

MINUTE of MEETING of COUNCIL of the  
SCOTTISH POTATO TRADE ASSOCIATION in the  
Wheel Inn Motor Hotel, SCONE at 2 p.m.  
on Thursday, 3rd September, 1987.

PRESENT: Messrs. J.H. Barr, G.S. Brass, J.P. Deuchar, J.G.H. Fenton, D. Maxwell, I. Melrose, J.R. McArthur, K.A. McKenzie, J.M. Swinton, and A.S. Whitehead, with R. David Hunter (Secretary) and D. Blackmore (Assistant) in attendance.

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

APOLOGIES: The Secretary reported apologies for absence received from Messrs. W.T. Aitken, R. Doig, D.H. Lindsay, P. Miller, P. Moffat, T. McClung and J.O. Robertson. He also reported receipt of Mr. Aitken's resignation from Council due to ineligibility following his very recent employment change.

MINUTES: The Minute of Meeting of Council in Scone on 2nd July, 1987 (previously copied to each Member of Council) was taken as read. It was duly approved and was signed to this effect by the Chairman.

MATTERS  
ARISING:

(a) Quota Sales - The Secretary read out the Association's further letter of 8th July and the reply dated 18th August received thereto from the PMB. Council's discussion recognised that the Board has not accepted that Scottish Grower Merchants constitute a special case and Council found the Board's "big battalions" argument to be unacceptable. It was decided pressure should be maintained, to which end the Chairman agreed to contact the Board's Scottish Area Supervisor (Mr. Craig Davie) to ask him to meet the Association's Office Bearers.

(b) Membership - The Secretary reported no further changes had occurred. Eight Notices of Applications for Merchant's Licences had been received from the PMB since Council had last met which Mr. Blackmore had omitted to circularise to the Office Bearers. From consideration of these Council instructed further details be sought in respect of Robertson's Potatoes, Tillicoultry and no objections could be made regarding the application by Duthie & Fleming (Seed Potatoes) Ltd., Coupar Angus; Fletcherfield Potatoes Ltd., Kirriemuir; James A. Forbes & Partners, Montrose; Hollywood Potatoes Ltd., Forfar; Messrs. A. Gallacher & Sons, Girvan; G.C. Taylor t/a Taypack, Errol; and Messrs. W.G. & G.I. McPherson, Keith. Council also made clear that all future Notices received are to be copied immediately to each Office Bearer.

(c) Office Bearers' Workload - The Chairman outlined his suggestions for easing this problem by spreading representation more widely among other Council Members. It was agreed to consider permanent or semi-permanent appointments to certain external Committees but not to reduce the number of Council Members. It was formally decided, however, to seek approval of Members at the next Annual General Meeting to reduce the requisite quorum at Council Meetings from eight to six Members.

(d) Peeler Grade - This Item was deferred until late in the meeting.

(e) French Fries - The Chairman reported this matter had not been discussed at the Joint Consultative Committee Meeting (reported below), being very much a steam-rollered fait accompli by that time. Council's discussion accepted that any reply to the Board's further letter of 28th July would be ineffective and a total waste of time.

(f) Seed Trade Working Party - This Item was also deferred until later in the meeting.

(g) PAYE/NIC - Advisers Fee - Mr. Hunter explained settlement had been made and Mr. McDougall had confirmed this will include reporting the review result in due course.

(h) /



(h) Conditions of Sale - Reporting on his consideration of NASPM's amendments, Mr. Hunter felt there to be no particular harm in retaining application of the Conditions to sale of unclassified seed potatoes, however remote the possibility of such sales becoming legal may be. Council endorsed this view.

In respect of retention of property in the goods until payment, he explained that unlike NASPM (whose members dealt principally direct with the end-user), SPTA members most often dealt at one remove. He read out a fully comprehensive suggested revised clause designed for hard goods but felt this would still have only marginal practical value for perishable goods. After discussion, Council decided no change should be made and when writing to inform NASPM accordingly, to ask for a reply to the Association's letter of 16th July. The Chairman reported a telephone call from the President of NASPM to explain that any offence caused had been unintentional and was regretted.

S.S.P.D.C.:

Council noted that précises of SSPDC Minutes are still not being received. It was felt the Association should insist on receiving these and it was agreed the Secretariat prepare a letter to this effect to the Chairman (Mr. John Fotheringham) for signature by the Association's President (Mr. K.A. McKenzie).

The Association's representatives agreed there were no particular matters to report. In subsequent discussion it was felt that adverse views of SSPDC were increasing among farmers, that with extremely low costs the levies gave good (although perhaps unquantifiable) value and steps are being taken to improve the SSPDC's admittedly low public relations image. In reply, the representatives explained Mr. David Lawson's position as a special representative remained unclarified.

SEED TRADE  
WORKING  
PARTY:

The Chairman and Mr. Brass reported with great detail on the meeting they had attended in Edinburgh on 17th July, 1987; a follow-up meeting of the Working Party with DAFS and subsequent correspondence therefrom.

Principally this concerned initiatives to improve the standard and presentation of Scottish seed to counter the severe criticism levelled by PMB Members in their resistance to the proposed Seed Support Scheme. Council's discussion of the details of these initiatives was technically complex and necessarily extremely prolonged, differences of view being expressed as to the best way to carry the proposed Scheme forward. The Chairman stressed that the report given was for information only and Council was not being asked to approve the details of these latest initiatives but he sought agreement only for continuation of dialogue with the PMB at a further meeting in Edinburgh on 11th September. Mr. Brass added his view that unless Scotland could improve its product it would inevitably hasten further fatal reduction of its seed potato industry.

Agreeing with this view and accompanied by several laudatory comments on the heavy efforts expended on the proposed Scheme over a two year period to date, Council agreed these efforts should continue. It was also decided that the technical details discussed today should be copied to each Council Member, in confidence, for further careful study and consideration before Council's next meeting. In further replies, Messrs. McKenzie and Brass both felt that unless the meeting on 11th September indicates that the Board's support for the proposed Scheme can be changed from a passive to an active role, far more radical alternatives will have to be considered.

B.P.T.C.:

Mr. McArthur reported on the poorly attended meeting of the British Potato Trades Consortium which he and Mr. McKenzie had attended in London on 1st September, 1987. On Peeler Grade, it was clear there was unanimous opposition to the PMB's proposals. There had been considerable discussion of the discovery of rhizomania in East Anglia (it was believed a second site in Cambridgeshire is also suspected), the seriousness of which could not be over-estimated. It had also been reported that the now-revised RUCIP Rules are being printed and copies are to cost £5.00 each. Council instructed that orders should be solicited from Members in the next News Letter and three copies for use of Council Members be purchased and held by the Secretariat.



J.C.C.:

Messrs. McKenzie and McArthur also reported on the meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee which they had attended in London on 1st September, 1987. In discussion of rhizomania, it had been agreed MAFF had treated this threat far too lightly, despite repeated warnings by both the industry and the PMB over the last number of years. It was noticeable that Mr. Harris (representing the processing industry) adopted a very defensive position. There had been a call for a ban on all imports of unwashed root crops and it was reported the Board is pressing MAFF to establish and publish the source of the outbreak(s), to assist the introduction of a ban.

Following Council's discussion of this matter, it was agreed the Association should write a forceful letter to MAFF requiring immediate implementation of all possible steps to prevent the spread of this disease into the High Grade Seed Area.

Information had also been given updating estimated U.K. plantings, check yields and liftings to date. In respect of Peeler Grade proposals, it had been clear that total opposition voiced had started a "back-peddalling" exercise in the Board, with the proposals having been remitted back to the appropriate Committee for re-consideration.

ANNUAL  
ELECTIONS:

Mr. Hunter reported that in terms of the Constitution, Messrs. A.J. Allan, J.E. Cook, J.P. Deuchar, R. Doig, D. Maxwell and J.M. Swinton are all due to retire from Council by rotation on 31st October, 1987. In addition, Mr. Aitken's resignation had increased the number of vacancies to be filled to seven. During discussion it was agreed Council Members should solicit suitable nominations and the Secretariat was instructed to initiate the usual procedures.

A.O.C.B.:

(1) SSPDC Inspection Results - Mr. Blackmore reported a telephone discussion with Mr. Bethel regarding arrangements for disseminating SSPDC's interim results of 1987 Crop Inspections. Council agreed last year's procedure should be repeated.

(2) Items for Agenda for JLC Autumn Meeting - After due discussion Council agreed that Co-ordination of DAFS/MAFF interpretations of Regulations and the proposed Seed Support Scheme should both be included in the Agenda for the forthcoming mid-October meeting. Further Items from Council Members will be welcome.

(3) Expert Inspection/Assessment capability - Mr. Hunter reported a telephone enquiry from a Member requiring the services of an independent witness. Council agreed such a requirement could be met from the Association's Arbitration Panel, providing safeguards of total impartiality can be assured.

(4) Scotch Seed Potato Exhibitors - The Secretary reminded the meeting that the Exhibitors' Annual General Meeting is to take place on Friday, 11th September, 1987. Without wishing to pre-empt the discussions, he voiced the opinion that participation in the 1987 Royal Smithfield Show could be increased by reduction of individual contributions.

(5) Date of next meeting - Council confirmed it will meet again at 2 p.m. on Thursday, 22nd October, 1987 at the Wheel Inn Motor Hotel, Scone following a meeting of the Chairman's (Finance) Committee there at 11.30 a.m. that day. The Secretariat was instructed to make the necessary arrangements.

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

