



[Memo to Scottish Crofters Union Office-bearers]

To: All office bearers in the Lewis and Harris area

From: Angus Macleod, Chairman of the Steering Committee

When the Chairman of the Lewis & Harris Area, Dr Frank Rennie, discovered that I was sending out letters from the Steering Group to all the 150 office bearers in the Scottish Crofter's Union, he suggested that we could save time and postage if the notice and Agenda etc for the meeting of the Lewis Area Committee on 15 October was included in the 42 envelopes for Lewis and Harris.

The last report I received, recently, of the paid up membership in the Lewis and Harris Area indicated that the membership, of which the central treasurer was informed, was still well below the thousand mark but what was more disappointing to me and the other people who worked so hard to organise the Scottish Crofter's Union, including Dr Jim Hunter, was the fact that about half the branches in Lewis and Harris have not yet sent in any membership fees.

I believe the Lewis and Harris treasurer, Mr Murdo A Murray 6 Sand Street Stornoway, is going to submit a treasurer's report of the situation to date for the 15th October meeting, but in the meantime I would like to appeal to the office bearers, particularly to the treasurers and chairmen in Lewis and Harris to be realistic and realise we cannot operate a Union without money. Considering the population we have in Lewis and Harris, the response from our area is one of the poorest in the Union and we have only three months left of 1985 and only one month until the inauguration of the Union on 6th November.

Our Steering Committee budget for 1985 is nearly exhausted and we have to exercise great prudence and spend only what is absolutely necessary from now on, including the expense of launching the Union on 6th November. We have, as you know, appointed a Director and fortunately for us he is not available full-time until about New Year. If he was ready to start at once, we would not be able to pay him from the depleted 1985 budget. In order to save money the Steering Committee only held the minimum number of meetings and each meeting we had lasted about 5 hours and we discussed upwards of 20 items of business at each meeting. Also, we took advantage of our stay in Inverness to organise other meetings while we were there, with the NFU and with Insurance Companies, the Crofters' Commission, H.I.D.B. and others regarding the 1986 commemoration [sic] at the Highland Show etc.

There is also another consideration. The H.I.D.B. will be duly noting if there is a satisfactory response from the Crofting Community to justify the confidence they placed in us and the estimates we put forward on behalf of the crofters. These estimates were modest enough when one remembers that there are nearly 18,000 crofts in the Highlands and Islands as brought out in the last Annual Report of the Crofters' Commission. Lewis alone has 3,600 crofts as well as an additional up to 1,000 in Harris. The initial membership target for Lewis and Harris is only 2,200 and we are still under 1,000 members.

It is quite useless for branches to keep saying they have collected some money but they are keeping it until they get round to collect more. Any money collected should be sent immediately to the Lewis and Harris treasurer, Mr Murdo Murray 6 Sand Street. All the branches in Lewis and Harris were constituted by March last and subscriptions should have been collected as early as possible in the calendar year because next year's subscription will be due from January 1st.

Please bring in any money you have to the meeting on 15th October together with names for each subscriber.

The response to the Scottish Crofter's Union from all areas is simply magnificent but it must be remembered that the success or otherwise of the Union depends on the Western Isles where the bulk of the membership is. Let us not let the rest of the Highlands and Islands Crofting Communities down; some of whom paid 100% and many of whom paid a high ratio of their total population.

If the Crofting Community fails to respond satisfactorily to their present golden opportunity it would have been better if we had never spoken about a Scottish Crofter's Union, because it will be clear as daylight to all in authority that the crofters have no heart in them. The authorities will question if it is worth bothering with the Crofting Community because they do not seem to have the commitment to look after their own interests.

Let us prove we are worthy of the priceless heritage our suffering forefathers fought for and handed down to us.
Let us not fail posterity; if we do they will not remember us kindly for a neglected opportunity.

Park House
Marybank
Stornoway

30 September 1985

Angus Macleod

[ends]

AN ARCHIVE RECORD FROM THE ANGUS MACLEOD ARCHIVE www.angusmacleodarchive.org.uk

Author: Angus Macleod

Date: 1985

Original document title: (none)

Location in physical archive: Series C, File 5/7/8, Section 5

NRAS reference: NRAS 4336/1/3/5

© Angus Macleod Archive