



[Notes on the Foundation of the Scottish Crofters Union]

- Crofter's Union movement in a small way before the War.
- The movement was really organised about 1960, about 25 years ago, in response to the first Crofters Commission report etc.
- The Federation very active at first was formed to coordinate with the various union branches.
- The weakness of the Federation and the Union branches was that it relied on voluntary effort.
- In consequence decline set in and by the late 1970s the movement was almost dead everywhere.
- The Federation office bearers were in Lewis for the first number of years.
- Then it was taken over by the people from Assynt but after a while the Federation became dormant and was not heard of for years and years.
- In 1979 we were able to trace one of the last office bearers of the Federation in Assynt and eventually he agreed to send us whatever papers still in existence - as well as about £250 that lay in a bank account.
- We formed a Federation Committee covering all the Western Isles down to Barra in 1979.
- At the end of the financial year we held the Federation A.G.M. at the Cummings Hotel, in Inverness on the eve of the Assessors Conference so as to attract delegates from all over the seven crofting counties.
- We continued to try and get the various branches of the Union to become members of the Federation and each year we prepared an annual report and held our A.G.M. at Inverness at the time of the Assessors Conference.
- In history, we gradually stimulated interest in the Crofters Union movement and dormant branches began to become live again all over the Highlands but particularly in the Islands including Shetland.
- One of the first things we did was to approach the Highlands and Islands Development Board with a proposal to give us a grant and to enable us to employ a coordinator full time to stimulate and reorganise the movement. We asked for grant for five years and by that time we felt we would be able to raise enough money on our own to pay for the full time organiser.
- After many meetings and much correspondence the H.I.D.B. agreed to finance a feasibility study into our proposals.
- At the A.G.M. on 9th November 1983 - Mr Hugh Maclean announced that the board was prepared to fund a study to the amount of £1,000 and £500 - later on that was raised to £1500 and £750 - expenses (not a lot).
- In 1984 we searched for a suitable person to undertake the feasibility study and we formed a small scale committee of myself, Iain MacIannan of Laxay, Hugh Maclean of the H.I.D.B. and John Angus Mackay also of the H.I.D.B.
- Eventually we appointed Dr. Jim Hunter to undertake the feasibility study and he produced a very comprehensive report, which confirmed our contentions and propositions.
- The Hunter report was so positive and detailed that the crofting world could no longer ignore the need for a reorganised single Crofters Union movement for the whole of the Highland and Islands.
- The Hunter report was received by the Federation A.G.M., which took place in Inverness on 7th November 1984. It was adopted and unanimously approved and a steering committee was set up to

implement the recommendations of the report. There were delegations on the commission from all the Islands as well as throughout the Highlands.

- See page 6 of the 1984/85 Federation Report - Mr D.J. MacCuish.
- In Lewis and Harris we held fourteen meetings throughout the area to explain the proposals in the Hunter report and to suggest that Lewis and Harris be divided into fourteen branches. Everyone agreed and we then held another fourteen meetings to form each of the fourteen branches in Lewis and Harris. We issued eight thousand leaflets - circulated to every grazing clerk. At the same time we were holding meetings of our own in Stornoway as well as attending meetings of the steering group in Inverness.

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