

REPORT on a MEETING of the CHAIRMAN'S
COMMITTEE of the SCOTTISH POTATO TRADE
ASSOCIATION in the Wheel Inn, SCONE at
11 a.m. on Friday, 15th MAY, 1987

PRESENT:

Messrs. J.H. Barr, G.S. Brass, R.D. Hunter, D.H. Lindsay,
J.R. McArthur, K.A. McKenzie and J.O. Robertson with D. Blackmore
(Assistant Secretary) in attendance.

The President, Mr. K.A. McKenzie, took the Chair and welcomed those
present to the Meeting.

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Messrs. J.E. Cook,
J.G.H. Fenton, P. Moffat and J.M. Swinton.

OFFICE-
BEARER
VACANCY:

The Chairman opened discussion by outlining the situation arising
from Mr. Moffat's resignation from his Office as Depute Vice President
of the Association. This had created a vacancy until the end of Mr.
Moffat's normal term of this Office on 31st October, 1987 with the
added problem of the normal succession for the ensuing terms of Offices.

The Committee agreed it would be possible to dispense with
appointment of an interim replacement, but a requirement to appoint both
a Vice President and a Depute Vice President, who may have relatively
insufficient experience, to serve for a two-year term from 1st November,
1987 was cause for serious concern. Consideration of various
possibilities to meet this eventuality was not conclusive and it was
agreed that Messrs. McKenzie and Brass should pursue their enquiries to
try to resolve the problem. It was recognised the heavy work-loads
involved in holding Office and the large proportion of former Presidents
among Council Members did not make for a ready solution. It was also
agreed to be unnecessary for Presidents and Vice Presidents to serve on
the S.S.P.D.C. and that Mr. McKenzie should consider further ways of
reducing the work loads of Office Bearers (e.g. by rotational and/or
substitutional means) and to report his recommendations in due course.

FINANCIAL
REVIEW:

The Committee gave detailed consideration to an Association Account
prepared for the period from 1st November, 1986 to 15th May, 1987 copies
of which had already been sent to each Committee Member beforehand.
While the Account also gave the budgetted estimates for each head, it
was accepted that receipts of Subscriptions and payments of expenses do
not occur evenly throughout the whole year. Mr. Blackmore spoke on
several specific points raised and the Committee agreed the Accounts
showed a satisfactory position. Mr. Blackmore also reported having
obtained a valuation and review of the Association's Investments from its
Stockbrokers. Following discussion the Committee accepted the
Stockbrokers' recommendations that no changes of Investments be made at
this time.

A.O.C.B.:

The Chairman reported briefly on the Producers' meeting organised
by the P.M.B., which he had attended in Inverness the previous day, at
which (as planned) the Seed Trade Working Party's seed support proposals
had been announced by Mr. John McLaren (N.F.U.S.). It was expected that
the proposals would be considered at a full Board Meeting by the end of
May and that acceptance could involve some "barter" with the (English)
N.F.U. interests. The Committee's brief discussion included assessment
of other factors and personalities that might bear on the outcome.

The meeting concluded with a Vote of Thanks to the Chair.

J.C.C. MEETING - MONDAY 8th JUNE, 1987.

1. Amendments to scheme :- Potato Growers action group English cases mostly settled. After Lawson's demise in Scotland - Lawyers are negotiating Scottish cases, but we are assured that all outstanding debts to the board will have to be paid in full including costs and court expenses.
2. It would appear that a dozen or so hectares qualified for old levy before new changes came into effect. Our earlier fears appear to have been groundless.
3. Report on Retailers meeting :- They felt quality was better last season and hope for the same this season. They were totally opposed to proposed changing of peeler grade to second grade and wanted it left alone but better marked etc.,.
4. Market Report:- Can report this at council meeting as old crop is historic, however new crop started on or about 15th May in Cornwall and the following week in most of the other early areas by the 29th May. 4,700 tonnes had been sold (130 tonnes 1986). The best ever recorded clearance before end May. Polythene covered crops up 36% on last year - now 1050 hectares. Average crop 16.35 tonnes/hectare, prices varying because of weather between but average £235.00 bags included.
5. Overseas:- Brittany down on last year, 5,700 tonnes into Britain by last Friday. Total into Great Britain by last Friday was 155,000 tonnes (200,000 tonnes in 1986) Board congratulated itself on the orderly way they were starting to get early imports coming into the country, they felt entirely due to the consultation and visitations abroad with early importers.
6. N.S.D.O. and P.B.I. should be in private hands by mid August/September. Short list of interested buyers should soon be known.
7. Peeler grade. Boards proposal to rename it second grade, for it to be a specified grade, to have no restriction on sales etc.,. Only body in favour of it was P.P.M.A. I spoke out strongly against it quoting our letter to the Board dated 24/3/87 and emphasised that nothing less than that would be satisfactory.
We have to give a written submission before September J.C.C. meeting.
8. New Licencing conditions were passed by all bodies. I felt that it would have been prudent to take this opportunity to really tighten up on licence issue. Far too little far too late.
9. Granting of extra quota allocation for french fry production. Boards proposal is to grant extra quota to growers to produce the equivalent of 60,000 tonnes of potatoes on a 1 year special grant basis. The idea is to stop 60,000 tonnes of imported potatoes coming in for french fry production. Guarantees are that the extra tonnage would be handled by normal merchandising channels. If the potatoes were not suitable for the factory then they would be denatured or fed to cattle, and the processor would guarantee that they would not come to the fresh market. This would be closely monitored by the board. They would be as fair as possible in the acreage allocation.
Because it was a 1 year allocation and because it therefore would be withdrawn at any time if the scheme did not reduce imports then it would be stopped. Recognised that it in effect would be a 2 year grant because they would not know all the details until next season was on us.
All of the bodies present agreed that it was a step in the right direction if imports are to be reduced, and the Boards seemingly changing view for help to special sectors of the U.K. industry. S.P.T.A's view was that we would need time to consider with council the implications, however the Board would have difficulty turning down special allocation of acreage for genuine seed exports to new countries if the contracts were guaranteed. The Board agreed with this. After the meeting it was revealed that one exporter in Scotland already has been given a special one year grant for export this season.
10. Numerous papers on visitations overseas etc., in total 13 papers!
These were quickly passed over except that I did remark that I found that it was unfortunate that the author of some of the papers felt it necessary to slight the Chief Executive of the S.S.P.D.C. and it did not do much for the relationship between the board and the S.S.P.D.C.
11. Next meeting 1st September, 1987.

K. A. MCKENZIE.