

REPORT OF COUNCIL
of the
SCOTTISH POTATO TRADE ASSOCIATION
to the
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF MEMBERS
for the year to
31st OCTOBER, 1985

As reported to the last A.G.M., there were 117 Members on the Association's Roll as at 1st November, 1984. Since that date 3 Members have resigned and one Member has been suspended. One new Member was enrolled part way through the year and two new Members were enrolled with effect from 1st November, 1985. Four further Members have notified their intention not to renew their membership in the current year, so that at 1st November, 1985 the total Membership Roll of the Association was 112. The arrest in the decline in Membership reported last year was thus but a temporary respite from the long-term decline, apparently now re-appearing.

The Insurance against consequential loss made available for Members at the time of the last A.G.M. has been only disappointingly supported by Members despite the best efforts of the Brokers. During the year under review there have been protracted negotiations to ensure that the Master Policy and the Arbitration requirement of the Conditions of Sale and of Purchase are fully compatible. Agreement on this point is expected shortly.

Your Council's investigation of the whole question of P.A.Y.E. and N.I.C. reductions from casual harvest wages also reported at the last A.G.M. have been vigorously pursued during the year under review. Many meetings have taken place at high level and another such with D.H.S.S. officials is in prospect. While tangible results have still to be achieved, Council is encouraged to continue these efforts during the current year and ^{aims to} ~~will~~ issue guidance notes to all Members as soon as possible. The engagement of professional expertise to assist in these matters has incurred a degree of once-only expenditure under the authority and full control of your Council.

Reflecting Members' disquiet at the P.M.B.'s ~~proposed~~ refusal to contribute financially to the promotion ^{by S.S.P.D.C.} of exports of seed potatoes from Scotland and its increasing commercial activities, efforts have been instituted to intensify surveillance of all operations by the Board. Of immediate concern is a close investigation of its accounting procedures in respect of Sutton Bridge, in the belief that the so-called "profit" there takes no account of proper oncosting. In turn, this is/

is expected to reveal hidden subsidisation by levy-paying producers and to show them the true commercial cost of that so-called "profit". Through your Association's representatives on the many P.M.B. committees, close attention and involvement will be maintained in reviewing the Direct Intervention Scheme, Seasonal Contracts, direct sales to processors outwith Trade hands and the role of the P.M.B. after 1990. It should be noted that your Association was alone in its vigorous resistance to the introduction of a minimum 45 mm riddle for ware, but was over-ruled at Board level.

In last year's Report of Council the subject of use and mis-use of chemicals received concerned comment. While time may now have provided a changed perspective, the problems are no less topical today. Complacency must not be allowed to develop and alongside its own maintained vigilance your Council continues to urge all Members to exercise the very utmost care at all times. Also through the Department of Agriculture, your Council has pressed and will continue to press for restraint of the extra costs to the industry (particularly seed exports) of retraction of government support for Research and Development and for the Advisory Services. Lastly, after years of campaigning by your Association, the Department has recently indicated its willingness to remove the separate tolerance for Veinal Necrosis in the growing crops Inspection Scheme and to include this fault in the tolerance for serious diseases. As usual, there is a price - the Department is also proposing to introduce year-numbering of Elite class (E1 and E2). Your Council has already notified your Association's total opposition to this proposal, ^{which will be vehemently resisted.} ~~this initiative is about to be joined.~~

In conclusion, your Council repeats last year's exhortation to each and every Member - take as active as possible a part in furthering the aims and interest of YOUR Association. ^{Don't stand on the sidelines -} Get involved - ~~each Council Member, like the Secretariat, is only a~~ ^{all Council Members, like myself and the Secretariat, are} 'phone call away.