

MINUTES of a MEETING of COUNCIL
of the SCOTTISH POTATO TRADE
ASSOCIATION in the Wheel Inn
Motor Hotel, SCONE at 11 a.m. on
Thursday, 27th OCTOBER, 1988.

PRESENT: Messrs. G.S. Brass, D.H. Lindsay, D. Maxwell, I. Melrose, P. Miller, T. McClung, K.A. McKenzie, J.O. Robertson, J.M. Swinton and A.S. Whitehead, with D. Blackmore (Assistant Secretary) in attendance.

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

APOLOGIES: Mr. Blackmore reported apologies for absence received from Messrs. J.H. Barr, J.E. Cook, J.R. McArthur and R. David Hunter (Secretary).

MINUTES: The Minutes of the Meeting of Council in Scone on 1st September, 1988 (previously copied to each Member of Council) were taken as read. They were formally approved and were duly signed to this effect by the Chairman.

MATTERS
ARISING:

(a) Membership - In respect of formal nominations of Robert J.S. Doig Ltd., Glenfarg, Council ratified the decision of its Special Meeting on 18th October, 1988 to admit this Company into Membership of the Association, thereby increasing the total Roll to 101 Members.

(b) Deputy Vice President - The Chairman reported receipt of a letter from Mr. McClung regretfully declining acceptance of appointment to fill this vacant Office. Council deferred resolution of this vacancy until its next meeting.

(c) Reviews of (i) Testing and Certification and (ii) Research and Development - Pending DAFS' clarification between the N.I.A.B. and National Listing roles (the former believed to be more important for cereals and grasses than potatoes, discussion embraced (i) and (ii) together. The Chairman reported receipt of a copy of the NFUS response to (ii). It was decided to respond to both (i) and (ii) once DAFS' clarification is received.

(d) Seed Support Scheme - During brief discussion there were indications from current prices that the Scheme could be approaching its trigger point.

(e) Elections to Council - Mr. Blackmore confirmed that with formal nominations having been received only in respect of the five retiring Members of Council (Messrs. J.G.H. Fenton, P. Miller, J. Logan Milne, J.O. Robertson and A.S. Whitehead) for the seven vacancies on Council, all five had been re-elected unopposed without need for a postal ballot of all Members, leaving two vacancies unfilled. It was agreed this latter point be deferred for resolution at Council's next meeting.

(f) Sponsorship - This matter was also deferred until Council's next meeting.

S.S.P.D.C./

S.S.P.D.C.: Mr. Blackmore reported having received a copy of the Minutes of the Scottish Seed Potato Development Council meeting held in Edinburgh on 4th October, 1988 providing an updating of the proposed Database initiative. Mr. Swinton also reported on the response to the post-1990 proposals, to which Mr. McClung added a brief report on this same subject from the Scottish Advisory Committee's meeting in Edinburgh on 20th October, 1988. Council's brief discussion recognised that time for responses to the proposals is rapidly running out.

B.P.T.C.
& J.C.C.: Council noted the content of Reports on the meetings of the British Potato Trades Consortium and of the Joint Consultative Committee in London on 5th September, 1988 which had been pre-copied to each Member of Council. In reply to the Chair, no points were raised for clarification and no comments were made.

SPECIAL
COUNCIL
MEETING: In response to the Chairman's invitation for further responses to the Report on Council's Special Meeting in Scone on 18th October, 1988 (pre-copied to each Member of Council), it was agreed these be deferred until later today.

SCOTTISH
ADVISORY
COMMITTEE: The Chairman reported verbally on the meeting of the Scottish Advisory Committee which he had attended in Edinburgh on 20th October, 1988. Crop check weighings had indicated yields had increased by approximately 3 tonnes per hectare but were probably less, providing for an estimated total crop of 6.5 million tonnes. With 1% of returns still to come, planted acreage was given as 154,796 hectares. It was believed about 6,000 hectares had still to be harvested. New potato imports had been 6,000 tonnes less than last year. Seed exports were minimal. In respect of post-1990, the NFU protested at the ending of the present financial arrangements and supported continuation of the PMB.

SEED
POTATO
ADVISORY
COMMITTEE: Reporting verbally on the meeting of the Seed Potato Advisory Committee which he had attended in Edinburgh on 20th October, 1988, Mr. McClung explained it had repeated the information given to the Scottish Advisory Committee. However, there had been concern over the extent of mini-tuber production (150,000 planted this 1988 Season). There had also been discussion of tolerances, powdery scab, planting of uncertified seed and the High Grade Seed Area. Mrs. Bright Gordon had proposed the March, 1989 meeting of this Committee and the Scottish Advisory Committee be combined.

JOINT
LIAISON
COMMITTEE: The Chairman and Mr. McClung reported on the meetings of the Joint SPTA/NASPM Liaison Committee held the previous day in Edinburgh. Covering the Scottish Inspectorate's (resumed annual) visit to England, prohibition of planting of unclassified seed in the High Grade Seed Area, tolerance changes (but not early burning down) "Small Ware" and extension of (Conditions of Sale) complaints periods. S.P.T.A. Representatives agreed to seek Mr. R. David Hunter's professional advice on this last point before responding.

The Association's representatives agreed the meetings had been less fruitful than formerly and Mr. Lindsay instanced the last subject as particularly embarrassing and rather acrimonious. During Council's discussion, the validity of continuation of this Liaison was questioned and possible remedies were suggested without firm decision being reached.

ANNUAL
ASSOCIATION
ACCOUNT: Council considered the draft Annual Account which Mr. Blackmore had prepared and tabled in its usual format, stressing that it required amendment to incorporate the cost of today's meeting, interest on funds still on Deposit and finalisation of estimated Secretarial Outlays (still subject to the Secretary's consideration and approval).

In a point-by-point comparison of each heading with its respective original Estimate, the salient points were a reduction in Subscriptions (principally due to unforeseeable resignations and suspensions) and increased costs of meetings (due to the costs of four additional special meetings held during the year). These factors had increased the Deficit for the year, which would provide for full recovery of all tax borne and a carry forward tax loss into the next tax year.

Council felt the Estimates for next year could be less tightly framed in due course and instructed meantime that the Account be finalised and submitted to the Auditor in the usual way as soon as possible.

POST-1990
REVIEW:

Introducing further discussion for the Association's response to the Government's Review of the Potato marketing arrangements after 1990, the Chairman reminded Council of the salient aspects to have emerged from earlier discussions to date. Following identification of the agreed preference from among the three options offered in the Review, (and the reported understanding that the Treaty of Rome prevents abolition of the PMB in order to set up a new "Authority" in its place, which the Secretariat was instructed to check) the aim should be to retain a "slimmed-down" form of the Potato Marketing Board with its present powers but with equal producer and merchant/processor/retailer/and end-consumer composition of a maximum twenty-member Board (Option 3). The Chairman urged Council to focus its discussion on the means to further this aim.

Council's ensuing discussion was lively, wide-ranging and prolonged, the agreed recommendations emerging therefrom being summarised and tabulated as follows:-

- (A) Restrict the Board's functions to acreage control and market support only.
- (B) Restore authority to the Board itself, taking it back from the administrative arm.
- (C) "In house" publicity and R. & D. are unaffordable luxuries - either drastically reduce them or scrap them altogether.
- (D) No need for a Basic Area Committee.
- (E) Retain disciplinary committee.
- (F) Scrap all consultative and advisory committees.
- (G) No need for a Head Office to be in London.
- (H) Pay Statutory bodies (e.g. Trading Standards Office) to enforce quality standard right through the marketing chain to its end.
- (I) Retain Merchant Licensing arrangements.
- (J) Strive for more stringent health standards for imports and for imports to comply with U.K. dressing standards.
- (K) Stringent review of collection and distribution of statistical information.
- (L) Restrict administration cost to 30% of present Levy income.
- (M) Engage professional Management Consultants to advise on necessary changes.

In/

In conclusion, the Chairman invited Council Members to pass their further thoughts to the Office Bearers or the Secretariat for incorporation into a proposed draft Response Paper to be prepared in time for consideration at Council's next meeting.

A.O.C.B.: (a) DAFS letter re Conditions of Sale was deferred until Council's next meeting.

(b) Curling Match - Mr. McClung pointed out that the First Leg game in Edinburgh is booked for Tuesday, 13th December, 1988 not Thursday, 15th December, 1988. Mr. Blackmore undertook to include a correction in the next News Letter.

(c) Date of next meeting - After brief discussion Council agreed to hold its next meeting in the Wheel Inn Motor Hotel, Scone at 2 p.m. on Thursday, 24th November, 1988 and its following meeting and the Association's Annual General Meeting at the same Venue on Thursday, 19th January, 1989.

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

J S Brass.