

MEMORANDUM TO CABINET BY THE HON. MINISTER  
OF TRADE, INDUSTRY AND AGRICULTURE

INTRODUCTION OF METRIC WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

On the 28th March, 1967 Cabinet agreed in principle to the introduction at a future date of the Metric System in Malta.

2. The Committee which was set up to deal with this matter has now submitted a report entitled "Recommended Programme for the Introduction of Metric Weights and Measures into Malta". A copy of this report is attached. The Committee has also drafted the necessary legislation.

3. The legislation relates to a Weights and Measures Act which lays down the nature of the system to be adopted - the Systeme International (or SI system). This system is the one adopted by all other countries making the change-over. It is also the system recommended by the International Standards Organisation of which Malta is a member.

4. The proposed legislation also provides for the setting up and the operation of a Weights and Measures Inspectorate.

5. In order to come to a decision on the most practicable date for complete conversion, the Committee circulated a questionnaire to all Government Departments and to all members of the Federation of Malta Industries and the Chamber of Commerce. The Committee also took into consideration the probable date (December 1971) of the introduction of decimal currency in Malta as it felt that a simultaneous target date for the complete metrication of weights and measures would be desirable.

6. After a careful study of all aspects of this question, the Committee decided that a period of four years would be required ...

required for the effective functioning of the inspectorate and has recommended that the target date be fixed accordingly. The Committee has noted that the target date in U.K. has been set as 1975 but the existing high degree of metrication in industry augurs for a more facile change than in U.K. The Committee has stressed, however, that any delay in the making of the formal announcement could result in an increased cost to industry.

7. Hon. Ministers are invited to:
- a) approve the making of a formal announcement by the Hon. Minister of Trade, Industry and Agriculture to the effect that:
    - i) Malta intends to embark on a programme of metrication of weights and measures based on the Systeme International; and that
    - ii) the conversion will be completed by a date to be reckoned 4 years from the date of the making of this announcement.
  - b) agree that the C.A.G. be asked to proceed with the preparation of the draft legislation.

REPORT BY THE STANDING  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Recommended Programme for the  
Introduction of Metric Weights and Measures  
into Malta

Introduction

The question of metrication of weights and measures in Malta was raised at the Sixth Meeting of the Malta Board of Standards on 28.1.66. As a result an ad hoc technical sub-committee was set up and its findings were embodied in a report written by Mr L.A.\* Hayward, the Scientific Adviser in the Department of Industry. This report was submitted to Cabinet and approval in principle was given on the 28th March 1967 that the Metric System should be introduced into Malta at a future date.

Following this decision, a Standing Advisory Committee to deal with this matter was set up. Its composition as approved by the Prime Minister is given in Appendix I. The terms of reference of the Standing Advisory Committee as proposed in the report laid before Cabinet have been very slightly expanded and are given in Appendix II.

The purpose of this report is twofold:-

- (a) to serve as an interim account of the activities of this Committee
- and
- (b) to draw attention to certain recommendations which require immediate consideration and official ratification.

It is important that industrialists be informed of the nature of the system to be adopted and the latest date for final conversion. The Standing Advisory Committee has now made recommendations on both these aspects. Any delay in making a formal announcement on these matters could result in extra cost for the replacement of equipment and plant.

Activities ...

Activities of the Standing Advisory Committee

This Committee has so far met six times in 1968 and a detailed action programme has been agreed upon. Very briefly, this programme has involved a consideration of:-

- (1) legislation
- (2) the setting up of a weights and measures inspectorate
- (3) numerical assessment of existing weights and measures
- (4) replacement of existing weights and measures
- (5) assessment of a target date for complete conversion
- (6) education and propoganda.

The implementation of this programme has involved the setting up of four working parties and the preparation of various questionnaires.

Work has now proceeded, as far as is possible, on items (1) and (5) above but is still continuing on items (2), (3) and (4). Item (6) will be mentioned later in this report.

Nature of System to be Adopted

With regard to item (1) legislation, a Weights and Measures Ordinance, and Weights and Measures Rules, have been drawn up (see Appendixes III and IV). This work was undertaken largely by Mr M. Galea, the Mechanical Engineer of the Department of Industry. These two items of proposed legislation relate to the nature of the system to be adopted viz., the Systeme International (SI system) and to the operation of a Weights and Measures Inspectorate. The Committee has agreed on both of these items and now wishes Government to consider and endorse them. It is not prudent for action to be taken with regard to item (6) education and propoganda until Government has formally announced the nature of the system to be adopted.

It is ...

It is to be noted that the SI system varies in slight detail from the classical metric system but is based on the gram, centimetre and cubic centimetre. Full details appear in Appendix III. The SI system is recommended by the International Standards Organization of which the Department of Industry is a member and is the system being exclusively adopted by all other countries which have converted to the metric system of weights and measures.

#### Preferred Target Date for Complete Conversion

In order to come to a decision on the most practicable date for complete conversion, questionnaires were circulated to Heads of all Government Departments, and to all members of the Federation of Malta Industries and Chamber of Commerce.

Replies to the questionnaires revealed a surprisingly high existing degree of metrication in both the Government and private sector. Many industries felt that they would be able to change over at the relatively short notice of a year or less.

The probable date of introduction of decimal currency into Malta of December 1971 was taken into consideration and there was a general consensus of opinion that a simultaneous target date for the complete metrication of weights and measures would be desirable. The Department of Education were, for example, anxious for the two change overs to coincide in order to reduce expenses in connection with the purchase of text books.

After a careful study of all aspects of the matter, it was, however, decided that it would be impracticable to recruit and train officers for the weights and measures inspectorate in time for a change by this date. Eventually it was agreed that as a total of four years would be required for the effective functioning of the inspectorate, the earliest possible date for complete conversion should be fixed as December 1973.

It is to be noted that the corresponding target date in the United Kingdom has been set as 1975. The smallness of Malta, the low level of industrialisation and the existing high degree of metrication augur for a more

facile ...

change than in the United Kingdom.

Summary and Conclusions

If ultimate official approval is given to the recommended target date and to the proposed legislation which embodies the nature of the system to be adopted and the operation of a weights and measures inspectorate, action should now be taken on the following three points.

- (1) A formal public announcement should be made immediately, to the effect that Malta intends to convert to the Systeme International (SI system) of weights and measures and that this conversion will be completed by December 1973 at the latest, after which date the new system will become law. This is provided that the announcement is made before the end of January 1969, as a period of four years is required to get the weights and measures inspectorate functioning properly.
- (2) The Ordinance on Weights and Measures and the Regulations thereto at Appendixes III and IV should be published with the minimum possible delay.
- (3) The weights and measures inspectorate should be in operation by December 1972 at the latest. This will entail (a) the immediate recruitment of officers who will be required to attend an overseas training course and (b) the provision of funds for the setting up of the inspectorate, and the purchase of standard weights and measures and ancillary equipment.

APPENDIX I

Standing Advisory Committee  
to Deal with the  
Metrication of Weights and Measures  
in Malta

The composition of this Committee as approved  
by the Prime Minister is as follows:-

W. Podesta' Esq.	Director of Industry (Chairman)
C. Psaila Esq.	Assistant Director of Public Works
E. Diacono Esq.	Representative of the Education Department
L.A.W. Hayward Esq.	Scientific Adviser Department of Industry
M. Galea Esq.	Mechanical Engineer Department of Industry
Major A.J. Calasione	Representative of the Chamber of Commerce
Luke V. Gauci Esq.	Representative of the Federation of Malta Industries
R.M. Plummer Esq.	Representative of the Malta Drydocks Corporation
M.A. Aquilina Esq.	Secretary Department of Industry

APPENDIX II

Terms of reference of the Standing Advisory Committee on Metrication as slightly amended by the Committee:-

- (1) Advise and recommend to Government any measures necessary for the facilitation of the metrication programme;
- (2) Keep Government closely advised of progress towards metrication;
- (3) Appoint working parties or individuals as necessary to deal with the manifold aspects of the subject;
- (4) Advise Government of target dates for conversion in various sectors;
- (5) Assist the promotion of metrication by various forms of propaganda.

APPENDIX III

Draft Legislation

(This is not attached as it has still to be vetted by the Crown Advocate General).