

REPORT on MEETING between
S.P.T.A. and LORD LINDSAY,
SCOTTISH AGRICULTURE MINISTRY,
held at ST. ANDREW'S HOUSE,
EDINBURGH, AT 2.30 p.m. on
FRIDAY, 15th MARCH, 1996.

PRESENT: SCOTTISH OFFICE: Lord Lindsay, Gordon Brown, Jonathan Pryce and Fiona Montgomery.

S.P.T.A. D. Stewart, A. Pullar, M. Beattie and R.D. Hunter.

POTATO BROWN ROT. Mr. Stewart opened the meeting by expressing S.P.T.A.'s appreciation of the efforts to prevent the importation of Brown Rot into Scotland which had already been taken by The Scottish Office. He added, and was supported by the other S.P.T.A. delegates, that it was the opinion of S.P.T.A. that the only way to be certain of avoiding the importation of Brown Rot into Scotland was for the re-introduction of the quarantine controls in respect of all imported seed potatoes. There was general discussion but Lord Lindsay was quite emphatic that it was not legally possible for the U.K. to introduce such quarantine controls and for it to do so would result in the U.K. being taken to the European Court where it would be successfully prosecuted. He added that it was particularly the case bearing in mind that the other "Protected Regions" in the Community were not supporting the U.K.'s wish to re-introduce quarantine controls. He stated that if the other Protected Regions also expressed a wish to have quarantine controls introduced then there was a possibility that the Community Legislation may be altered to permit such controls to be re-introduced.

Gordon Brown stated that he believed that the existing controls should be able to be re-introduced or even strengthened for the following year and possibly for a longer period. He also stated that The Scottish Office had recently received from Brussels a copy of the first draft of a Potato Brown Rot Order proposed to be introduced by the Community.

FUTURE OF SCOTTISH SEED POTATO INDUSTRY. David Stewart confirmed that there was currently a very active debate on the subject of whether, after the demise of the Potato Marketing Scheme, the interests of the Scottish Seed Potato producers would be best served by S.S.P.D.C. or by a Seed Sectoral Group under the new proposed G.B.P.O. He stated that many in the Scottish Seed Potato Industry who had been previously against the continuation of S.S.P.D.C. were coming round to favouring its continuation largely on the grounds that a Seed Sectoral Group and, in particular its finances, would be controlled by a Body dominated by English Ware Growers. He added that the case for a Seed Sectoral Group, as opposed to S.S.P.D.C., would be greatly strengthened if the Order setting up the G.B.P.O. were to contain provisions which would ensure that the Seed Sectoral Group received an adequate budget. Lord Lindsay was advised by Gordon Brown that there was no possibility that the Order would contain such provisions. Gordon Brown confirmed, however, that the Order could contain provisions which could ensure that the Chairman of the Seed

Sectoral Group who would be a member of the G.B.P.O. would be a Scottish Seed Potato producer.

Lord Lindsay stated that The Scottish Office did not prefer either of the alternatives but was waiting until the Industry decided which of the alternatives it favoured. Lord Lindsay stated that the timing of the Poll regarding the future of S.S.P.D.C. was a matter which rested in his hands. He stated, however, that he was aware that a decision with regard to whether or not S.S.P.D.C. is to continue must be made early enough for S.S.P.D.C. to be reconstructed for 1st January, 1998 if the decision was in favour of the continuation of S.S.P.D.C.

During discussion Gordon Brown expressed the opinion that it should be possible to incorporate into both S.S.P.D.C. and G.B.P.O. a definition of "Seed Growers" which would ensure that they did not have to pay Levies to both Organisations. It was assumed that if this were to be achieved, Seed Growers would only pay a Levy to S.S.P.D.C. which would, in turn, pass over a proportion of these Levies to the G.B.P.O. in respect of the ware growing activities of the Scottish Seed Potato producers.

The meeting was concluded with Lord Lindsay thanking S.P.T.A. for attending the meeting with him.