

MINUTES of a MEETING of COUNCIL the
SCOTTISH POTATO TRADE ASSOCIATION in
the Ice Rink, PERTH at 11 a.m. on
Friday, 6th MARCH, 1992

PRESENT:

Messrs. G.S. Brass, R. Doig, J.G.H. Fenton, A.C. Galbraith, J.B. Hollywood, J.M. Marshall, J.L. Milne, J.R. McArthur, K.A. McKenzie, A.B. Pullar, J.O. Robertson, D.Y. Stewart Jnr., D. Smith, J.M. Swinton and A.S. Whitehead, with D. Blackmore (Assistant Secretary) in attendance.

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

APOLOGIES:

Mr. Blackmore intimated apologies for absence on behalf of Messrs. J.E. Cook, J.P. Deuchar, D. Maxwell, I. Melrose and R.D. Hunter (Secretary).

MINUTES:

The Minutes of the meeting of Council in Scone on 9th January, 1992 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) Press Matters - Mr. Blackmore read out a letter received from a Member in response to the invitation for voluntary donations to the Association's Press Fund. The letter suggested that to avoid duplication of expenses, the Association should seek to use Press facilities funded by the SSPDC out of levies which many Association Members already bore. While accepting the logic of the suggestion, yet firmly favouring retention of an independent capability, Council agreed the Association's Press Officers should consider liaising with the SSPDC's Press Committee and report back to Council.

Mr. Blackmore reported that up to this morning, donations to the Press Fund totalling £635.00 had been received from 15 of the 47 Members who had now paid their Membership Subscriptions, increasing the Press Fund balance to £1,088.16. Council agreed that a request for those Members who had not sent a donation to reconsider doing so should be included in the next Association News Letter.

(b) E.C. Potato Regime - Following the Chairman's brief comment on recently reported remarks by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gummer), Council had nothing to report on this topic and it was deferred until Council's next meeting.

(c) Electoral Reform Society - Mr. Blackmore reported having verified that the current continuation of the SSPDC expires on 4th December, 1995. After a short discussion it was agreed to keep in mind to make early plans for a Poll of Levy-payers in readiness for the next Ministerial review.

(d) SOAFD proposals re SPCS changes - It was agreed to deal with this matter as part of the Report on the Seed Potato Consultative Panel Meeting later this morning.

(e) Minimum Residue Levels - Mr. Galbraith explained that residue levels are a statutory requirement under the Food Safety Act. The Secretariat was instructed to procure a copy of this Act as a first step to inclusion of an advisory item in the next Association News Letter.

(f)/

(f) Complaints periods inspections - Mr. Blackmore read out a reply letter received from SOAFD regarding possible co-ordination of the 10 days contractual and the 14 days regulations periods for inspections of seed potatoes complaints. He pointed out that the letter fully supported Mr. Hunter's own view that these inspections are quite distinctly and separately based. Although the logic given in the letter for adoption of the 14 days regulations period might be debated, the fundamental difference of purposes remained irrefutable. In this light Mr. Hunter's advice to Council was that further correspondence with SOAFD in this matter would be unproductive.

Council's discussion also made clear that the contractual period is "within (3 or) 10 days of delivery" whereas the regulations period is "within 14 days of receipt of a complaint". Council agreed the content of SOAFD's letter be forwarded to NASPM for information.

(g) Membership and Subscriptions - Mr. Blackmore also read out a letter from Robert Laing, Esq., Broughty Ferry, resigning from membership of the Association. Mr. Blackmore explained this reduced the Membership Roll total to 92 Members and he added that 47 of these (i.e. 51%) had already paid their Annual Subscriptions before the start of today's meeting. In reply to the Chair he confirmed this rapid response was in line with earlier years' experience. Four upward and three downward bracket changes, coupled with the resignation reported, had together reduced the total estimated Subscriptions receivable by £44 to £11,855 of which £6,319 (i.e. 53.3%) has been received.

(h) Timetable of Council Meetings - Council considered a tabled timetable of suggested meeting dates. Following discussion, Council agreed its future meetings this year will take place on Thursday, 7th May; Tuesday, 30th June; Thursday, 27th August; Thursday, 15th October and Tuesday, 10th November and that the next Annual General Meeting of Members will be held on Thursday, 7th January, 1993.

S.S.P.D.C.:

The Minutes of a meeting of the Scottish Seed Potato Development Council on 19th December, 1991, having been pre-copied to each Member of (SPTA) Council, were taken as read. Attention was drawn to the first paragraph on page 3 thereof regarding SSPDC setting up companies in the future. Some anxiety was voiced on its possible importance since the Minutes had now been approved by SSPD Council but, as was pointed out, the paragraph merely reported a personal view and approval of the Minutes does not elevate that view to the status of SSPDC policy.

Mr. Hollywood asked if a recent SSPDC Press Release proposing gifts of Scottish seed potatoes to Russia and Ukraine had had prior SSPD Council approval. Mr. Swinton stated such approval had not been given, the Press Release having been simultaneously faxed to one SSPDC Press Committee Member and then to all SSPD Council Members. Mr. Fenton shared a dislike of the Release's implication of the existence of a 2%-3% surplus of seed in Scotland. Mr. Hollywood urged that great care must be exercised to avoid misinterpretation and/or misquotation of SSPDC Press Releases. In further discussion the restriction of dissemination of trading opportunities to Members/

Members of S.E. Growers only, to the disadvantage of all other SSPDC levy-payers, was highlighted. Mr. Swinton stated his intention to raise both of these matters at the next SSPD Council meeting.

It was confirmed to today's meeting that S.E. Growers Ltd. has decided that its financial separation from SSPDC will be completed by 30th June, 1992 and its geographic separation from SSPDC will be completed by 30th June, 1993. Council welcomed these decisions and agreed Mr. Swinton be strongly commended for his strenuous efforts in this achievement. SPTA Members of SSPD Council were asked to monitor progress to ensure that these deadlines are met and that all costs proper to be reimbursed to SSPDC are duly received.

S.O.A.F.D.:

A Report on a meeting between Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department staff and Association representatives in Edinburgh on 16th January, 1992 regarding proposed changes in the Seed Potato Classification Scheme, which Report had been pre-copied to each Member of Council, was taken as read. Copies of a further Report, on the meeting of the Seed Potato Consultative Panel in Edinburgh on 2nd March, 1992 which had included the same topic, were tabled today. Council agreed to deal with both Reports together.

During discussion Mr. McKenzie expressed strong reservation that a provision for compulsory burning down will have to be watched very carefully. Mr. Galbraith also urged care that Scottish ware growers are not to be further disadvantaged vis-a-vis their English counterparts. The problem of nil tolerances was also discussed, but no decision was reached. In respect of indicated discontinuation of merchants' traditional 10-days latitude for submission of crop inspections applications, Council agreed to raise no objections provided such applications are accepted by SOAFD as indicative of intended, not actual, plantings. In discussion of the indicated rate of increase in costs, it was pointed out that label charges had been increased from £1.80 to £2.80 per tonne about two years ago. It was agreed to check that this charge will not be subject to the indicated rate of increase. Mr. Blackmore was instructed to convey the latter two further comments to SOAFD by 13th March. Mr. Galbraith also pointed out that as an agent in alerting procedures, SSPDC must alert all growers and not restrict this to Members of S.E. Growers only.

J.C.C.:

Both Mr. McArthur's Report and the PMB's draft Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee in London on 10th February, 1992 had been pre-copied to each Member of Council and were taken as read. In enlarging comment Mr. McArthur explained that Basic Area remains the most controversial topic in E.C. terms by which U.K. growers are disadvantaged by about £300 per hectare against their European competitors.

In readiness for the next JCC meeting, Mr. McArthur sought an SPTA policy on ownership of Quota/Basic Area and in particular, who should own "title" to it. After a very full discussion it became clear that the majority view was in favour of sale and purchase of Quota only (not leasing) by those who complete the forms. It was also felt that non-growing holders should be required to sell their Quota/Basic Area.

A.O.C.B./

A.O.C.B.:

(a) Association Investments - Mr. Blackmore reported that the Association's holding of £2,800 10% Treasury Stock 1992 had been redeemed at par on its maturity date on 21st February, 1992. Having cost £2,400.92 this had provided a tax-free Capital Gain of £399.02. The Association's Stockbrokers have recommended re-investment of the proceeds in 9% Conversion Stock 2000. After a brief discussion Council decided to refer this matter to the Chairman's Committee for consideration.

(b) SSPDC visit to Russia/Ukraine - Mr. Swinton reported Mr. Bethell's expressed intention to invite the Association's President and the Convenor of the NFUS' Potatoes Committee to join the next SSPDC visit to the C.I.S. in an auditing/observer capacity. In reply, the Chairman confirmed he had received such an invitation which he was considering.

(c) Date of next meeting - Council confirmed its earlier decision to hold its next meeting at 2 p.m. on Thursday, 7th May, 1992 and Mr. Blackmore was instructed to make the usual arrangements with Perth Ice Rink.

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

Sp. Swinton