

MINUTES of a MEETING of COUNCIL of the
SCOTTISH POTATO TRADE ASSOCIATION in
the Wheel Inn Motor Hotel, SCONE at
2.45 p.m. on Thursday, 9th JANUARY,
1992.

PRESENT:

Messrs. A.W. Bayne, J.E. Cook, J.P. Deuchar, R. Doig, D.H. Lindsay, J.M. Marshall, D. Maxwell, J. Logan Milne, J.R. McArthur, K.A. McKenzie, A.B. Pullar, J.O. Robertson, D.Y. Stewart, Jnr., J.M. Swinton and A.S. Whitehead, with D. Blackmore (Assistant Secretary) in attendance. By invitation from the immediately preceding Annual General Meeting of Members, Messrs. J.M. Harley and D. Harley (Kirkforthar Potato Co. Ltd.), J. Macfarlane (Scott & Newman Ltd.), D. Peebles (Dalgety Produce-Scotland) and G. Smillie (J. & E. Smillie (Potato Merchants) Ltd.) remained present at Council's meeting.

The President, Mr. R. Doig, took the Chair and welcomed those present to the meeting. Expressing his sincere regret that he had been unable to attend Council's previous meeting which had elected him to the Presidency of the Association, he thanked Council for its confidence in him and undertook to devote his best endeavours to this Office.

APOLOGIES:

Mr. Blackmore intimated apologies for absence received from Messrs. G.S. Brass, J.G.H. Fenton, A.C. Galbraith, J.B. Hollywood, I. Melrose, D. Smith and R.D. Hunter (Secretary).

MINUTES:

The Minutes of the Meeting of Council in Perth on 11th November, 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) Merchant Licensing - Deferred from the previous meeting for his views on this matter, the Chairman explained these were well known to Council and he remained convinced that better use could be made of the resources which the PMB expended on maintaining its merchant licensing system.

(b) Annual Dinner and Dance - The Chairman reported that the Function held on 13th December, 1991 had been very successful. 154 people had been present and their generosity during the usual Raffle had provided a well-publicised surplus of £1,050 for the Cancer Research Campaign.

(c) Press Matters - The Chairman referred to the earlier discussion during the immediately preceding Annual General Meeting. During renewed discussion it was felt that there would likely be an even greater need for an Association press capability during the current year and it was agreed that a single contact point is preferred. Accepting that replenishment of the Press Fund could only be on a voluntary basis, it was suggested that Members holding a seed licence be invited to donate £50 for this purpose and Members holding a ware licence only be invited to donate £20. This suggestion was formally adopted and the Secretariat was instructed to circularise all Association Members accordingly.

(d)/

(d) Plant Breeders' Rights - The Chairman reported that in their acknowledgement of receipt of the Association's views, MAFF had given an assurance that these will be fully taken into account when further considering the matter. From the meeting it was also reported there are indications from Brussels that royalties will be charged on farm-saved seed at between 20% and 80% of community rates from 1996 onwards.

(e) British Standards for potato boxes - The Chairman reported that in reply to the Association's enquiry, draft technical specifications had now been received. These are 27 pages long, for which reason they have not been copied to each Member of Council. He understood the PMB had originally sought such standards. He explained that he found them confusing and extremely complex and since it is clear the Association cannot influence them, his view is they must be accepted.

(f) E.C. Potato Regime - There having been no further developments to report, this matter was continued until Council's next meeting.

(g) Co-option to Council - Mr. Blackmore reminded Council that co-option of Mr. Nicoll following the 1990 Elections Ballot reflected a particular voting result which had not been repeated in 1991. It was agreed no further action on this enquiry be taken.

S.S.P.D.C.: Minutes of meetings of the Scottish Seed Potato Development Council on 5th September, 10th October and 13th November, 1991 having been pre-copied to each Member of (SPTA) Council, were taken as read and noted. The Chairman reported receipt of a letter from that Organisation with a draft protocol agreement from St. Petersburg. The letter explained that whereas the Russians had proposed the SSPDC as the Scottish signatory to the protocol, it may transpire that a commercial agency is better placed to sign and implement it. Mr. Smillie provided additional information from his participation in the visit which led to that protocol. Following full discussion the meeting agreed unanimously that it would be undesirable for the SSPDC to be the Scottish signatory to a protocol agreement with commercial implications.

During subsequent discussion it was reported that as explained in the Development Council's Newsletter dated 31st December, 1991, S.E. Growers Ltd.'s Directors have decided to seek its Members' approval of plans to complete a phased separation of its offices and staff from those of the Development Council by 30th June, 1992. Today's meeting welcomed this announcement with unanimous support. In the light of further discussion which indicated an attempt to amend the Directors' plans, it was agreed that the Association Council/Membership liaison arrangements should be used to re-inforce encouragement of Association Members of S.E. Growers Ltd. to support the complete separation plans at S.E. Growers Ltd.'s forthcoming Annual General Meeting. A question on Council's response to possible nomination of S.E. Growers Ltd. for Association Membership was briefly considered without decision.

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J.C.C.:

The Minutes and Report of the meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee held in London on 12th November, 1991 which had been copied to each Member of Council were taken as read. Mr. McArthur, the Association's representative at that meeting, highlighted the progress towards improving the accuracy of predicted yields, the benefits of which are planned to be available in time for the Committee's Quota recommendations meeting in May, 1992.

S.P.A.C.:

Council also noted the content of the pre-circularised copies of the Minutes of the meeting of the Seed Potato Advisory Committee in London on 4th December, 1991. In a rapid resume, Mr. McArthur explained Messrs. J.W. Hay and J.S. Cruickshank had been re-elected unanimously as the Committee's Chairman and Vice Chairman respectively; the bulk of the meeting had been devoted to historical matters and he mentioned (and corrected) several inaccuracies in the quoted statistics therein.

ELECTORAL
REFORM
SOCIETY:

The meeting considered a letter of enquiry sent as instructed, with a reply (enclosing details of charges) received from the Electoral Reform Society which had been pre-copied to each Member of Council. A view was expressed that the charges appeared a little less than were expected. The Chairman asked whether a Poll was still a good idea. In reply, it was felt that the questions to be posed and the timing of a Poll would be the critical factors. It was felt the appropriate time would be when the next official review of continuation of the SSPDC falls due. To resolve some confusion the Secretariat was instructed to verify when this will be. It was also suggested that the matter be kept under review and that the Association should engage the Electoral Reform Society only if an official Poll is again refused as part of the next review. Pending resolution of when that is due, the matter was deferred until the next meeting of Council.

S.O.A.F.D.:

The Chairman introduced the consultative Paper issued by the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department on possible changes to the Seed Potato Classification Scheme, which the Secretariat had pre-copied to each Member of Council. Discussion resumed the broad format of the consideration given to this matter by the immediately preceding Annual General Meeting today. Views offered varied widely between total opposition and a call to refer the proposal to an immediate meeting of the Department's full Seed Potato Consultative Panel; support for any improvement of the seed industry's image; an awareness of greater urgency in some respects and a perception that at least one of the proposals appeared to involve lower standards for the sake of E.C. harmonisation ends.

Following this rather prolonged discussion the Chairman's proposal that each paragraph of the Paper be considered in turn was adopted. Paras. 1-11 were agreed to introductory/explanatory background material and were accepted as such.

Para. 12 - The meeting agreed that "the (inspections) Scheme should continue to be based on low tolerances for diseases". Whether the "Elisa" test should be incorporated in the Scheme or replace the visual basis of the Scheme was unresolved and although discussion seemed to favour retention of a visual inspections Scheme, as concluded in

Para. 13/

Para. 13 -, there was a call for control of higher grades to include "Elisa" testing for all pre-basic down to SE1 class seed. There was also a call for plant population problems to be tidied up.

Para. 16 - There was a strong call to ascertain whether "the early (May/June) virus spread" referred to was from seed or from ware crops sources and it was unanimously agreed and noted that early burning down is ineffective.

Para. 16.1 - The meaning of this sub-paragraph was not understood and

Para. 16.2 was unanimously unacceptable, the Department's own Paper of some two years ago on this topic being cited in support.

Para. 19 - without definition of the "sanctions" referred to, the meeting was unable to express a view.

Para. 21.1 and 2 - These two sub-paragraphs were noted (pending definition required for para. 19 above) with one firm disagreement with the stated recommendations.

Para. 22 - Planting requirements for ware crops were widely felt to be neither enforced nor policed. The meaning of the recommendation was not fully understood and there was pronounced concern whether sanctions would be applied if the "source" is a neighbour's ware crop. Some regarded this recommendation as unworkable.

Para. 26 - It was firmly felt that this recommendation would worsen, rather than improve, the present arrangements and a nil tolerance for VTSC was regarded as impractical.

Para. 27 - The meeting was nevertheless not in favour of differentiation.

Para. 29 - The first two sentences were regarded unanimously as full justification for total rejection of compulsory burning down. The meeting did not reach a decision on the recommendation.

Para. 30 - Pronounced concern was expressed on the effect the first two sentences would have on the spread of blackleg. It was also queried what the extra visits would be looking for and it was agreed that such visits must all be grower-accompanied. The meeting decided that comparative year-on-year crop maturity levels must be considered and taken into account.

Para. 32 - The Chairman explained that the VTSC Growers Association is to provide a detailed response to these recommendations which the meeting noted without decision.

Para. 33 - The meeting agreed that its consideration of determination of "field age" would first require the proportion of failures of 2-year (VT1 to SE1) and 3-year (VT1 to VT2 to SE1) crops to be known.

Para. 35 - The meeting sought confirmation that this paragraph referred to labelling for approved stocks.

Discussion concluded with a call for more Department resources to be directed to prevention of fraudulent consignments. It was agreed to seek an early meeting to discuss these responses with SOAFD and to report back to Council before the next Consultative Panel meeting.

MINIMUM
RESIDUES:

The matter was deferred for further discussion at the next meeting of Council.

(a)/

A.O.C.B.:

(a) Complaints period inspections - Mr. Blackmore reported that the Department's reply to the Association's enquiry regarding the possibility of reconciling the official inspections period for complaints with the contractual period had now come to hand. The Secretary is giving this fuller consideration before giving Council his further views.

(b) Membership - Mr. Blackmore reported that the requisite two written nominations each of both Ian Glen (Grangehall) Ltd., Montrose and Messrs. A.F. Murray & Co., Forfar for Association Membership had now been received. After due consideration Council accepted these nominations and duly enrolled both nominees. Mr. Blackmore explained that following removal of Angus Produce Ltd. (now ceased trading) and Hollywood Potatoes Ltd. (after merging with Beeson Group Ltd.) from the Membership Roll, the total number of enrolled Members now remained unchanged at 93.

(c) Timetable of meetings - Under pressure of time this item was deferred until Council's next meeting, which it was agreed will take place on Friday, 6th March, 1992.

The meeting then concluded.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Murray', is written in a cursive style across the lower middle of the page.