

MINUTE of MEETING between SCOTTISH  
NATIONAL FARMERS' UNION and S.P.T.A.  
held at INGLISTON, EDINBURGH, at 10.30  
a.m. on TUESDAY, 25th JANUARY, 1994.

PRESENT:

S.N.F.U. Messrs. W. Reid and A. Strachan, along with Ms. Caroline Lang.

S.P.T.A. Messrs. Doig, McArthur, Stewart and Hunter.

APOLOGIES: An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr. J. Hollywood.

- (1) FUTURE OF P.M.B. Mr. Reid explained that he had recently attended a meeting with Mr. Fairbairn of the P.M.B. who had explained to him the difficulty which the P.M.B. has in reducing its annual Levy to a figure acceptable to the Potato Industry. Mr. Reid observed, however, that the Levy could be reduced if Sutton Bridge were to be sold. Mr. Reid added that his Union was pressing the Board to reduce the Levy from the suggested £48.00 to £35.00 which would be acceptable to his Union. Mr. Doig confirmed that the Levy imposed by the P.M.B. must be reduced and suggested that anything in excess of £30.00 would be completely unacceptable.

Mr. Reid stated that he understood that the P.M.B. were hoping to scale down their operation for transfer over to Development Corporation Status in two years time. Mr. McArthur stated that he did not believe that the existing P.M.B. could be converted to an acceptable Body and that the Trade should be aiming to start with a completely blank sheet and form a completely new Development Council. The meeting agreed that it seemed that the Industry would be happy if the P.M.B. and S.S.P.D.C. were to be replaced with a new U.K. Development Council working to a Budget of, say, £4M per annum.

- (2) PRODUCER POLL. Mr. Hunter explained his legal interpretation of the requirements to force the P.M.B. to arrange a Producers Poll on the question of whether or not the Board should be revoked.

Mr. Doig confirmed that the indications were that there was substantial support for the demanding of a Poll but a decision had not yet been made with regard to the timing of the sending out of forms to be completed demanding a Poll. Mr. Doig requested the support of the Scottish National Farmers' Union by encouraging its members to sign forms demanding a Poll. Mr. Reid stated that at the moment his Union was working to having the P.M.B. Levy reduced to an acceptable figure. If that was not achieved then they would wholeheartedly support the call for a Producers Poll regarding the future of the P.M.B.

Mr. Doig stated that the future Levy payable either to the P.M.B. or to a Development Council must be paid by all of the Industry not, as at present, only by the Growers. The Farmers' Union agreed with this suggestion.

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- (3) CONTROLLED PLANT VARIETIES. Mr. Reid stated that there was considerable concern amongst his Union Members regarding some Controllers who were exploiting their powerful position by offering to Growers contracts which gave to the Grower an unsatisfactory profit margin. He added that this was encouraging the Trade in "small ware". Mr. Doig and Mr. McArthur responded by stating that the best way in which this situation could be combated would be for the Growers to form Growers Associations which would give them the "mussle" to "stand up" to the Controllers. The S.P.T.A. representatives agreed that the attitude being adopted by some Controllers to their Growers was most unfortunate and could "backfire" on them by contracts only being accepted by less professionally skilled Growers.
- (4) S.S.P.D.C. It was confirmed that there was no need for S.S.P.D.C. to remain in existence if a U.K. Development Council were to be set up with a Section dealing with Seed Potatoes. Mr. Strachan, as a member of S.S.P.D.C., stated that he did believe that, with the greater involvement of Controllers in the export market, S.S.P.D.C. may have come to an end of its usual life.
- (5) DATE OF NEXT MEETING. It was arranged that the next meeting between the Union and S.P.T.A. would be held at Ingliston at 10.30 a.m. on Tuesday, 22nd March, 1994.

This terminated the business of the meeting.