

MINUTE of MEETING of COUNCIL of the  
SCOTTISH POTATO TRADE ASSOCIATION  
held in the City Mills Hotel, PERTH  
at 2 p.m. on Thursday, 28th JUNE, 1984

PRESENT:

Messrs. J.H. Barr, G. Brass, J.E. Cook, D.H. Lindsay, D. Maxwell, P. Miller, J.R. McArthur and K.A. McKenzie, with R. David Hunter (Secretary) and D. Blackmore (Assistant) in attendance.

The President, Mr. J.E. Cook, chaired the meeting.

APOLOGIES:

The Secretary intimated apologies for absence on behalf of Messrs. A.J. Allan, J.P. Deuchar, R. Doig, B. Fulton, J. Henderson, J. Logan Milne, W.E. Muirhead, T. McClung, J.O. Robertson and G. Smillie, and for probable late attendance on behalf of Messrs. J.G.H. Fenton and P. Moffat.

MINUTES :

Each Member of Council having previously received a copy of it, the Minute of Meeting of Council in Perth on 10th May, 1984 was taken as read. It was formally approved and signed to this effect by the Chairman.

MATTERS  
ARISING:

(a) Membership and Subscriptions - Mr. Blackmore reported that the applications for P.M.B. Licences by ESK Frozen Foods and by Thos. Rowe Farmers Ltd. reported at Council's last meeting had now been granted. After brief discussion it was agreed to write both Companies suggesting they consider enlisting nominations for Association membership.

He also reported receipt of formal nominations of Howard England Ltd. for Membership (per David T. Fenton & Sons Ltd. and Nickersons Seed Potatoes) and an application for Membership from Strathtay Potato Company. Council accepted this Nomination and agreed to write the latter to enlist formal nomination.

Council also noted that Mr. Kenneth McDonald, Kilmacolm and Mr. Robert S. Strachan, Blairgowrie had applied for P.M.B. Ware Merchant Licences. Mr. Blackmore undertook to report the results of these applications in due course. In conclusion, he also reported that all annual Membership Subscriptions had now been received without recourse to suspensions. Council agreed "personal-approach" pressure should be adopted by end-March in future years.

(b) Conditions of Purchase - In reply to the Secretariat's enquiry Council instructed that the "follow-up" letter to NIPMA should not indicate any amount of contribution to SPTA costs of formulation.

(c) Product Liability Insurance - Mr. Hunter reported having completed his study of the two (identical) quotations received. Insofar as the Association sought cover principally for admixture and chemicals problems the "package" policy offered contained various exclusion clauses which effectively ruled out the cover required. After a brief discussion Council agreed Mr. Hunter should meet Stewart Wightson's representative again to try to resolve the matter.

(d) Chemicals Forum - After re-considering the outcome of the Consultative Panel meeting, Council agreed an early meeting of the Seed Trade Committee should be arranged to try to widen further discussion of chemicals problems. It was also suggested ESCA should be invited to be represented on this topic.

(e) Ware Imports Advisory Committee - Mr. Hunter read a draft letter to the PMB Chairman, prepared pending the Consortium's views. In the event that the matter had not been discussed during the Consortium's last meeting, Council agreed that the letter should be sent as drafted.

(f) Overseas Trials - Mr. Cook reported he now understood from private discussion that the PMB is not prepared to give up its trialling. A meeting/



meeting between the Board, the Development Council and Solanex but excluding trading interests is due to take place at the end of July. During discussion it was suggested that Solanex's days could be numbered. It was also reported (and confirmed) that Mr. A.A. Sinclair had reverted to PMB staff, ending his secondment to the Development Council. No reason for this change was voiced.

(g) Small-sized seed - Mr. Cook read out a letter dated 8th April from Mr. Whittle to the Association expressing bitter complaint and personal offence that this Association had ignored his request for confidentiality for his Paper. Mr. Cook also explained that Mr. Whittle had made no reference to this letter or these views during their conversation following the Consortium Meeting on 11th June.

Mr. Cook also tabled and read out an item published in the "Farming News" on 15th June attributing to Mr. Whittle allegations that this Association and also (by implication) Mr. Cook personally, had breached Mr. Whittle's stipulated confidentiality for his Paper until 20th June. Mr. Cook pointed out that the allegations contradicted Mr. Whittle's own personal invitation to Mr. Cook (which he also tabled) in which the writer had asked for his Paper to be treated as "confidential until our meeting on 19th April". In fact, that meeting actually took place on 18th April.

After a prolonged and searching discussion, Council agreed unanimously that the untruths published in the item impugned the personal and business integrity of Mr. Cook and were defamatory in respect of the standing and reputation of this Association. Council therefore formally resolved to take all necessary steps to remedy these wrongs. It was decided not to respond through the Press but to confine the matter to direct correspondence between this Association and Mr. Whittle in his private capacity only (and unrelated in any way with his membership of NASPM), such correspondence to have Mr. Cook's prior personal approval at all times.

(h) (i) Curling - Mr. Hunter reported that an application for a booking in March, 1985 had been made to Perth Ice Rink. The finalised date will be announced in due course.

(ii) Anglian Produce Ltd. - In reply, Mr. Blackmore read out the reply letter, approved by Messrs. Deuchar and Fenton, which had been sent to Anglian Produce Ltd.

(iii) NASPM - A.G.M. - Mr. Cook recorded the view that the intended NASPM/SPTA business/social linkage had not been successful. Mr. Miller provided a detailed explanation of his abortive efforts. The Secretariat was instructed to write NASPM expressing SPTA's disappointment.

S.S.P.D.C.:

Mr. Hunter reported no further information had been received from the Development Council. Mr. Barr reported very briefly on a meeting of that Council held on 13th June. The Secretariat noted to circularise the précis of the Minute of that meeting to all SPTA Council Members as soon as it is received. Mr. Lindsay felt SSPDC should distribute educative material on the new seed grades to the English market.

B.P.T.

Consortium:

Mr. Cook explained his return from holiday abroad had delayed his arrival until the end of the Consortium Meeting held in London on 11th June. Mr. McKenzie had also been unable to be present and Mr. McArthur had attended in his place. There had been no discussion regarding the Ware Imports Advisory Committee. A full Report on the 1984 European Union AGM/Congress in Interlaken had been issued. Mr. Hunter stated the 1985 Congress will be held in the Bedford Hotel, Brighton from 30th May to 1st June, 1985 inclusive. Council agreed this information be included in the Association's next News Letter, offering copies of the Report to interested Members on request.



JOINT  
CONSULTATIVE  
COMMITTEE:

Mr. Cook reported on the meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee which he and Mr. McArthur had attended in London on the afternoon of 11th June, 1984. It had been stated that the morning meeting of the Retailers Committee had recommended to the PMB that the minimum riddle for the Ware Standard be changed to 50mm. Following discussion by Council, it was agreed the Association should write the PMB to urge rejection of this recommendation.

Among various statistics provided, the 1984/85 tonnage offered for contract by the PMB was 508,200 tonnes; MAFF field staffs "think" actual plantings are reduced to about 162,000 ha.; no indication of Dutch plantings had been discussed; imports from Cyprus and Greece were not expected to exceed 100,000 and 5,000 tonnes respectively and the total expected imports of ware were now indicated to be 330,000 tonnes not 350,000 tonnes as earlier forecast. News on quality control of imports was expected in about three weeks time. Mr. McArthur added that 1984 'Great Brits' promotion was budgeted to cost £400,000; PMB discussions in Brussels on an EEC Potatoes Regime had not been fruitful, with no way forward in prospect; PMB "model farm" statistics showed a per-acre cost of production to be £1,055 (approx. £67 per tonne).

SCOTTISH  
ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE:

Mr. McKenzie reported on the meeting of the Scottish Advisory Committee which he and Mr. Brass had attended in North Berwick on 25th June, 1984. During the meeting the PMB Chairman (Mr. Hitchcock) had announced that Consultants from the Board's own Auditors had been appointed to investigate the Board's Accounts and to report back. Expected to take about five weeks, this course had received NFUS acceptance. The problem of Press leaks had been tackled and reportedly stopped, but no details were given. In reply, funding from "Food for Britain" was still a possibility, although that Organisation was reportedly "already so big it can barely pay its wages".

Overall, Market Reports confirmed a good season to date (quoting prices, about 300% higher than last year). At 107Kg. per head, the latest human consumption figure is an all-time record. March, 1984 ex-farm tonnages had been the same as last year, showing that the whole ware shortage had been confined to the last two months of the Season. There had been full discussion of withdrawal of the "peeler" grade standard (introduced at NFU and Trade request, to legalise an existing practice) in a surplus year. The Board would not be happy to abandon this standard.

Mr. McKenzie also quoted various statistics given. The Secretariat was instructed to copy the relevant paper to all Council Members and to include a résumé of it in the next Association News Letter. The Chairman thanked Messrs. McKenzie and Brass for their Report.

FINANCE  
COMMITTEE:

Mr. Hunter reported briefly on a meeting of the Association's Finance Committee held earlier in the day. Payment of all 1983/84 Membership renewal Subscriptions had now been received, avoiding any need for suspensions from Membership. Expenditure was also within budget and it was decided to leave remaining current year funds on Bank Deposit without further Investment meantime.

A.O.C.B.:

(1) Tax on casual/harvest workers' wages - Mr. Miller read letters from his Company's Accountants re potato wages and from NFUS re raspberry wages. Following discussion, it was agreed to refer this matter to an early meeting of the Seed Trade Committee.

(2) 1985 Foreign Study Tour - After brief discussion Mr. McArthur agreed to obtain cost estimates for a visit to Lanzarote in January or February 1985 and Mr. Miller agreed to obtain cost estimates for a one week package visit to Cyprus (envisaging a subsequent programme request to the Cyprus Marketing Board) in mid-January, 1985.

(3)/

(3) Date of Next Meeting - Council agreed to meet again in the City Mills Hotel, Perth at 2 p.m. on Thursday, 6th September, 1985 and the Secretariat was instructed to make the necessary usual arrangements.

The meeting then closed with a Vote of Confidence and Thanks to the Chair.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'James King', written in a cursive style.