

MINUTES of a MEETING of COUNCIL  
of the SCOTTISH POTATO TRADE  
ASSOCIATION in the Wheel Inn  
Motor Hotel, SCONE at 7 p.m. on  
Monday, 13th MARCH, 1989.

PRESENT: Messrs. J.H. Barr, G.S. Brass, J.P. Deuchar, D.H. Lindsay, D. Maxwell, T. McClung, P. Miller, J. Logan Milne, J.O. Robertson and A.S. Whitehead, with D. Blackmore (Assistant Secretary) in attendance.

The President, Mr. G.S. Brass, took the Chair.

APOLOGIES: Mr. Blackmore intimated apologies for absence on behalf of Messrs. A.W. Bayne, J.E. Cook, J.G.H. Fenton, J.R. McArthur, K.A. McKenzie, I. Melrose, J.M. Swinton and R. David Hunter (Secretary).

MINUTES: The Minutes of the Meeting of Council in Scone on 19th January, 1989 (previously copied to each Member of Council) were taken as read. The Minutes were formally approved and signed to this effect by the Chairman.

MATTERS ARISING: (a) Membership - Mr. Blackmore explained that the total Membership Roll of 105 Members reported to Council's last meeting had included A.D.S. Cluny Ltd. pending clarification following that Company's merger with Stokes Bomford Ltd. into a single membership for subscription purposes. Council ratified the consequent reduction of the Membership Roll to 104 Members.

Formal Nominations for Association Membership were tabled on behalf of Croy Potatoes Ltd., Nairn; Scott & Newman Group, Kirriemuir and Twygen Ltd., Dundee. After due consideration Council accepted the first two nominations with effect from today's date (thereby increasing the Membership Roll to 106 Members) but continued the third Nomination pending clarification of the relevance of tonnage-based subscriptions, Conditions of Sale and the Seed Classification Scheme to this Company's activities.

Mr. Blackmore also reported receipt of a notification of an application for a P.M.B. Seed Merchant Licence by V.T. Consultants Ltd., Abernethy. Due to very short notice provided, no response to this notification had been possible. The matter of such responses would be raised later in this meeting.

(b) Annual Subscriptions - In the calendar month to today's date, Mr. Blackmore reported Subscription payments totalling £6,150 had been received from 59 Members. These had included seven downward and five upward changes between tonnage-brackets, together reducing the total estimated Subscriptions receivable by £55 to £10,550. Including V.A.T., a total of £6,800 was currently on interest-bearing deposit (@ 8½%) with the Bank, interest totalling £21.86 having already been received.

(c) Deputy Vice President - The Chairman regretted that no progress had been made in this matter but it would continue to receive the Office Bearers' pressing attention.

(d) Reviews of Testing and of R. & D. - In the latter respect the Chairman referred to a further letter received from Baroness Trumpington about a month or six weeks ago which Mr. Blackmore undertook to try to trace.

(e)/

(e) Market Prices Bulletin Survey - Presenting the results of the postal survey of Association Members receiving the Bulletin, Mr. Blackmore stated six Members no longer required this service and only one of the remaining recipients required first class mailing. On present costs he calculated a saving of £82.60 will be made during the remainder of the Association's current accounting year and £118 in each full year thereafter.

(f) Inspectorate's 1989 Visit to England - Replying to Council Members' requests the Chairman confirmed N.A.S.P.M. had written a letter, which Mr. Blackmore read out, inviting S.P.T.A. representatives to visit England separately from D.A.F.S.' Inspectorate (not with them, as proposed and agreed by the Joint (NASPM/SPTA) Liason Committee and D.A.F.S. during last October's meetings), in case "commercial considerations might interfere with a detached over-view by either side". Following his telephone conversations with the President of N.A.S.P.M., Mr. John Stephenson, the Chairman stated a joint visit was now currently taking place, Mr. Cook accompanying the Inspectorate earlier today and the Chairman himself travelling overnight tonight to accompany them tomorrow. His other appointments for Wednesday (15th) precluded his acceptance of an invitation from Dalgety Seed Potatoes for an Association representative to visit them in Lincolnshire. At such short notice an alternative representative from among those present could not be arranged.

(g) Insurance Scheme - Mr. Blackmore explained he had deferred contacting the Association's Insurance Brokers pending Mr. Hunter's return to business.

S.S.P.D.C.:

The copies of the Minutes of the meetings of the Scottish Seed Potato Development Council in Edinburgh on 21st December, 1988 and on 9th February, 1989 previously sent to each Member of Council were taken as read. In Mr. Lindsay's view these contained much of importance nowadays and Council confirmed its instruction to copy such future Minutes to each Council Member as soon after receipt as could be matched with other second class mailing.

Concern was expressed among those present in respect of the envisaged implications of the proposals referred to in those S.S.P.D.C. Minutes to form S.E. Growers Ltd. to regulate the production and marketing of the varieties Maris Bard and Pentland Squire. Objections to possible future restriction of varieties that had heretofore enjoyed "open licence" status were voiced, along with fears of a "thin end of the wedge" approach to prospective closed shops in varieties and probable prohibition of planting of lower than S.E.2 class in Scotland after 1990. Prolonged discussion, however, clearly suffered from the lack of "hard" information, but a general view that an S.E. Growers-type of co-operative would be preferable to any additions to existing commercial monopolies emerged.

B.P.T.C.:

The Minutes of the meeting of the British Potato Trades Consortium in London on 6th February, 1989 (previously copied to each Member of Council and taken as read) were duly noted. Mr. Lindsay complimented the area-by-area comprehensiveness of the Minutes. Mr. Blackmore explained the Minutes had been accompanied by an Invoice for S.P.T.A.'s 13% share of the Consortium's estimated 1989 expenditure. After deducting £124.55 in respect of Association's share of 1988 Surplus, the Invoice totalled £132.99 against £300 provided for this item in the Association's own financial budget Estimates. Council duly authorised payment of this Invoice.

J.C.C.:

A P.M.B. Report on the meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee in London 6th February, 1989 previously copied to each Member of Council was also taken as read and noted. Mr. Brass pointed out that paragraph 9(2) thereof was not a true record, in that the Committee had not been advised that the Seed Support Scheme was conditional on (2) urgent N.F.U.S. consideration of early burning down, but in fact had been told the question must first be considered by the Scottish Advisory Committee. In any event, Mr. Brass further explained, he understood the U.K. Working Party had been informed that the English N.F.U. would not now impede renewal of the Seed Support Scheme for a further year.

Mr. Brass also confirmed that D.A.F.S.' Official Review on Early Burning Down had now been issued. In general terms it found no evidence that any measurable benefit that might be expected could justify the high costs of introducing such a Scheme. This had been forwarded to the English N.F.U. and would be discussed during his own ad hoc meetings with their representatives on Wednesday (15th).

Further discussion of the Seed Support Scheme centred on this morning's first-ever implementation of intervention, at £70 per tonne, following operation of the trigger-formula mechanism. The P.M.B.'s intention to take up its March ware contracts, regarded as a necessary tandem requirement, was also welcomed. In the general view the seed buying programme was foreseen as removing about 1,000 tonnes of 30 x 50mm stocks from the market within say four weeks. Single inspections to both D.A.F.S. and P.M.B. requirements would be carried out by D.A.F.S.-instructed P.M.B. Inspectors. There was also a brief discussion of recent movement changes among the P.M.B.'s Scottish staff. In conclusion, in reply to the Chair, Council authorised Office Bearers to submit written responses to misleading arguments contained within the "free market" supporters' Papers on the post-1990 future of the P.M.B.

S.P.C.P.:

A Report (with two relevant Papers) in respect of the meeting of the Seed Potato Consultative Panel in Edinburgh on 21st February, 1989, all previously copied to each Member of Council, were taken as read. Mr. Blackmore reported that in a subsequent letter, D.A.F.S. had since confirmed that Inspections Fees and Label charges for 1989 will be unchanged from their 1988 levels.

In preparation for its March letter to Growers, D.A.F.S.' letter also asked for finalised views by 17th March on (a) Intensity of Inspections and (b) P.C.N. Changes. After careful consideration of Paper (a), Council supported the concept of a short form of Crop Inspection but, rather than leaving this to the discretion of the Inspector and/or the grower, agreed unanimously that before any crop is downgraded a full inspection must have been carried out on it.

In respect of P.C.N. Changes (prohibiting planting of seed crops in parts of fields exhibiting an overall patchwork of infestation), there was sympathy for D.A.F.S.' concern but resistance to such prohibitions at D.A.F.S.' discretion without pre-determined criteria. After full discussion it was accepted that the majority view to support the proposed change would prevail. It was also agreed to ask D.A.F.S. to indicate how many fields and their total acreage would have been prohibited if the proposed change had been operative in Season 1988. It was also expected that the effect of the proposals will be reviewed in the light of experience at the end of the first year.

(a)/

A.O.C.B.:

(a) P.M.B. Merchant Licence Applications - Mr. Blackmore outlined the P.M.B.'s very full reply to the Association's enquiry regarding a Licence issued in 1988. Council accepted that with the full relevant information provided to the Board by the applicant not being available to Council, the Association's comments (if any) were most unlikely to be decisive. Nevertheless, it was agreed to be useful to continue to receive notification of applications and Council re-affirmed its instructions to respond to each notification in the usual standardised terms.

(b) Date of next Meeting - Council confirmed its next meeting will be held in today's venue at 2 p.m. on Thursday, 11th May, 1989 and Mr. Blackmore undertook to make the usual arrangements.

In concluding the Meeting, the Chairman again thanked those present, particularly the high proportion of whom had undertaken considerable travelling to attend, for ensuring that the first experimental evening meeting had been worthwhile.

*J.S. Brass.*