

MINUTE of SPECIAL MEETING of
COUNCIL of THE SCOTTISH POTATO
TRADE ASSOCIATION in the Wheel Inn
Motor Hotel, SCONE at 2 p.m. on
Thursday, 31st MARCH, 1988.

PRESENT: Messrs. W.P. Balfour, G.S. Brass, J.E. Cook, D.H. Lindsay, P. Miller, J.R. McArthur, K.A. McKenzie, J.O. Robertson and A.S. Whitehead, with D. Blackmore (Assistant Secretary) in attendance.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Messrs. J.H. Barr, J.P. Deuchar, J.G.H. Fenton, D. Maxwell, I. Melrose, T. McClung, J.M. Swinton and R. David Hunter (Secretary).

FUTURE OF THE P.M.B.: The Chairman explained that the previous Special Meeting of Council had not completed its discussion of this topic and it had been agreed that today's further meeting would consider only "a post-1990 without a P.M.B." situation.

Although all normal Council business would thus be deferred, he gave a brief progress report on the Seed Support proposals. With one exception, the P.M.B. Executive meeting on 28th March supported the proposals unanimously. The full Board Meeting on 29th March voted 28 in favour and 2 against the proposals, with 1 abstention. The Chairman described these decisions as a resounding success, placing the English N.F.U. under enormous pressure to withdraw its objections. Messrs. Hitchcock, Pooley and the Scottish N.F.U. are to meet the English N.F.U. to try to provide Mr. Hoyle with a face-saving way out before the U.K. Working Party meeting on 14th April. Mr. McKenzie confirmed this represented a major step forward in Scotland to establish the principle involved and he now felt 70-30 sure that a self-financed Seed Support Scheme will be introduced in Season '88.

Mr. McArthur welcomed this news and paid tribute to the Seed Potato Working Party's prolonged hard work in achieving it, urging every further effort to ensure the Scheme survives any possible cessation of the P.M.B. beyond 1990. In that same situation the Chairman also saw the need to ensure that all accumulated producer funds in P.M.B. hands are passed on to any post-1990 Authority, drawing the meeting back to discussion of what could replace the P.M.B. in Scotland and how such a body could be financed.

Speaking to his Paper, Mr. McArthur pointed out it envisaged such a body as combining the functions of the P.M.B., D.A.F.S. and S.S.P.D.C. to cover both seed and ware, possibly extending beyond Scotland to include the whole High Grade Seed Area (retention of which he considered to be essential), with proper discipline to ensure that costs were shared equally. It would be equally essential for statutory powers to be passed to such an authority.

Being absolutely clear in his own mind that all government support for potatoes will cease from 1990, Mr. McKenzie pointed out that Quota arrangements could not be retained in Scotland if they were discontinued in England. In this light, he saw the need for an authority for seed, but felt ware would be better served by a STOPA-type organisation. In the ensuing prolonged discussion, which again included consideration of projected costings and the many sources of current statutory powers (non-administration of some of which, it was agreed, creates much unfairness), the consensus view favoured arrangements for seed in Scotland (or the HGSA) and continuation of a U.K. Quote for ware. Mr. McKenzie proposed Council/

Council should agree that if the results of the review of the future of the P.M.B. after 1990 (expected to be known in October 1988) are unacceptable to Scotland (e.g. by virtue of "the triple-zero option" or an insufficiently-slimmed P.M.B.) it would be feasible to run a Scottish Seed Potato Authority on a budget of £3.5m per annum. Council duly endorsed this view.

After further general discussion, Mr. McKenzie formally Moved "that S.P.T.A. ask S.S.P.D.C. to ask the Scottish Development Agency to carry out a feasibility study on a proposal that all potato-related functions of the P.M.B., D.A.F.S. and S.S.P.D.C. be combined under a Scottish Potato Authority with similar statutory powers to those bodies". Mr. Miller seconded this Motion which, in the absence of any amending Motion, was passed unanimously. It was further agreed Messrs. Cook and McArthur convey this request verbally to the S.S.P.D.C. at its meeting on 5th April, 1988.

A.O.C.B.:

(a) Notifications of Applications for P.M.B. Merchant Licences - The Chairman reported receipt of such in respect of David Lawson (Thrums) 1987 Ltd. and Messrs. John Lascelles (Seed). Council considered it would be most unwise to grant the first application and that provided the P.M.B.'s criteria are stringently fulfilled, no objection to the second application would be made. Mr. Blackmore was instructed to notify the P.M.B. accordingly.

(b) Resignations from Membership - Mr. Blackmore also reported that since Council's meeting on 4th March, N.B. Auckland Ltd. and Matthew H. Calderwood Ltd. had notified their resignation from the Association, reducing the total Membership Roll to 102 Members.

(c) "Bulking" after Crop Inspections - In reply to Mr. Cook, the Chairman explained the Department's proposals during the Consultative Panel Meeting on 3rd March. He also explained that a further Panel Meeting is to be held, once the Seed Support proposals result is known, to review standards. This will also now include discussion of D.A.F.S.' increases in fees and he proposed N.F.U.S. be approached to find out if they share S.P.T.A. concern over these increases.

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