

**FEDERATION OF CROFTERS UNIONS**

**ANNUAL REPORT 1984 - 1985**

**AND**

**STEEERING GROUP REPORT**

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EXPLANATORY NOTENOTES REGARDING THE INAUGURAL GENERAL MEETING AT 2.00PM

THE INAUGURAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE UNION IS THE BUSINESS MEETING TO WHICH DELEGATES WILL BE ELECTED BY AREA COMMITTEES IN TERMS OF RULE 23 OF THE CONSTITUTION.

DELEGATES TO GENERAL MEETING

Each area is entitled to a minimum of three delegates. Areas having more than 200 members are entitled to elect - but do not have to elect - additional delegates at the rate of one per 100 members above 200.

It is suggested that areas send the following number of delegates:

|                               |           |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| Shetland                      | 3         |
| Lewis and Harris              | 6         |
| Uist and Barra                | 4         |
| North West Sutherland         | 2         |
| East Sutherland & Easter Ross | 2         |
| Wester Ross                   | 2         |
| Skye and Lochalsh             | 3         |
| Lochaber                      | 2         |
| Argyll                        | 2         |
|                               | <u>26</u> |

These 26 delegates will be the only persons entitled to vote on resolutions before the General Meeting. The names of these delegates should be sent to the Steering Group secretary as soon as possible.

Each of the above delegations must include the Area President - and, in the case of Lewis and Harris area or any other area with more than 500 union members, the additional Council members to which they are entitled in terms of Rule 10 of the constitution, one delegate for each 500 union members or part thereof within the area, as set out below, as follows:

COMPOSITION OF THE CROFTERS UNION COUNCIL, IN TERMS OF RULE 10 OF THE CONSTITUTION.

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Shetland                      | Area President                           |
| Lewis and Harris              | Area President - plus two or more others |
| Uist and Barra                | Area President - plus possible other     |
| North West Sutherland         | Area President                           |
| East Sutherland & Easter Ross | " "                                      |
| Wester Ross                   | " "                                      |
| Skye and Lochalsh             | " "                                      |
| Lochaber                      | " "                                      |
| Argyll                        | " "                                      |

From among the members of the Union Council the Inaugural General Meeting will elect a Union President. The Steering Group will recommend an appropriate candidate to the Inaugural General Meeting.

EXPENSE

To minimise expenses, as many as possible of these delegates should be assessors. The Union will meet only otherwise unavoidable expenses. It is suggested, for example, that Western Isles delegates travel together by ferry and car. Expenses will be paid retrospectively by the Union and not until January 1986.



# AONACHD CHROITEARAN ALBA

SCOTTISH CROFTERS UNION

'S e Aonachd Neart

## GENERAL MEETING

INAUGURAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SCOTTISH CROFTERS UNION TO BE HELD  
ON WEDNESDAY 6TH NOVEMBER 1985 AT THE CUMMINGS HOTEL INVERNESS at 2 PM

### AGENDA

- 14.00 Introductory remarks by Angus Macleod
- 14.10 Adoption of constitution
- 14.20 Union formally constituted and Union Council formally installed  
in office
- 14.40 Election of Union President
- 15.00 Consideration of proposal that first A.G.M. of Union be held  
early in 1987
- 15.10 Angus Macleod to present final report of the Federation of Croft  
Unions - embodying report of the Crofters Union Steering Group
- 15.40 Formal dissolution of Federation.
- 15.45 Angus Macleod relinquishes chair to Union President
- 15.50 Concluding remarks by Union President
- 16.00 End of meeting

Between 16.15 and 17.00 there will be a Press Conference at which the  
Union President and the Union Council will be introduced to the Press.

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MINUTE

MINUTES OF MEETING OF FEDERATION OF CROFTERS UNIONS HELD IN THE CUMMINGS HOTEL, INVERNESS ON 7 NOVEMBER 1984 AT 8.00PM

In attendance:                   Dr James Hunter  
   Mr D J MacCuish  
   Mr R J Murray - Minute Secretary  
   Delegates as per sederunt

Chairman's Welcome:

Mr Angus MacLeod, Chairman welcomed those present and expressed his pleasure at seeing more present that night than at any other meeting.

Apologies:

There were no apologies.

Minute of Meeting of 9 November 1983:

Approval of the minute was moved by Mr C A MacLeod, Garyvard, Lewis, seconded by Mr Matheson, Assynt.

Matters Arising from the Minutes:

There were no matters arising.

Annual Report:

Mr Peter MacLeod, Gress, Lewis, moved adoption of the Annual Report and expressed congratulation to the Chairman on the work of the past year particularly the report on the proposed new union, Land Court decisions, and all matters affecting crofting.

The Chairman had several matters to point out to the meeting arising from the report:-

- 1) Acknowledgement of the hard work put into the Hunter report by Mr Hugh MacLean and Mr John Angus MacKay of the HIDB.
- 2) The need for members of the Land Court to be more familiar with crofting matters, particularly in view of the Easter and Wester Stoule case.
- 3) Members of the Crofters Commission should be appointed following consultation with crofter representatives.
- 4) The Federation representative had been withdrawn from the HIDCC.

Financial Statement:

The Federation had a credit balance of £524. Barra branch was in arrears and an anonymous contributor had given £20 last year and £30 again this year. A further anonymous donor had contributed £20 later. Adoption of the report was moved by Alex Kennedy, Lochaber, seconded by Peter MacLeod, Gress, Lewis.

2.

The Hunter Report:

The Chairman introduced the report, describing it as a watershed in crofting history. As well as dealing with the past history and present position of the Crofters Unions, the report showed the way forward for the future.

Dr Hunter described the present situation in the Crofters Unions which had been reviving in the last 2-3 years and growing in membership. There was a widespread feeling that the Unions ought to be reorganised but everyone found this difficult to carry through. The need for strong union representation was evident due to the lack of influence which the existing unions had on cuts in grant levels and other matters. There was total support for the concept of one union with branches, and no one had opposed the idea. The Uist and Barra model was considered the most appropriate one for other branches to follow and the union should have a full time official. Skye was considered the most appropriate location and there should be part time secretaries in the Western Isles and Shetland. Increases in subscriptions would be necessary. The decisions requiring to be taken by the present unions were:-

- 1) To agree to join the new union and become areas of a large body
- 2) Increase in membership fees to £4.00 for the first year and £6.50 for the second year.
- 3) Set up a Steering Committee which would put through the various measures necessary to organise the new union.

The Chairman said that he did not wish the report debated at present but that any comments would be noted. The meeting agreed to the formation of a Steering Committee who would receive any comments or amendments. It was also agreed that a grant should be sought from HIDB to extend Dr Hunter's remit for one year to coordinate the activities of the Steering Group. Existing unions agreed to increase the subscriptions to £4.00 and pay the costs of sending delegates to a meeting of the Steering Committee in January.

In the debate which followed Mr Roddy Steele, South Uist said the union would have to be paid for and that the existing situation was of no benefit to crofters. Mr Stonehouse, Shetland pointed out that subscriptions could be offset against tax.

Mr Johnathan MacDonald, Skye welcomed the proposed new union, which would be of great benefit to crofters in protecting their interests and said the whole new set up should be explained through Grazings Clerks and Community Councils.

Mr Kennedy, Lochaber said many mainland crofters were already in the NFU and that the question of fees from those wishing to join the Croft Union would require to be sorted out.

Mrs Betty MacDonald, Convener NFU Crofting Committee said the matter had not been discussed by her Committee but she thought the NFU would like to see all crofters organised to give them a strong voice. Her association with the NFU would give access to the EEC through NFU s

Mr Stonehouse, Shetland wondered how the NFU saw the distinctive interests of crofters and farmers, and thought there could be a divergence of views if a strong Crofters Union were to emerge alongside a strong NFU.

Mr Hunter, Shetland welcomed the revival of the Crofters Union, and Mr MacKinnon, Harris wondered whether the HIDB should be asked to provide funding for five years instead of three. Mr Donald MacAskill suggested that all crofters should be sent membership application forms.

Dr Hunter suggested that representatives of existing unions should organise a programme of meetings to find out what people felt about the new structure.

The Chairman asked for adoption of the report in principle, Mr John Crichton, Point, Lewis thought the report too academic and wondered which crofters were consulted in the formation of the report. Mr Peter MacLeod, Gress said the test would come when the report was taken back to the individual unions for consideration but that the meeting should accept the principle of formation of a new union.

Delegates agreed on behalf of the following unions:-

- 1) Assynt
- 2) Uist
- 3) Lochaber
- 4) Shetland
- 5) Lewis

Mr Peter MacLeod, Gress seconded by Mr Calum MacLeod, Portree moved adoption of the report and this was carried unanimously.

Mr D J MacCuish thought the report provided a good opportunity to provide an organisation which would enable the voice of crofting to be heard, and that delegates ought now to return to their own areas and to inform all crofters of what was proposed.

The meeting agreed the following:-

- 1) Each area to send a delegate to the Steering Committee.
- 2) Extend Dr Hunter's remit to service the Steering Committee.
- 3) Increase in fees to £4.00.
- 4) Present unions pay the expenses of delegates to the Steering Committee .
- 5) Present unions to hold meetings with crofters in their areas to discuss the Report.
- 6) Crofters Commission be asked to appoint area presidents as liaison officers on the panel of Assessors.

#### Appointment of Committee

The Chairman and Committee were unanimously returned.

... closed with a vote of thanks to the chair.

FEDERATION OF CROFTERS' UNIONSREPORTTHE FINAL REPORT OF THE FEDERATION OF CROFTER UNIONS

PRESENTED AT THE INAUGURAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SCOTTISH CROFTERS UNION  
IN THE CUMMINGS HOTEL, INVERNESS ON 6 NOVEMBER 1985

|                           |                      |                    |
|---------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE: | Angus Macleod        | Angus A Morrison   |
|                           | Iain MacLennan       | Roderick Macdonald |
|                           | John Crichton        | Alastair MacEachen |
|                           | John Murdo MacMillan | James Robertson    |
|                           | Calum MacLeod        | J MacIntyre        |
|                           | Peter MacLeod        | Hugh Morrison      |
|                           | Neil MacKinnon       |                    |

EARLY HISTORY OF THE CROFTERS UNION MOVEMENT

The Crofters Union movement started about fifty years ago in the 1930s. We know that there were small independent branches at least in Lewis and Lochaber before the Second World War.

It was not, however, until the 1950s and 1960s that the movement really came alive and branches sprang up spontaneously all over the Highlands and Islands.

At that time each branch of the Union was in fact a small autonomous union on its own with no real machinery for the co-ordination of the activities of the branches. Because of that the movement was not as effective as it might have been, yet crofters everywhere testified to the value of the work of the movement.

FORMATION OF FEDERATION OF CROFTER UNIONS

The Federation was formed in Stornoway in 1962 in order to co-ordinate the activities of the various branches of the Union and to enable the crofters of the Highlands and Islands to speak with one voice.

To begin with the Federation was based in Lewis but there were two Vice Chairmen from the mainland, and in due course the Federation moved to the mainland.

Meetings were held in various places both on the mainland and in the Islands and for a time the Federation was very active and stimulated the activities of the various branches of the Union, all of which were affiliated with the Federation.

The well known small Federation Annual Handbook testified to the manifold activities and usefulness of the Federation in the 1960s.

However, both the Unions and the Federation relied almost entirely on voluntary effort and after a while the enthusiastic founders of the movement began to drop out and the whole movement went into serious decline.

Eventually it became clear that the movement required a full-time paid organiser if it was ever to become an effective organisation capable of ensuring that the crofting viewpoint was kept before Government ministers etc.

RE-VITALISATION OF THE FEDERATION

Steps were taken about 1979/80 to re-vitalise the Federation which by that time was dormant for several years. A committee, representative of all the Islands in the Outer Hebrides, was set up and the Federation set about trying to revive the various Union Branches and encourage them to become members of the Federation.



The Annual General Meetings of the Federation were held in Inverness on the day before the Crofters Commission Assessors Meeting in order to take advantage of a ready audience of crofters from all over the Highlands and Islands. Both our Annual Reports and our Annual Meetings were designed to stimulate discussion and debate about the concept of a reorganised Crofters Union movement. Gradually over the next few years the serious decline of the 1970s was arrested and a marked revival took place. Several previously inactive Unions were re-activated and the total membership of the movement doubled at least, and in some cases trebled. Many of the re-constituted Unions were now run by energetic young active crofters.

In that way the work of the Federation over a period of years prepared the ground for the feasibility study that was to take place subsequently.

#### FULL-TIME ORGANISER OR SECRETARY GENERAL

In 1982 the Federation opened negotiations with the Highlands and Islands Development Board for initial grant aid assistance to enable the movement to employ a full-time organiser or secretary general with clerical assistance, and an office etc, in order to reorganise the movement.

In doing so the Federation emphasised that while there were a variety of statutory bodies in the field and all of them were necessary and fully supported by the Crofting Community, nevertheless, the Crofters Union movement was the only body in Scotland freely articulating the grass roots aspirations of the Crofting Community.

The Federation also maintained that a properly organised Crofters Union movement would make a valuable contribution to the Highland economy as well as be useful to the various statutory bodies as a crofters' representative body for consultation on a variety of subjects.

#### FUNDING FOR FEASIBILITY STUDY

In the Federation Report of 1983 we were able to report that our negotiations with the HIDB had reached the stage where we presented a formal application for the funding of a feasibility study to assess the viability of the proposed reorganisation, and to make recommendations as to how it might be brought about. At our AGM on 9 November Mr H.A.M. MacLean, Head of the Land Division of the HIDB, announced the acceptance of our formal proposal for funds to pay for a feasibility study for the reorganisation of the Crofters Union and the employment of a full-time secretary general.

#### FEASIBILITY STUDY

In our 1984 Annual Report of the work of the Federation we reported the setting up of a working party whose task was to draw up detailed terms of reference, objectives and plan of action for the researcher who was to conduct the feasibility study in time for the AGM on 7 November 1984.

Dr Jim Hunter was appointed to carry out the feasibility study and his report, "A reformed Crofters Union", was ready in time for presentation to the AGM on 7 November 1984.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HUNTER REPORT

The Hunter Report recommended that existing Crofters Unions merge to form a single Crofters Union organised into seven or eight areas with each of the branches within the areas represented on an Area Committee.

Each area in turn be represented on the Crofters Union Council which is the Union's executive who control the central secretariat consisting of a Director and a Director's secretary.

The Report also recommended that a representative steering group be formed in order to oversee the steps needed to implement the measures recommended in the Hunter Report and to enable the reformed Crofters Union to be constituted in November 1985. An account of the work of the steering group is presented as a separate report.

#### FEDERATION'S CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS REORGANISATION

The Federation was very active in the early days of its history and did a lot of very useful work for the crofting community.

However, perhaps it was in recent years that it rendered its biggest contribution to the crofting community and the Crofters Union movement, because the Federation was the medium through which alone, it was possible to re-vitalise and reform the movement.

Experience had shown that the movement was not properly organised and would never prosper so long as it consisted of a number of small autonomous Unions lacking cohesion and depending on voluntary effort to service them without any form of centralised direction.

At first it was thought that the Federation itself would provide the necessary central direction but again experience proved that it was necessary to re-structure the whole movement into one single Union making the Federation itself as well as all the old Unions redundant.

#### THE REORGANISATION

The task of re-structuring the movement and creating one single national Union in such a scattered area as the Highlands and Islands was obviously a formidable task and at the outset it was thought that the exercise would take several years to complete.

However, it would seem that the Hunter feasibility study was the lead the people of the Highlands were waiting for and under the direction of the steering group they responded in a magnificent way. The reorganisation that was meant to take years was achieved within one year and we have to report a success story of about fifty new branches and nine area committees. All this entails about 200 office bearers scattered throughout the Highlands and Islands as well as several hundred additional committee members.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In presenting the final report of the Federation and announcing the formal launching of the new Scottish Crofters Union, we gratefully acknowledge our indebtedness, and wish to express our gratitude to the many people throughout the Highlands and Islands who laboured and helped make possible the launching of the new Scottish Crofters Union.

It would not be possible to list them all. At the head of the list we place the Highlands and Islands Development Board who, in the first place, provided financial assistance to enable us to commission a feasibility study, then agreed to give us financial assistance to help implement the reforms outlined in the feasibility study. Special thanks are due to Mr Hugh A M Maclean, Head of Land Division HIDE, with whom we discussed the Union reform over a period of years, during which he co-operated with patience and cheerfulness. Again he gave us valuable assistance and good advice as an observer on the Steering Group.

Highland //

Highland Regional Council who gladly contributed financially and Mr Hugh Black, Highland Region Development Department, who rendered valuable assistance and good advice as an observer on the Steering Group. Shetland Islands Council who also gladly granted our request in full for financial assistance.

Comhairle nan Eilean who also readily granted our request for financial assistance as well as giving us other valuable facilities and assistance. Also, Roderick Murray, Development Department Comhairle nan Eilean, who was a member of the Steering Group as an observer. He rendered valuable service both to the Steering Group and with the reorganisation of Lewis and Harris area into fourteen new branches.

The Crofters Commission - In truth the Annual General Meetings of the Federation in recent years, on the eve of the Commission's Assessors Conference, in Inverness, was possible, only because of the co-operation of the Crofters Commission. These AGMs at Inverness played a valuable part in spreading the message that the Crofters Union movement required radical reform. We are most grateful to the Chairman, Commissioners and Staff of the Crofters Commission for their valuable assistance.

Lewis Council of Social Service. The Lewis Council of Social Service also rendered valuable assistance with the reorganisation of the Union as well as providing other valuable facilities.

John Angus MacKay of Comunn na Gaidhlig, who assisted us as an observer on the Steering Group, but more particularly in his previous capacity as HADB Development Officer in Stornoway, when he served with us on the working party whose task was to draw up detailed terms of reference etc for the researcher who was to conduct the feasibility study.

Donald J MacCuish, Inverness, was also an observer on the Steering Group and his legal mind and long experience in matters relating to crofting were valuable to the Group.

In case we have, by oversight, omitted to mention anyone whom we should have mentioned, may we express our deep appreciation to all those who helped to bring about the reformation of the Crofters Union movement.

#### DISSOLUTION OF THE FEDERATION

Now that we have, by God's help, attained to this historic occasion when the new "Aonachd Chroitearan Alba", the Scottish Crofters Union, was constituted here today, the work of the Federation is now at an end and we bring forward a Statement of Accounts showing the bank account of the Federation closed having withdrawn the credit balance as represented in this cheque value £349.84 which we are handing over to Dr Jim Hunter, the representative of the new Crofters Union which is the successor of all the old independent Unions which, along with the Federation, are now absorbed into the new Scottish Crofters Union.

I now declare the Federation to be formally dissolved.

FEDERATION OF CROFTER UNIONS

RECEIPTS AND EXPENSES FROM 1ST OCTOBER 1984 TO 11TH OCTOBER 1985  
WHEN THE BANK ACCOUNT WAS FINALLY CLOSED

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| <u>CREDITS</u>          |                | <u>EXPENDITURE</u>  |                |
|-------------------------|----------------|---|----------------|
| 1985 Subscriptions:     |                | Postages  | £346.97        |
| Shetland                | £2.10          | Stationery  | 17.87          |
| Lochaber                | £10.00         | Meeting expenses  | 10.00          |
| Assynt                  | 5.00           | Copying   | 7.80           |
| Benbecula               | 10.00          |   |                |
| N Uist                  | 25.00          |   |                |
| S Uist                  | 13.80          |   |                |
| Skye                    | 15.00          |   |                |
| Anon. 1st contribution  | 20.00          | Cheque handover to<br>new Crofters Union<br>being balance in<br>account when it was<br>closed | £349.84        |
| " 2nd "                 | 20.00          |   |                |
| " 1st "                 | 30.00          |   |                |
| " 2nd "                 | 30.00          |   |                |
| Interest on Deposit A/c | 26.61          |   |                |
|                         | <u>£207.51</u> |   |                |
| Balance in Deposit A/c  |                |   |                |
| 30.9.84                 | £407.50        |   |                |
| Balance in Current A/c  |                |   |                |
| 30.9.84                 | £117.47        |   |                |
|                         | <u>£732.48</u> |   | <u>£732.48</u> |

The old Lewis and Harris branch of the former Crofters Union do not appear above as having paid their 1985 subscriptions because they contributed about £800 toward the expense of the reorganisation of the Union in 1985.



# AONACHD CHROITEARAN ALBA

## SCOTTISH CROFTERS UNION

'Se Aonachd Neart

### CONFERENCE

#### INAUGURAL CONFERENCE AT 6.45PM - 6.11.85

THE INAUGURAL CONFERENCE IS THE OPEN GATHERING TO WHICH ALL UNION MEMBERS, THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS ARE WELCOME.

THE FIRST ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE SCOTTISH CROFTERS UNION WILL BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 6TH NOVEMBER 1985 AT THE CUMMINGS HOTEL INVERNESS AT 6.45PM.

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### AGENDA

- 18.45 Opening remarks by Angus Macleod who will introduce the President
- 19.00 President's address : Broad policy aims and objectives of the Union
- 19.30 Director's address, the year ahead, Union organisation, etc
- 20.00 Open session
- 20.30 Remarks by Area Presidents
- 21.00 Address by Mr MacAskill, Secretary H.I.D.B.
- 21.30 Consideration of proposal that Angus Macleod be elected Honorary President of the Scottish Crofters Union
- 21.45 Concluding remarks by Angus Macleod
- 22.00 Close of conference

The conference will be open to public and Press and will be advertised in advance.

All Union members present will be entitled to vote on any resolution put to the conference.

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# NEW CROFTERS' UNION STEERING GROUP

## REPORT

### REPORT OF THE CROFTERS UNION STEERING GROUP

#### THE HUNTER REPORT

At its Annual General Meeting on November 7, 1984, the Federation of Crofters Unions adopted in principle the report prepared for the Federation by James Hunter on the prospects for a reorganised and reformed Crofters Union. The report stated that suggested reforms were feasible and recommended the creation of a single Crofters Union for the Highlands and Islands. The new Union, the Hunter Report continued, should have a network of area committees and local branches. The Union should be run by an elected council which should include representatives from each area. The Union should have its own headquarters and should employ a full-time official or director. The Hunter Report also recommended that, if its conclusions were accepted by the Federation AGM, the AGM should agree to establish a Steering Group to oversee the reform process. This, too, was agreed by the AGM.

It was agreed that delegates to the AGM should report back to their own unions. Assuming that these unions agreed to proceed with the reform proposals, each of the major crofting areas then involved in the Crofters Union movement would send delegates to the first meeting of the Steering Group to be held in Inverness on January 23, 1985. Expenses of delegates to the first meeting would be met by their own unions. Expenses of delegates to subsequent meetings would be met by the Steering Group. To help finance the work of the Steering Group, all unions were to be asked to increase their annual subscription for 1985 to £4.00. Half of each subscription would be forwarded to the Steering Group.

#### INTERIM PERIOD

Between November 7 and mid-January, each of the established crofters unions met to consider these proposals. There was unanimous support for them.

During this interim period, Angus Macleod and James Hunter co-ordinated the responses of the various unions and made arrangements for the first meeting of the Steering Group. The first of a series of "Bulletins" on progress towards the creation of the new Crofters Union was prepared and issued. Several thousand copies of an explanatory leaflet were prepared, printed and issued. Explanatory meetings were held in all the main crofting areas.

#### FIRST NEW BRANCH

On December 4, 1984, at the invitation of local crofters, James Hunter spoke at a meeting at Poolewe. There was formed that evening in Poolewe, Aultbea and Gairloch Branch of the new Crofters Union and 38 paid-up members were recruited on the spot. This was the first of many entirely new branches of the new Crofters Union which were to be formed in successive months.

#### FORMATION OF STEERING GROUP

The first meeting of the Crofters Union Steering Group, delayed for a week because of bad weather, took place on January 30, 1985. In the course of the year, the following served as Steering Group office-bearers and members:

Angus Macleod Lewis, Chairman  
 Ronald Campbell Lochaber, Vice Chairman  
 Iain M Maciver Lewis, Treasurer  
 James Hunter was appointed paid  
 part-time Secretary and consultant to the Steering Committee  
 Angus MacRae, Lochcarron Ross-shire  
 Roderick Steele South Uist  
 John Stonehouse Shetland

Frank Mirtle Culkein Sutherland  
 Angus MacHattie Breakish Skye  
 Alexander Kennedy Blarmafoldach Inverness-shire  
 Dr Frank Rennie Lewis  
 Alastair Mackenzie Kyles of Sutherland  
 Lawrence Graham Shetland  
 Alistair Fraser Forsinard Sutherland  
 Roderick Macdonald Uist  
 as well as the following observers:  
 Hugh Maclean, HIBD  
 Roderick Murray Comhairle nan Eilean  
 Hugh Black Highland Region  
 John A Mackay Comunn na Gaidhlig  
 Donald J MacCuish Inverness

#### MEETINGS

The Crofters Union Steering Group met in full session in Inverness on four occasions: in January, March, June and September. Sub-committees of the Group met on several occasions in different places in connection with the appointment of a director, the inspection of headquarters premises, discussions with the NFU, discussions with insurance companies, etc.

#### FUNDS

One of the Group's first tasks was to raise the funds necessary to finance its own activities. A Steering Group budget and a Steering Group programme of action were prepared. A number of organisations were then approached for grant aid. The HIBD contributed £5000 in two instalments. Comhairle nan Eilean, Shetland Islands Council and Highland Regional Council each contributed £1500. Remaining financial requirements were met from the £2.00 contributions of Crofters Union members.

#### REORGANISATION

Reorganisation of the structure of the union movement proceeded rapidly - such reorganisation being possible only because of the immense amount of voluntary work done by Steering Group representatives and others in the different crofting areas.

In Lewis and Harris the former Lewis and Harris Crofters Union was replaced by 14 local branches of the new Crofters Union. This was a major undertaking involving no fewer than 36 public meetings. A Lewis and Harris Area Committee was formed in March and the first of the Union's Area Presidents was elected.

In Shetland the former Shetland Crofters Union was replaced by seven local branches of the new Union. Membership increased rapidly.

In Uist and Barra the Barra, Benbecula and North Uist Crofters Unions became local branches of the new Union. Three local branches of the new Union replaced the former South Uist Crofters Union.

In Skye and Lochalsh, the former Skye Crofters Union was replaced by 6 local branches of the new Union. These 6 branches covered all of Skye and Raasay. It was anticipated that a seventh local branch, covering the mainland part of Skye and Lochalsh, would be formed in October.

In North West Sutherland, the former Assynt Crofters Union became a local branch of the new Crofters Union. Two more branches were formed - in Tongue and Farr, Eddrachillis and Durness - to give the area its full complement of branches.

In East Sutherland and Easter Ross, the Achterneed Crofters Union became a branch of the new Union. Further branches were formed in Loth and Clyne, Rogart and District, Kyle of Sutherland and District.

In Wester Ross, the Poolewe, Aultbea and Gairloch branch was joined by a Lochcarron and Applecross branch. It was anticipated that the final Wester Ross branch would be formed in the Ullapool area in October.

In Lochaber, the former Lochaber Crofters Union became a branch of the new Crofters Union. Further branches were formed in Morar and District, and in Ardnamurchan and Sunart.

In Argyll, local branches were formed in Tiree and in Mull and Iona.

On the Highland mainland, then, in the course of the year, the new Crofters Union incorporated three former local unions and formed 11 entirely new branches in places previously uninvolved in the crofters union movement. Total mainland membership rose from under 100 to around 600. And in Argyll, also an entirely new area in crofters union terms, some 100 members were recruited.

#### COMPLETION OF REORGANISATION

In the course of the year, then, the Crofters Union Steering Group completed the reorganisation process which the Hunter Report had expected to take some four to five years. The Steering Group created, in short, an entirely new organisation consisting of some 49 local branches and nine area Committees - the entire organisation having some 3000 paid-up members.

The reorganisation process involved the Group Secretary in addressing meetings in Poolewe, Sleat, Dunvegan, Fort William, Lochcarron, Ardgay, Tiree, Morar, Mull, Tongue, Kinlochbervie, Rogart, Acharacle, Helmsdale, Kintail, Ullapool and John o'Groats.

#### CONSTITUTION

In March the Steering Group drew up a draft Crofters Union constitution which was circulated to branches for comment. The Group subsequently agreed to present an amended version of the original draft to the Union's constituting conference for adoption.

#### NOTES ON GUIDANCE AND PROCEDURE

The Group prepared notes for the guidance of new branches and issued papers to branches on procedure for keeping minutes, opening bank accounts, compiling membership lists, remitting funds to the Steering Group, etc.

#### OPERATING BUDGET

In the Spring the Steering Group turned its attention to the financing of the new Union. An annual operating budget for the new organisation was prepared. The total annual operating cost came to £72,000. That figure included all costs from that of running the Union headquarters to that of running a local branch. A further £5000 was included in the budget for 1986 to cover initial capital outlays on office and other equipment.

#### START-UP GRANT

The Group then approached the HIDB for start-up grant aid. Following detailed negotiations between the Group and the Board, the HIDB agreed to provide 50 per cent of the operating budget for 1986 and 1987. Assuming continued satisfactory progress, the Board will meet 25 per cent of the budget in 1988 and 20 per cent in 1989. At that point the Crofters Union will require to be self financing. The HIDB made clear that a major reason for their provision of financial assistance was the rapid and impressive progress made by the Steering Group and by the new Union generally.

#### SUBSCRIPTION

The Steering Group agreed that the annual subscription rate for 1986 will be fixed at £8.00.

#### HEADQUARTERS

The Group agreed that the Crofters Union headquarters will be located in Skye.

#### DISCUSSION WITH NFU

During May the Steering Group commenced a continuing series of discussions with the Scottish NFU with a view to exploring possible relationships between



The Group made it clear that it wished to work closely with the NFU while retaining the complete independence of the Crofters Union.

#### MEMBERSHIP TARGETS

Membership targets were issued to areas and branches with a view to attaining a total Crofters Union membership of some 3000 by November.

#### CROFTERS UNION DIRECTOR

In June the Steering Group advertised the post of Crofters Union director. Press advertisements and a job description were prepared. A Steering Group sub-committee considered the applications. In September the Steering Group appointed James Hunter.

#### INSURANCE

During the summer the Steering Group commenced a series of discussions with insurance companies with a view to determining the best way of offering Crofter Union members a comprehensive insurance service.

#### INFORMATION LEAFLET

The Group prepared and printed several thousand copies of a new Crofters Union information leaflet which was issued to all Union branches.

#### MEMBERSHIP CARDS

The Group prepared and issued Crofters Union membership cards for 1985.

#### INAUGURAL MEETING

The Group made the necessary arrangements for the inaugural conference of the Scottish Crofters Union in Inverness on November 6.

#### CROFTERS UNION NEWSPAPER

The Group prepared, printed and distributed 8500 copies of the first issue of the Crofters Union newspaper - the "Crofter".

#### UNION HEADQUARTERS

The Steering Group acquired headquarters premises for an initial six month period in Broadford.

#### POLICY ISSUES

The work of the Crofters Union Steering Group has been primarily concerned with the reorganisation of the crofters union movement, and with the formation of the Scottish Crofters Union. The Group's limited resources have not permitted it to take an active lead on policy issues. In the course of the year, however, the Group has taken up a number of issues concerning Crofters Union members.

Among these issues were:

the reduction in crofting grants; the proposed cuts in the agricultural advisory service; the fodder crisis arising from the bad summer weather; the representation of the crofting interest on the Scottish Land Court; the commemoration of the centenary of the Crofters Act of 1886 at the 1986 Highland Show; the failure of the GPO to issue a Crofters Act centenary stamp; the future of derating concessions to crofters; the representation of the Crofters Union on the HIDB advisory panel; the future role of Crofters Union liaison officers at the Crofters Commission's assessors conference.

The Steering Group has also encouraged Crofters Union area committees and branches to take up these and other issues locally. The Group has been greatly encouraged by the extent to which this has been done.

#### PUBLICITY

In the course of the year, the Crofters Union Steering Group has sought to maintain good relations with the media. The Group has issued a series of press releases on its progress and the new Crofters Union has received, as a result, a good deal of valuable publicity in the newspapers, on radio and on television.

#### FUTURE

There is a big job of work to be done yet; let us go forward together in unity.

With your support we can achieve a lot more.

Income to Scottish Crofters Union Steering Group to 15.10.85

LEWIS/HARRIS

|           |               |
|-----------|---------------|
| Paice     | 190.00        |
| Barvas    | 616.00        |
| Point     | 406.00        |
| Uig       | 184.00        |
| Scalpay   | 38.00         |
| N Harris  | 168.00        |
| M. Lochs  | 192.00        |
| Stornoway | 76.00         |
| Ness      | 74.00         |
| Kinloch   | <u>168.00</u> |

£2112.00

UIST/BARRA

|           |               |
|-----------|---------------|
| N Uist    | 400.00        |
| Benbecula | 120.00        |
| S Uist    | 360.00        |
| Barra     | <u>200.00</u> |

£1080.00

SKYE

|                |               |
|----------------|---------------|
| Trotternish    | 30.00         |
| Strath & Sleat | 50.00         |
| Portree        | <u>132.00</u> |

£212.00

SHETLAND

£412.00

TIREE

£174.00

MAINLAND

|                         |              |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| Assynt                  | 98.00        |
| Lochaber                | 100.00       |
| Kyle of Sutherland      | 48.00        |
| Lochcarron & Applecross | 112.00       |
| Thurso                  | 4.00         |
| Gairloch                | 116.00       |
| Morar & Dist.           | 46.00        |
| Rogart                  | <u>36.00</u> |

£560.00

Grants

|                                       |                |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| Highlands & Islands Development Board | 5000.00        |
| Western Isles Islands Council         | 1500.00        |
| Highland Regional Council             | 1500.00        |
| Shetland Islands Council              | <u>1500.00</u> |

£9500.00

OTHER

4.00

TOTAL £14,054.00

Expenditure of Scottish Crofters Union Steering Group to 15/10/85

|                             |               |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Jim Hunter                  | 5118.34       |
| Stornoway Office Supplies   | 260.77        |
| Postages                    | 60.75         |
| British Airways             | 730.00        |
| Hugh Matheson               | 77.60         |
| Calum Nicolson              | 15.00         |
| Cummings Hotel              | 174.20        |
| Merlin Restaurant (5 meals) | 29.00         |
| A Fraser                    | 111.15        |
| Angus Macleod               | 886.14        |
| F MacLennan                 | 54.00         |
| J Stonehouse                | 427.82        |
| Stornoway Gazette           | 292.44        |
| Alex MacArthur              | 30.00         |
| Iain Maciver                | 131.90        |
| Data Plastics Ltd           | 547.47        |
| Michael Fraser Assoc        | 797.99        |
| L.C.S.S.                    | 302.75        |
| Hebridean Press Service     | 12.50         |
| Frank Rennie                | 55.55         |
| Angus MacHattie             | <u>123.10</u> |
|                             | £10238.47     |

ASSETS

Accumulated Funds £3825.53

LIABILITIES

Remaining Balance including unrepresented cheques £3825.53

*John W. Fraser*

15/10/85.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

We now have a professional Crofters Union, run by crofters for the benefit of crofters.

If the Union is to be really effective it must be supported financially by all those living in the crofting counties, in order to make an economic impact on the Highlands.

Dont't let the Union down for the sake of £4.00 in 1985 (which is only 8p a week) or £8.00 in 1986 (which is only 16p a week).

JOINING

THE SCOTTISH CROFTERS UNION

Have you joined the Scottish Crofters Union?

If not, do so today and help the Union work for a better future for all our crofting communities. Union membership is open to everyone over the age of 16 years.

Fill in this form and send it, with your subscription, to the treasurer of your local branch or to the address below.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

.....

.....

Please register me as a member of the Scottish Crofters Union.

I enclose my subscription.

Subscription rates: 1985 organising year ..... £4.00

1986 First full year ..... £8.00

Individual associate membership .....£20.00

Organisation " " ..... £50.00

Signature .....

Please make cheques and postal orders payable to  
The Crofters Union