

MINUTE of MEETING between Members of the JOINT LIAISON COMMITTEE together with the SCOTTISH FARMERS' UNION with THE SCOTTISH OFFICE AGRICULTURE & FISHERIES DEPARTMENT held at PENTLAND HOUSE, EDINBURGH, at 2.30 p.m. on WEDNESDAY, 20th OCTOBER, 1993.

PRESENT:

S.P.T.A. Messrs. A. Pullar, J. Marshall and R.D. Hunter.
N.A.S.P.M. Messrs. W.H. Scott, D.H. Scott, P.E. Smith and I. Stirling.
S.N.F.U. Messrs. W. Black, S. Moles and Mrs. C. Lang.
SCOTTISH OFFICE: Messrs. G. Brown, Bill Rennie, S. Carnegie and Mrs. M. Barns.

APOLOGIES: Mr. Hunter intimated apologies on behalf of Messrs. Bob Doig, D.Y. Stewart, K. McKenzie and S. Whitehead.

- (1) FUTURE OF P.M.B./POTATO SCHEME: Mr. Brown gave to the meeting a resume of the present position regarding the future of the P.M.B. He explained that the uncertainty regarding the future of the P.M.B. had been increased by the change of Minister of Agriculture. The new Minister, Mrs. Shepherd, had entered into a further consultative process which had now been completed and the Minister was awaiting the recommendation of the Ministry and The Scottish Office. Mr. Brown emphasised that he had no idea what was in the Minister's mind regarding the future of the P.M.B. He was, however, expecting a decision before the end of 1993. Mr. Moles stated that the English N.F.U. had indicated that they were not in favour of "intervention". He added that this was, however, not an unanimous decision. In general terms the Growers, south of the Humber, were against intervention and those north of that area were in favour of intervention. He added that the P.M.B. were also split on the question of intervention. He stated that the Scottish N.F.U. were in favour of intervention. Mr. Bill Reid stated that it was expected that a new Potato Scheme would be introduced but containing much more flexibility with regard to Quotas, etc. There was general discussion regarding the future of the Scheme and the situation which would arise in the event of the demise of the P.M.B.

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- (2) HOBBS/TAYLOR CASE. The Scottish Office stated that they would investigate all alleged infringements of the Seed Potato Regulations which are brought to their attention and, if there is sufficient evidence to do so, they would prosecute.

The Scottish Office reported that the results of the chemical testing for possible virus infection of crops entered for certification were not yet available. They pointed out that the tests took eight to ten weeks before a result was obtained. They reported that twentyfive crops were being investigated this year out of approximately six thousand crops entered for certification.

There was general discussion regarding The Scottish Office's policy with regard to complaints concerning growing crops in England planted with Scotch Seed. Mr. Brown pointed out that it was the policy of The Scottish Office, in general terms, to leave the examination of English crops to the Ministry. He added, however, that in the event of a very bad case the Department would be willing to send an Inspector down to England to examine the crop.

There was general discussion regarding the problems resulting from the "small ware" trade. Mr. Pat Smith stated that he was of the opinion that the trading in small ware was on the increase. Mr. Brown for The Scottish Office stated that they found the trade in small ware to be a most frustrating matter. He explained that it was very difficult to find sufficient evidence to enable them to do anything about it. Everybody attending the meeting agreed that all steps should be taken to discourage the trading of small ware. Mr. Brown stated that The Scottish Office were considering the tightening up of the Seed Potato Marketing Directive which would give them more power.

Mr. Brown confirmed that after the elapse of six months from an alleged infringement The Scottish Office were time-barred from commencing Court Proceedings. Mr. Brown stated that it was the date of invoice or the date of delivery, whichever was the later, from which the six month period ran. The Scottish Office agreed to seek approval to the/

the extending of the six month period to at least twelve months if not longer. Mr. Brown explained that this would require a change in Primary Legislation but this could be achieved within the terms of the new Plant Varieties and Seeds Act which would shortly be coming before Parliament.

- (3) CHANGES TO CLASSIFICATION SCHEME: The Scottish Office issued a copy of a circular being sent to all Seed Potato Producers giving details of the Marketing of Seed Potatoes for 1993/94 season.

There was general discussion regarding further changes to the Classification Scheme related to the implementation of Community Grades. Mr. Brown stated that a Consultative document had been issued to the members of the Scottish Seed Potato Consultative Panel requesting a response by 8th November at the latest. He added that these changes should have been implemented by 1st June, 1993 and that the U.K. was now being prosecuted by the Community for the delay in implementing these changes. This was the reason for the very short consultative period. Mr. Brown added that a copy of the Consultative document had also been sent to the Ministry of Agriculture.

Referring to the 1993 Classification Programme, Mr. Brown stated that The Scottish Office were delighted with the way things had gone. He reported that 91% of crops had held their grade which is the highest that he could remember. Mrs. Barns stated that the Statistics of Crops Classified would be issued at the end of October and the Register would be issued in November.

- (4) BULK LOADS: Mrs. Barns confirmed that as far as she was aware it was the loader who attaches the labels to bulk loads. One label should be attached to the top of the container and the other to the exit chute. Mrs. Barns undertook to advise those present at the meeting of the Department's inspection procedures for bulk loads.

Mr. D. Scott suggested that the Department give consideration to including the charge for labels in the general inspection fee which is the present system in England. Mrs. Barns explained why it was that The Scottish Office believed that it was fairer to charge for the labels separately. The Scottish Office, however, agreed to give consideration to this suggestion.

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- (5) VOLUNTARY PREMIUM SCHEME: Gordon Brown stated that this Scheme had not taken off. Mrs. Barns stated that in 1993 fortytwo crops had been entered (1992 - 70 crops). Mr. Brown stated that he was considering dispensing with the Scheme and this would be discussed at the next meeting of the Scottish Seed Potato Consultative Panel.

This terminated the business of the meeting.