

MINUTES of MEETING of COUNCIL of  
the SCOTTISH POTATO TRADE  
ASSOCIATION in the Wheel Inn Motor  
Hotel, SCONE at 2 p.m. on Thursday,  
7th JULY, 1988.

PRESENT:

Messrs. J.H. Barr, G.S. Brass, J.E. Cook, J.G.H. Fenton, D.H. Lindsay, P. Miller, J.O. Robertson and A.S. Whitehead, with R. David Hunter (Secretary) and D. Blackmore (Assistant) in attendance.

The President, Mr. G.S. Brass, took the Chair and welcomed those present to the meeting.

APOLOGIES:

The Secretary reported apologies for absence received from Messrs. J.P. Deuchar, D. Maxwell, I. Melrose, J.R. McArthur, T. McClung, K.A. McKenzie and J.M. Swinton.

MINUTES:

The Minutes of the meeting of Council in Scone on 26th May, 1988 (previously copied to each member of Council) 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 in implement of Council's instructions, formal Notices of Suspension from Membership had been sent to three Members on 6th June. One of these Member's subscription had since been received (on 5th July), restoring the Membership Roll to 98 Members and leaving suspensions of Farm Fresh Produce (Tealing) Ltd. and George Ogilvie (Montrose) Ltd. still in operation.

Mr. Hunter reported receipt of notifications of applications for P.M.B. Merchant's Licences made by Angus Produce Ltd., Montrose (already an Association Member) and Ian A. Gerrard, Esq., Inverurie. Following discussion Council agreed to make further enquiries. Mr. Brass also reported having telephoned Mr. John Hedding (Chairman of the P.M.B. Licensing Committee) as agreed, who had appreciated the contact and informal discussion.

(b) Proposed SSPDC "Database" - During lengthy further discussion of this topic there was opposition to the proposal on principle and concern over its potential to increase direct, non-Trade dealing. It was also believed to have stemmed from only two or three enquiries and that it conflicts with the objectives of the Association's Constitution. It was also pointed out that by virtue of voluntary participation, non-volunteers on principle grounds, by definition, would be excluded from the database altogether. The advantages of a database over the Crops Register were felt to be unclear.

On the other hand there was support for the proposal provided careful control of its input and operation can be assured. It was reported that the proposal had not been discussed at the S.S.P.D.C. meeting in Edinburgh on 28th June, 1988 but it was understood that questionnaires are being sent out. In the event that continued discussion did not resolve differing views, the Chairman called for a show of hands which revealed a majority of 5 - 2 opposed the formation of a database.

(c) Revision of grading standard tolerances - The Chairman confirmed that the P.M.B. had finally approved the proposed Seed Support Scheme which will come into operation for the 1988/89 Season on an initial one year only basis. As he had previously/

previously explained, in course of formulating the proposed Scheme the Working Party had considered improvements to grading standard tolerances with D.A.F.S. in Autumn 1987. The Working Party had made it quite clear to the English N.F.U. that Scottish agreement to the introduction of improved grading standard tolerances was conditional upon the English N.F.U. giving its unqualified support to the Seed Support Scheme.

In the event, in negotiations between the English N.F.U. and the N.F.U. of Scotland, the former's support for the proposed Scheme was qualified, by an (agreed form of words) N.F.U.S. undertaking "to consider the introduction of an Early Burning Down Scheme in Scotland". Furthermore, the English N.F.U.'s vote was eventually the only vote cast against the Seed Support Scheme.

In these circumstances therefore, in the Chairman's view, acceptance of the proposed revised grading standard tolerances (tabled by D.A.F.S. at the Consultative Panel meeting on 3rd March, 1988 and now circularised for hurried "rubber stamp" approval) is not binding on either the Working Party or this Association. The Chairman also felt the N.F.U.S. agreement to "consider" early burning down had relied on D.A.F.S.' known view that such a Scheme in Scotland is totally unwarranted and impractical but, in his own view, such reliance is perhaps too simple. He sought Council's support at next week's Working Party meeting, therefore, to obtain an N.F.U.S. commitment to total opposition to any form of early burning down in Scotland.

In Council's full and lively discussion it was agreed the Chairman's interpretation of events was valid. It was felt that permanently changed tolerances in exchange for a one-year Seed Support Scheme would constitute a poor deal. Tremendous English pressure for a burning down scheme in Scotland was reported and supported. The commercial motivation and objections of this pressure were well known but it was felt the adverse effects its success would have in England were not recognised there. It was also pointed out that any such scheme was essentially related to aphid problems which had not troubled Scotland for many years and that even though a Scheme was in place in Holland, it had not been implemented over the last four years. It was eventually decided to play for time on tolerance changes and to regard any burning down discussions as essentially a cosmetic and totally elastic exercise.

(d) Deputy Vice President - Mr. Hunter reported the substance of the discussion which took place during the Chairman's Committee meeting earlier today. Council's consideration of this matter included the present vacancies on Council, but no conclusions were reached.

S.S.P.D.C.:

The Secretary and the Association's representatives all reported that their copies of the Minutes of the meeting of the Scottish Seed Potato Development Council in Edinburgh on 28th June, 1988 were not yet to hand. Discussion was therefore deferred.

Mr. Lindsay raised several questions arising from his reading of that Council's latest Annual Account. It was agreed the Association's Representatives would seek clarification of the changed accounting method of showing the Chief Executive's Pension contributions and an explanation of the almost-doubled car expenses.

BRITISH/

BRITISH  
POTATO  
TRADES  
CONSORTIUM:

The Chairman explained it had not been possible for the Association's Representatives to attend the meeting of the Consortium in London in the morning of 13th June, 1988. From a copy of the Minutes of that meeting since received he reported the bulk of business had concerned European Union matters and a conference attended by Mr. Harold Aves.

JOINT  
CONSULTATIVE  
COMMITTEE:

Council noted the content of tabled copies of the P.M.B.'s Report on the meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee which Messrs. G.S. Brass and J.R. McArthur had attended in London in the afternoon of 13th June, 1988. Council agreed copies of this Report be provided, on request, to any Association Member.

SCOTTISH  
ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE:

The Secretariat also tabled copies of the P.M.B.'s Report on the Scottish Advisory Committee which Messrs. Brass and McArthur had also attended at Maidens, in Ayrshire, on 15th June, 1988. In brief comment Mr. Brass felt this contained little of substance and he reported his strong impression that P.M.B. staff are very conscious of pressures for financial economies and are dreading the outcome of the post-1990 Review.

D.A.F.S.:

Mr. Brass also reported on a meeting arranged by the Department of Agriculture which he had attended with Mr. McArthur in Edinburgh on 24th June, 1988. In essence, the meeting provided for debate between the Ministry of Agriculture's Review Body and various D.A.F.S. specialists following publication of the Report on the future and funding of the U.K.'s variety testing and certification systems.

Reflecting the Report, potato matters occupied but a small part of the debate. As a general impression, standards and arrangements (especially for cereals) were regarded as very largely self-financing already. A lack of any correlation between the Treasury's intake from industry and individual Ministries' output on research and support, etc. was quite apparent. There was no suggestion that the Scottish Testing Station will not continue to be maintained in Edinburgh.

Mr. Brass further reported receipt of an invitation for the Association to be represented at a meeting chaired by Baroness Trumpington in London on 27th June, 1988, one of a series of such meetings to consider industry-funding of "near market" research and development expenditure. In the light that this did not justify the travelling costs involved it was arranged that Mr. Bethel (S.S.P.D.C.) would report the outcome to Mr. Brass, which report is awaited. Mr. Blackmore added that from Press reports, participants had objected to the severity of the changes proposed and the very short notice provided for the meetings.

CHAIRMAN'S  
COMMITTEE:

Mr. Hunter reported further on the meeting of the Chairman's Committee held earlier today. The Committee's review of an interim eight-month Association Account had concluded that Income and Expenditure to date are broadly in line with overall budget and the present financial position was regarded as satisfactory. A review of the Association's Investments accepted the Stockbrokers' recommendation that no changes are necessary at the present time.

ANY OTHER  
COMPETENT  
BUSINESS:

(a) Press Release - Cullen Allen Panel - For information the Secretary read out the content of a Press Release received the previous day.

(b)/

(b) Sealing of boxed consignments - In reply to Mr. Cook, the Chairman explained the discussion of this topic at the last Consultative Panel meeting. Following a short discussion Council agreed the next meeting with D.A.F.S. be asked to explain why a customer letter requesting boxed or bulk delivery is required.

(c) Date of next meeting - After brief discussion Council confirmed its next meeting will take place in the Wheel Inn Motor Hotel, Scone at 2 p.m. on Thursday, 1st September, 1988 with the Secretariat making the usual arrangements.

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

*J. Brass*