

MINUTES of a MEETING of COUNCIL of
THE SCOTTISH POTATO TRADE ASSOCIATION
in the Ice Rink, PERTH at 2 p.m. on
Wednesday, 4th SEPTEMBER, 1991.

PRESENT: Messrs. G.S. Brass, J.P. Deuchar, R. Doig, A.C. Galbraith, J.M. Marshall, D. Maxwell, I. Melrose, J.L. Milne, J.R. McArthur, K.A. McKenzie, W. Nicoll, J.O. Robertson, D.Y. Stewart, Jnr. 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: The Secretary intimated apologies for absence on behalf of Messrs. J.E. Cook, J.G.H. Fenton, J.B. Hollywood, D. Smith and A.S. Whitehead.

MINUTES: The Minutes of the meeting of Council in Perth on 3rd July, 1991 previously copied to each Member of Council were taken as read. They were formally approved and signed to this effect by the Chairman.

MATTERS
ARISING:

(a) Council/Membership Liaison - The Secretary reported that circularisation of individual arrangements had been duly completed. One instance of successful liaison had been reported and further feed-back from Council Members on other instances will be most helpful.

(b) Agra Europe - The Secretary also reported that an Association Group Subscription Scheme had been successfully established, with six founder Members each subscribing £343.75 for the year to 30th June, 1992. Further participants will be welcomed at any time to reduce this cost still further.

(c) Membership - The Secretary further reported receipt of two written Nominations for each of two prospective Association Members. After due consideration Council agreed to accept these Nominations and to enrol Rush Potatoes Ltd. (with a Scottish office in Ladybank, Fife) and Paul Thomson Potatoes Ltd. (with a Scottish office in Montrose, Angus) into Association Membership with effect from 1st September, 1991. It was further decided each shall be charged the minimum £100 Subscription for 1991.

In respect of a PMB notified application by Messrs. A.F. Murray & Co., Brechin for a Seed Merchant's Licence, Council agreed the Secretariat should seek an assurance that the applicant will require to meet all the normal financial criteria.

(d) P.M.B. Licensing Committee - Pre-circularised copies of the PMB's Report on the meeting with Trade representatives in London on 29th April, 1991 were taken as read. Following discussion the Secretariat was instructed to request a note of the minimum financial criteria that a Licence applicant must meet.

(e) Entertainments Committee - The Secretary explained a further meeting had still to be arranged. Matters requiring attention included a proposed outing to Knockhill Motor Racing facilities and the Association's 1991 Dinner and Dance. These matters will be given early priority.

(f)/

(f) Virus Problems - This matter was deferred for inclusion under Item 6 of today's Agenda.

(g) Press Matters - The Chairman reported that a meeting with the Association's Press Consultant has been arranged for 6th September to ensure maximum publicity for the satisfactory results of the very exacting inspections of this year's crops of Maris Piper. With timing for the PMB's Harvesting Demonstration 11th and 12th September very much in mind, the Chairman also invited Council's suggestions for other topics and priorities for Press and publicity material.

In replies, Mr. McKenzie urged maximum effort to improve the Association's public image and to warn of possible supply/availability problems in certain varieties; Mr. Logan Milne pointed out that the majority of complaints are made on stocks delivered towards the end of the planting period; Mr. Brass highlighted the severe problem of having to deliver the bulk of seed tonnage in the last few weeks of the planting period, especially when dormancy break had already made tuber handling much more difficult.

S.S.P.D.C.:

The Minutes of a meeting of the Scottish Seed Potato Development Council in Invergowrie on 12th July, 1991 (which had been pre-copied to all Association Council Members) were taken as read. Mr. Swinton stated his view that the Minutes of the preceding meeting (on 13th June, 1991), to which he had formally objected, had still not been correctly amended. He explained he had written separate letters objecting that (a) his own reservation had not been recorded and (b) that the Annual Report was not a "Matter Arising" from the Minutes of the previous meeting. In reply, Mr. Robertson confirmed these letters had not been tabled at the meeting on 12th July (at which Mr. Swinton himself had been unable to be present).

In further explanation Mr. Swinton reported that an un-dated Draft Annual Report had been circulated to the 1990 Council, with seven days allowed for objections under Development Council procedures. He added that the 1990 Council's appointments expired and a new 1991 Council was appointed ^{prior to the publication of the 1990 Report.} ~~before the next meeting took place.~~ Mr. Swinton also reported that one of the new Council Members was told it was not competent for him to object to any part of the 1990 Annual Report. He explained that an amended 1990 Annual Report, along with the 1990 Accounts, were submitted for Ministerial approval on 13th June, 1991. A copy thereof has subsequently been sent to each levy payer. Mr. Swinton stated ¹⁹⁹⁰ ~~1991~~ that at no time had the Annual Report and Accounts for ~~1991~~ been submitted to, approved by, or formally adopted by, the Development Council itself.

The ensuing further very prolonged discussions included the salient topics of SSPDC's perceived procedural shortcomings, inaccuracies and omissions from Minutes of its meetings, diminished confidence in the competence of its Chairman, together with widespread and very pronounced objections to continuing financial and other support of S.E. Growers Ltd. from SSPDC levies. Discussion of tactical responses to these problems included suggestions which ranged from further correspondence, closer co-ordination between nominated appointees, the en bloc resignation of those appointees to possible with-holding of levy payments.

Council/

Council eventually decided to write a further letter to the SSPDC Chairman before tomorrow's SSPDC Meeting. The Secretary was instructed to draft a suitable letter covering the principal points of concern which, after approval by the Office Bearers, would also be faxed to all six Association nominated Members of SSPDC Council before that same meeting and to Mr. Whitelaw (SOAFD) for information.

Further concluding discussion, regarding the possibility of obtaining the Opinion of Queen's Counsel in respect of SSPDC's activities in relation to its statutory powers, decided to keep this option in mind.

J.C.C.:

Pre-circulated copies of the Minutes of a meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee in London on 16th July, 1991 were taken as read. Mr. McArthur pointed out that SPTA and NFUS representatives had been the only dissenting voices to oppose the eventually recommended target area for 1992. He also explained the PMB Invoice, Statement and two relative letters regarding an Association contribution of £871.87 towards the remuneration of the Chairman of the JCC which had been pre-copied to each Member of Council. In a short discussion Council declined to authorise any such contribution.

S.O.A.F.D.:

The Chairman reported having met with Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department staff in Edinburgh on 26th August, 1991. He gave details of the results provided to him, in confidence meantime, on the inspections and leaflet-testing of 1991 crops of Maris Piper. Council agreed the very high percentage of crops in which absolutely no leaf roll virus at all had been detected was most encouraging, fully vindicating the Inspection Scheme and placing earlier adverse criticism in proper perspective. Mr. Hunter also pointed out that the Seed Potato Regulations specifically require daughter crop tolerances to be determined by "the number of growing plants which show symptoms".

J.L.C.:

Pre-circulated copies of a Report on a meeting of the Joint (NASPM/SPTA) Liaison Committee in Edinburgh on 28th August, 1991 were taken as read. Discussion noted that SPTA is to seek SOAFD views on reduction of the arbitrary 14-day period for requested inspections of consignments after delivery to match the longstanding complaints periods specified in the commercial contracts' Conditions of Sale. It was agreed that the next Association News Letter will include advice to Members to adhere strictly to the Conditions of Sale. The Chairman also reported having written a letter on his company's notepaper to "Arable Farming" in response to a challenge to the Scottish seed industry published by a reader.

A.O.C.B.:

(a) Annual Election to Council - Reminding Council that Association Rules require six of its Members to retire each year, Mr. Hunter reported that Messrs. G.S. Brass (Past President), J.G.H. Fenton, J.L. Milne, J.O. Robertson and A.S. Whitehead will each reach the end of their terms of Office on 31st October, 1991 on which date also Mr. W. Nicoll will reach the end of a year of co-opted service. Council instructed that the usual arrangements inviting Nominations of Candidates for election to fill these six vacancies be followed.

(b)/

(b) Pro forma growing contract - The Secretary also reported receipt of a letter from a Member enquiring whether the Association had formulated standard conditions for growing potatoes under contract. In discussion it was Council's view that the variations of circumstances in which such contracts are made are such that standard terms would be most difficult to prescribe and to apply. In the light of the very limited demand it was agreed an attempt should not be made.

(c) Maximum Residue Levels of Pesticides - The Chairman reported that in response to official invitation for comment on proposed amendments, the Association had submitted views on the effects of reducing the permitted level of 2-aminobutane in ware and stock-feed potatoes from 50 parts per million to 1 p.p.m.

(d) Date of next meeting - Council agreed to hold its next meeting in the Ice Rink, Perth at 2 p.m. on Wednesday, 9th October, 1991 and the Secretariat was instructed to make the necessary arrangements.

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

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "R. Allister".