

REPORT on MEETING between  
S.P.T.A. and the NATIONAL  
FARMERS' UNION of SCOTLAND  
held at INGLISTON, EDINBURGH  
at 2.15p.m. on WEDNESDAY,  
8th FEBRUARY, 1995.

PRESENT: S.P.T.A.: Messrs. D. Stewart, D.H.Lindsay and R.D.  
Hunter.

N.F.U.S.: Messrs. W. Reid, J. Grant and J.  
Cruickshank.

Mr. Reid occupied the Chair.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Ms  
C. Lang and Messrs. J. Hollywood and R.McArthur.

ROYALTIES: Mr. Hunter referred to the Consultative Paper issued  
by the Ministry of Agriculture regarding proposed amendments to  
the Plant Varieties & Seeds Act 1964. Mr. Hunter explained that  
a Sub-Committee of S.P.T.A. had considered the Consultative  
document and formulated proposals which had still to be submitted  
to Council of this Association. Mr. Hunter proceeded to outline  
the two main proposals of the Sub-Committee, namely:-

- (a) that Royalties should be charged at the same rate in respect  
of all potato production, including Home Saved Seed, and
- (b) that the definition of a "Small Potato Farmer" should  
correspond with the existing exemption area for registration  
with the P.M.B. (i.e. one hectare).

Referring to the proposal to charge Royalty on Home Saved  
Seed, Mr.Reid stated that the English Union were in favour of  
Royalties being charged on all potato production. With regard to  
the definition of a Small Farm his Union had agreed that the  
definition should correspond with the Minimum Threshold for  
P.M.B. Registration. Mr. Reid expressed the opinion that the  
minimum threshold was two hectares but everybody else at the  
meeting stated that it was one hectare. It was agreed, however,  
whether it be one hectare or two hectares the definition of a  
Small Farm should correspond with the P.M.B. Minimum Threshold.

SMALL WARE: There was general discussion regarding the letter  
received from The Scottish Office, dated 13th January, 1995,  
under the heading "Uncertified Seed Potato Sales". Mr. Reid  
stated that his Union has still to consider the letter. Mr.  
Hunter explained to the meeting the recommendations of the  
S.P.T.A. Sub-Committee which had considered the letter. Mr.  
Hunter again pointed out that these recommendations had not yet  
been presented to Council of this Association. Mr. Reid stated  
that the provisional recommendations of the S.P.T.A. Sub-  
Committee would assist the Union in its consideration of The  
Scottish Office letter. In the course of discussion Mr. Stewart



suggested that the damage caused by the Small Ware trade might be minimised by making the sale of Uncertified Seed legal as previously.

P.M.B. SUCCESSOR BODY: Mr.Reid explained that there had been a meeting of a Working Party held on the afternoon of 6th February following which a Paper had been prepared identifying "A suitable Potato Organisation for Great Britain". Although the Paper was confidential and as yet not ratified, Mr. Reid handed out copies to the S.P.T.A. representatives and agreed that it could be discussed at the next meeting of Council of S.P.T.A. Mr. Reid explained that the Paper had been prepared on the basis of the Working Party first identifying the sort of Potato Organisation for Great Britain which was required and thereafter setting out to consider how that Organisation could be achieved. He stated that the English Union want the Government to be asked to set up an Elected Body. They also want the Potato Marketing Scheme to remain in existence until such time as the contents of the anticipated Potato Regime are known. Mr.Reid stated that the English Union were claiming that it might be possible to have an Elected Board without new Legislation. Mr.Cruickshank stated that the P.M.B. had obtained legal opinion to the effect that it would not be possible to have an Elected Body without new Legislation. Mr. Stewart suggested that it might be wise to set up the machinery based on an Elected Board but at the same time keeping open the possibility of the new Body being a Development Council. Mr. Reid pointed out that while the main the proposals contained in the Working Party's Paper were generally acceptable they did not include provision for Sector Groups notwithstanding that it had been agreed that there would require to be a Seed Sector Group. The representatives of the National Farmers' Union of Scotland and S.P.T.A. agreed that the three Sector Groups were essential particularly bearing in mind that if the main Board of the new Body comprised, say, twelve members, these members would be very remote from "grass roots level". Mr.Cruickshank expressed the opinion that the Industry must benefit from S.S.P.D.C.'s experience where the lack of communication between that Council and Growers had resulted in hostility on the part of Growers towards S.S.P.D.C.

Mr.Reid stated that the next meeting of the Working Party considering the Successor Body was to be held in London on 8th March. He requested that S.P.T.A. let him have its comments regarding the Confidential Paper after it had been considered at the Council Meeting on 14th February.

S.S.P.D.C.: Mr.Reid stated that he believed that Mr. Bethell may want the Review of S.S.P.D.C. to be carried out in 1995 in the hope that in the absence of any Successor Body, Growers might fear a "Black Hole" and therefore be in favour of S.S.P.D.C. being retained. Mr.Stewart reported that in an informal discussion with Mr. Gordon Brown of The Scottish Office it had become clear that The Scottish Office were in favour of S.S.P.D.C. being continued for a further year to ensure that the P.M.B. Successor Body was set up on a basis satisfactory to Scottish Seed Growers. Mr. Brown had stated that if the Industry did not press for a Poll of Growers to be carried out in 1995 he would be willing to give an undertaking in writing that in 1996

either S.S.P.D.C. would be disbanded or a Poll of Growers carried out. Mr. Reid expressed concern that if S.S.P.D.C. is allowed to continue until 1996 the Development Council will have been given time to carry out its proposed "re-launch" possibly at considerable expense and which conceivably might result in a Poll supporting its retention for a further five years. Mr. Reid added that his Union may still wish to press for a Poll this year and will be discussing the matter at a meeting on Tuesday, 14th February. Mr. Stewart confirmed that S.P.T.A. would also be discussing the matter at a meeting of Council on Tuesday, 14th February. Mr. Reid stated that he believed that the Minister would carry out a Poll in 1995 if pressed to do so by both his Union and S.P.T.A.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: It was agreed that the next meeting between S.P.T.A. and the Scottish Farmers' Union would be held at 25 South Methven Street, Perth, at 2.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 22nd March, 1995.

This terminated the business of the meeting.