

4th October, 1934.

The Secretary,
The Australian Dried Fruits' Assn.,
Melbourne.

DEAR SIR,—

The purpose of this letter is to solicit your assistance in connection with our application to be placed on the Commonwealth Dried Fruit Control Board's list. We are enclosing a copy of a letter addressed to the Chairman of the Board, which will give you some understanding of the whole situation.

Reference to your files will show that the whole of our business for prunes, apricots, peaches, nectarines and pears have been confined to the Australian Dried Fruit Association through your selling agents. We feel sure that the support we have accorded Australian fruits in the past the exclusion of Californian and South African which as you know are competitive, and in some cases particularly prunes, slightly better than Australian that there should be no reason why the Control Board will not accept our business on vine fruits.

We think, perhaps, in view of the circumstances your Association may approach the Board on our behalf and any action you care to take will be appreciated by us. We are reluctant to place our business outside Australia but we are afraid that the position is one where we are not being fairly treated by the Board's refusal to supply us with the vine fruits and expecting us to purchase from merchants at 10% above landed cost, when we are confining the whole of our purchases on prunes, apricots, &c., to Australian and paying a slight premium in some cases because these are Empire products.

Yours faithfully,
NATIONAL DISTRIBUTORS LTD.

11th October, 1934.

Stanley H. Wilson, Esq.,
Messrs. Pavcy, Wilson, & Cohen,
Solicitors, 360 Collins Street, Melbourne.

DEAR SIR,—

National Distributors Ltd.

I duly received your letter of the 30th ult. and I am afraid that owing to the long lapse of time since we first wrote you, you have overlooked the advices which we originally gave you. In my letter to Mr. King on the 2nd March last which you had to deal with owing to his unfortunate death I forwarded a copy of the correspondence between ourselves and the Hon. Mr. William A. Watt. My first letter dated the 12th January 1934 to Mr. Watt sets out the fact that National Distributors Ltd. is a wholesale Company which does all the buying for the Self Help Stores. As a matter of fact I suppose I might have made the position more clear although I think it has been mentioned in other correspondence with the Board. National Distributors is purely a wholesale company. Self Help Stores Ltd. is a retail organization. National Distributors Ltd. in addition to doing all the buying for the Self Help Stores Ltd., also buys for other companies to a fairly considerable extent so that National Distributors Ltd. has for some time been in the position that you advise Mr. Sutherland to attain. The only difficulty is that up to the present the Merchants' Association in New Zealand have declined to admit National Distributors Ltd. as a member of their Association.

You will, of course, appreciate the fact that while several of the merchants belonging to the Merchants' Association are directly interested and are controlling and running chain stores, yet the more difficult they can make it for Mr. Sutherland to obtain supplies cheaply through National Distributors Ltd. the less effective his opposition through Self Help Co-op. Ltd. is likely to be, so that the position is actually that while National Distributors Ltd. is and has been since its inception a wholesale company, yet it does not belong to the Merchants' Association.

I might say in addition that the shareholders of National Distributors Ltd. are none of them shareholders in Self Help Stores Ltd. and none of the shareholders of Self Help Stores Ltd. are shareholders in National Distributors Ltd. Actually, members of Mr. Sutherland's family are interested in the two companies so that while technically the two companies are not associated, yet actually there is a close bond. I mention this because I want you to be seized of the full facts. Dealing again with your letter you say, "The result is this, that as long as your man stands as at present he has no hope of getting on the list. He is not a merchant. I understand that all merchants are entitled to be placed on the list."

Actually, as I have explained National Distributors Ltd. is purely a wholesale merchant company and is not in any way connected with the retail business. If therefore, your letter gives a correct statement of the position there seems to be no reason why National Distributors Ltd. should not be placed on the same terms as its competitors. Will you take the first opportunity of seeing Mr. Bell again. You may think it wise to delay approaching him for a little while. We shall have to leave this to you.

Please keep us in touch with the position.

Yours truly,
O. & R. BEERE & Co.

16th October, 1934.

S. H. Wilson, Esq.,
Messrs. Pavcy, Wilson, & Cohen,
360 Collins St., Melbourne.

Dear Sir,—

National Distributors Ltd. & The Dried Fruits Board.

We have to-day cabled you as follows :—

Son "Our letter seventh August National Distributors Sutherlands in fathers absence forwarded formal application direct Board sending you all copies correspondence would like you see Bell suggest he defer action if unfavourable meantime".

You will remember that in our letter to you of the 7th August we told you that Mr. Sutherland had sent forward a special order to the Board and that if it were dealt with as he expected he would know that his application had been granted. Apparently, however, his application has not been granted. Mr. Sutherland is still in very poor health and during his absence from the office his son who did not know of our recent correspondence with you sent a letter direct to the Dried Fruits Board. We enclose herewith copy of that letter dated the 4th October also copies of letter sent to the Co-op. Dried Fruits Sales Pty. Ltd. Sydney and to the Leeton Packing Co. Ltd. of Melbourne. There is, we think nothing in the letter to the Board to which exception could be taken but in order that you can understand the whole position Mr. Sutherland instructs us that he has been advised that after he had been placed on the direct list for three months a deputation committee of New Zealand merchants sent over to Australia interviewed the Dried Fruits Board and advised them that if National Distributors Ltd. were put on the direct list they, the New Zealand merchants, would exert pressure on the New Zealand Government with a view to having duties removed from Californian and other American dried fruits.

It is difficult to believe either that anything so stupid should have been said to the Board or that if it were said the Board should have taken any notice of it, because it is quite obvious to anybody who knows anything about the position in New Zealand that such a threat was quite impossible of being put into action. The Board may possibly have been impressed by the representation of New Zealand Merchants' Association as some of those merchants have been very active in their opposition to Mr. Sutherland and his company. Exactly the same position arose with