

MINUTES of a MEETING of COUNCIL of
THE SCOTTISH POTATO TRADE ASSOCIATION
in the Ice Rink, PERTH at 2 p.m. on
Thursday, 25th APRIL, 1991.

PRESENT: Messrs. G.S. Brass, R. Doig, J.M. Marshall, D. Maxwell, J.R. McArthur, W. Nicoll, J.O. Robertson and J.M. Swinton, with R.D. Hunter (Secretary) and D. Blackmore (Assistant) in attendance.

The President, Mr. J.R. McArthur, took the Chair and welcomed those present to the meeting.

APOLOGIES: Mr. Blackmore intimated apologies for absence received from Messrs. J.E. Cook, J.P. Deuchar, J.G.H. Fenton, A.C. Galbraith, J.B. Hollywood, D.H. Lindsay, I. Melrose, K.A. McKenzie, D. Smith, D.Y. Stewart, Jnr., and A.S. Whitehead.

MINUTES: The Minutes of the meeting of Council in Perth on 8th March, 1991 (previously copied to each Member of Council) were taken as read. Mr. Maxwell pointed out that in the penultimate line of the second paragraph on page two thereof, "A.C. Adamson" should be "A.C. Anderson". Subject to this alteration the Minutes were duly approved and signed to this effect by the Chairman.

MATTERS ARISING: (a) Council/Membership Liaison - Council considered a Memo prepared and pre-copied by the Secretariat. It was agreed that the limitations of News Letter communication probably contributes to a disappointing level of Membership "feed-back" into Council. To overcome this it had been proposed that each Council Member act as a direct link with three or four specifically named Association Members. From a listing on a geographical basis, those present suggested a number of changes and it was agreed the Secretariat obtain each other Council Member's approval of their own listing before notifying each Association Member individually which Member of Council is to act as their direct two-way link.

(b) Agra-Europe - Mr. Blackmore reported that the News Letter Item had not produced the necessary three new Subscribers to secure 50% discount on the price of this publication. Further brief discussion provided additional possible new Subscribers, which he undertook to approach.

(c) Press Fund - Mr. Hunter reported that advertising authorised up to £500 had actually cost £367.50. Bank interest of £82.16 had been received, so that the balance remaining in hand at today's date amounted to £1,960.14.

The Chairman reported that in implementation of Council's instructions at its last meeting, he and Mr. Doig with the Secretariat had met with Mr. Colin Ley, of Colin Ley Consultants to discuss possible revival of the Association's Press Activities. After recounting Mr. Ley's list of Clients and the services he provides, the Chairman explained that a "pay as you go" basis had not been acceptable to Mr. Ley who stipulated that he worked on a "retainer fee" basis only. He suggested the Association consider an initial six month trial period at a fee of £250 per month.

In the ensuing discussion Council favoured resumption of its Press Activities while sharing Mr. Brass' caution regarding financing of possible extension of the suggested trial period. Without deciding whether the Press Fund's original voluntary funding should be repeated, perhaps assisted from Membership Subscriptions, it was accepted that any renewal will depend on the results achieved during the trial period. Council resolved to engage Colin Ley Consultants on the terms described and the Secretary undertook to arrange this.

(d) Membership and Subscriptions - Mr. Blackmore reported that against budgetted Subscriptions of £11,300 from 95 Members, five resignations and seven tonnage-bracket migrations had caused a shortfall of £320, the remaining £10,980 from 90 Members having all been received by 2nd April, 1991.

Council also considered a pre-circulated list of Registered Merchants who are not Association Members. Following discussion it was agreed each Council Member would approach any of these listed merchants to offer assistance in applications for Association Membership. It was also agreed that supportive material prepared by the Secretariat be revised by Mr. Colin Ley and be available on request.

(e) Meeting with PMB Licensing Committee - Reminding Council of this meeting which he is to attend in London on 29th April, 1991 the Chairman asked for points which Council Members wished him to raise. In reply Mr. Doig explained that the licensing system originated to administer government payments to growers. Although these payments ceased long ago, the system has continued for the purpose of ensuring growers will be paid, a purpose it is manifestly impossible to guarantee. In his own view, the cost of maintaining the system would be better used for crop support. Discussion showed Council did not fully support this view but nevertheless the Chairman undertook to report it to the Licensing Committee.

While agreeing that freedom from default cannot be guaranteed, some present felt that at least a Licence holder had already been vetted by the Board although this does not render further enquiry checks unnecessary. Discussion revealed little faith in the system's ability either to detect impending defaults or to apply criteria even-handedly. The Chairman noted one or two suggested possible changes to discuss and to ask for a note of the cost of the Licensing system and the number of people it requires.

S.S.P.D.C.:

The pre-copied Minutes of a meeting of the Scottish Seed Potato Development Council at East Craigs on 22nd March, 1991 were noted. Mr. Doig explained it had been brought to his notice these Minutes recorded that an SPTA-nominated Member had favoured remuneration of SSPDC Members, whereas the Minutes of SPTA Council's earlier meeting (at which the SPTA nominee had not been present) had formally recorded opposition to such remuneration. Mr. Blackmore pointed out that the SSPDC meeting had taken place before the SPTA Minutes had been circularised. While re-affirming the independence of the Association's nominees, Council recommended the necessary steps be taken to avoid a future repetition of such a situation. Council also noted that the Agenda for the next SSPDC meeting, at Mylnefield on 2nd May, 1991 had still to be received.

The/

J.C.C.:

The Chairman sought Council's instructions to assist him in his representational capacity at the next meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee in London on 9th May, to discuss the Ware Standards for maincrop. Bearing in mind the strong pressure to increase the top riddle size from 45mm. to 50mm., Council confirmed its view that grading requirements should be fixed by the buyer, accurate sizes markings on bags being the only regulatory need. On this basis the Board, like any other buyer, should only prescribe its grading requirements for stocks it is to buy. Council also agreed this view should be conveyed to Mr. Colin Ley for his possible attention.

W.P.I.A.C.:

Council took note of a pre-copied PMB Report on a meeting of the Ware Potato Imports Advisory Committee in London on 13th March, 1991 at which it had not been possible for a representative of the Association to be present.

ENTERTAIN-
MENTS
COMMITTEE:

The Chairman reported on meetings of the Entertainments Committee on 22nd March, 1991 and again earlier today. The prices of tickets for the Association's Golf Outing to Ladybank Golf Course on Monday, 10th June, 1991 had now been fixed and full details will be circularised to all Association Members shortly.

Council also considered pre-copied details of a proposed Clay Pigeon Shoot. It was suggested this could take the form of a Merchants v. Farmers Match in early-August, 1991. It was agreed a provisional booking be sought and details circularised to all Association Members inviting support from about twenty participants.

Details has also been obtained regarding a possible Association Outing to the Knockhill Racing Circuit. Council again agreed all interested Association Members be invited to contact the Secretariat for further details.

S.P.A.C.:

The Chairman also reported briefly on a meeting of the Seed Potato Advisory Committee which he and Mr. Doig had attended in Edinburgh on 28th March, 1991. Principally devoted to historical data, details were given of transfers of Quota into and out of Scotland which showed a small net loss to Scotland of about 100ha. A Contract to supply 15,000 tonnes of Scottish seed to the U.S.S.R. had also been announced and Council briefly discussed loadings under this Contract currently taking place.

MEETING
WITH DAFS:

The Chairman reported that he had been invited to attend a meeting called by the Department in Edinburgh on Tuesday, 16th April, 1991 in connection with a series of complaints from the Cambridge area. In essence, these involved Scottish SE class Maris Piper Seed, samples of which the buyers had submitted to the National Institute of Agricultural Botany (NIAB) to be tested for virus. Results of these tests alleged that in excess of 40% infection had been found. If sustained, these results (which are being given maximum media coverage), could have potentially serious implications for the Scottish Seed Potato Industry, the Seed Potato Classification Scheme and the High Grade Seed Area. The Department is working extremely hard to limit damage to the industry pending the results of its own tests, which take three weeks to complete.

Council's/

Council's prolonged discussion was much hampered by a clear lack of factual or authoritatively reliable information. It was agreed the Association must do its utmost on behalf of its Members and the Industry. As a first step the Secretary was instructed to write to ask NIAB to give factual information in early replies to the most important questions raised during Council's consideration.

A.O.C.B.: (a) Date of Next Meeting - Council confirmed its intention to meet again in Dewar's Ice Rink, Perth at 2 p.m. on Thursday, 4th July, 1991 and the Secretariat was instructed to make the necessary arrangements.

However, in respect of the above Cambridge-area complaints (and bearing in mind that a further meeting of the Seed Potato Consultative Panel expected in May may now be delayed), it was agreed a special meeting of Council before 4th July is a strong possibility.

The meeting concluded with a Vote of Thanks to the Chair.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "R. W. Lister". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the page.