

and referred to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to move second reading of Bill C-23, which is an act to facilitate conversion to the metric system of measurement.

I should like to talk first about the principles behind the government's decision in 1970 to assume a leadership role in metric conversion. We all know that to make such a change in a modern industrial nation entails cost and inconvenience. But it is also clear that almost every country in the world has concluded that the benefits offered by the metric system more than justify the costs of converting to it. Only Burma, the Yemen Arab Republic, the Yemen Peoples Republic, and Liberia are not yet converting. Of the countries now converting, Australia and New Zealand, for example, are about 75 per cent converted.

The benefits of metric conversion derive mainly from the inherent simplicity of the system which tends to have the effect of speeding up and simplifying the measurement calculations which are made every day throughout the economy. By simplifying many measurement-sensitive operational jobs it helps keep operating costs down, no matter what the size of a company.

Increasing Canada's exports is also one of the key reasons why it makes good economic sense to go metric. It has been estimated that almost half of Canada's export trade is measurement-sensitive; and there is a clear market trend to the metric system both inside and outside North America. The increasing importance to Canada of export markets, especially for manufactured goods, confers a certain urgency on the need to convert. In the case of exports by secondary industries to countries outside North America it is the practical judgment of many of those who are concerned with Canadian trade in many of the established metric areas of the world that the unfamiliar inch-pound standards significantly hinder Canada's penetration of those markets. On this score, there is one country which will no doubt continue for many years to be our most fertile export market, and that is the United States. It is a mistake to think that our great southern neighbour is moving only very slowly to the metric system. In fact the United States is adopting the metric system much more quickly than is generally believed. For example, 40 per cent of all General Motors automotive parts are manufactured to metric dimensions.

There is one principle which pervades all areas of the national effort. It is that metric conversion must be carefully planned, timed, and phased in order to make sure we minimize the cost while maximizing the benefits for the public, industry, labour and government at all levels. In 1970, the leaders of all parties in this House gave their support to the principle of metric conversion and to the policy as outlined in the white paper on metric conversion. On the basis of this support the government established the Metric Commission in 1971, and in 1974 approved the national program of guideline dates for metric conversion, consisting of four distinct phases as follows: Phase I—Investigation to be completed in 1974; Phase II—

### *Metric System*

Planning to be completed in 1975; Phase III—Scheduling, to be completed this year; Phase IV—Implementation to begin in 1975 and to peak in 1978, the end of 1980 being fixed as the guideline date by which the economy will be working substantially in metric units.

Last year a resolution in connection with this program of guideline dates was introduced in the House by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. The Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs examined and endorsed the program last December. The ministers responsible for metric conversion in each of the provinces, who met with the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce in Ottawa in April, 1976, also unanimously endorsed it.

The program was similarly endorsed by organizations such as the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, the iron and steel industry, the Canadian Construction Association, the Canadian Telecommunications Carriers' Association, the Canadian Labour Congress, and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. The following two associations also endorsed it and stressed the importance of passing amendments to legislation: the Canadian Gas Association, and the Canadian Petroleum Association. The program received qualified endorsement from the following organizations: the Retail Council of Canada, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Retail Merchants' Association, the Canadian Federation of Retail Grocers, and the Canadian Electrical Manufacturers' Association.

Supporting metric conversion since 1971, some 1,500 volunteers from all sectors of the economy have been investigating, planning, scheduling, and in some cases actually implementing metric conversion in their respective sectors of the economy. These national metric conversion officers, grouped into more than 100 sector committees, have put their faith in the leadership of the government. They have produced sector plans for their industries which contain specific guideline dates indicating when it would be in their best interests to introduce metric products and services. They expect the appropriate legislation to be properly amended in time to meet their schedules. They are doing their share, and the results of their work are already evident in hospitals, in weather reports, in metric road signs on many of our roads, in litre milk containers in British Columbia and Quebec, litre soft drink and wine bottles and, kilometer per hour speedometers on 1977 cars, to mention just a few examples.

Hon. members may ask why an omnibus bill is being presented. Mr. Speaker, the House has already passed the law which is the basis for virtually everything the economy does in terms of measurement. I refer to the Weights and Measures Act of 1873, amended in 1971, which makes the international system of units legal for all purposes in Canada. But there are still approximately 90 federal acts which must be amended if we are to keep pace with the march of events I have just described.

Differing national sector plans call for different implementation dates in the various industries or public services. Although the implementation dates are not mandatory, they