

tion imposed metric conversion on this land without any consultation with Parliament, other than in a most strictly formal sense. There was no desire by the previous Liberal government to allow a full debate in this House to assess the human impact of metric conversions. On the only two occasions that I know of that the subject of metric conversion came before the House, it was a time exactly like this, the ghetto hour of Friday afternoon between four o'clock and five o'clock. In fact the last time was in 1975 on a Friday afternoon, March 17, St. Patrick's Day, somewhere around 3.30 or four in the afternoon. One can imagine how much interest and attention were being paid to the subject then.

Any amateur observer of the proceedings of the this chamber will know that a so-called debate during this hour is about as exciting as watching a casket warp. Still, this desperate hour represents the very first time that Parliament has examined the human factor in going metric. I regard this intervention as merely an opening shot in the debate on the need for voluntary metric conversion.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Scott (Hamilton-Wentworth):** The intent of this motion is to impress on the Parliament of Canada the need to listen to the people of this country regarding their resentment of the way metrication has been imposed on Canadians. I do not think it is widely known that this imposition of metric on the Canadian people has been the greatest intervention by a government in the lives of more than 20 million Canadians since World War II. Total metrication was not only a creature of the former Trudeau government, but it remains a present commitment and, indeed, an indelible commandment of the current administration: proceed, and damn the torpedoes. My notice of motion is, as I say, to bring some democracy and some sanity to the whole metrication process.

Let me refer to the metric overview board's review of the metrication process and recommendations for action, and while mentioning this report which, incidentally, has not yet been made public by the government, may I on behalf of many members of this House of Commons commend its authors, Mr. Gordon MacEachern and Mr. Rex Werts, for their thorough examination of this very important subject affecting the lives of so many Canadians.

This matter of voluntary conversion is one of the greatest importance. Time and time again in the white paper of 1970 when it came before this House, emphasis was laid on the fact that the discussed change to metric was to be achieved by voluntary means. This promise soon became lost in the actions which followed. Metric Commission officials continue to refer to actions being voluntary because the consensus principle was applied. The metric overview board has insisted that due to the actions of government this is only voluntary in the old army sense: you have no choice but to volunteer.

Throughout its work the overview board has upheld the definition of voluntary used by the American National Metric Council: "Voluntary: freedom of choice as to if and when conversion is to be carried out". The executive director of the Metric Commission I have never met, but the commission

itself certainly has been almost unaware of the rights and opinions of the people of Canada.

In more recent times the commission has appeared to lose credibility as it chose to ignore the rising opposition to metrication either at home, in the United Kingdom, or in the United States. As the United States is by far our paramount trading partner in every respect, I think it behoves us as a matter of common sense to bring our metric posture into line with America's, and right away. Whether we like it or not, the North American economy is so interlocked with so many pervasive linkages, products, factories, corporations, equipment, communications, information systems, advanced technology, research and development, community of regulations, measurement standards and statistics that, in my view, any basic move to use a different measurement system entirely here is almost incomprehensible. The United Kingdom has recently moved to slam the brakes on metric for the next ten years, and now—would you believe?—Japan, one of our largest importers and exporters, has admitted metric defeat.

During a meeting in July, 1979, in Sacramento, California, a member of the California Metric Conversion Council told the group that he had been informed that Japan had enacted legislation which now legalizes the use of traditional, customary measurement units once again. Some of the old units would be used along with some of the metric ones as they had done before a number of years ago. According to the report, the relegalization of the old units took place only after considerable public pressure was brought to bear on the law makers for the last two years. That is the kind of public pressure that I hope we are able to launch here in this House of Commons right now.

Japan has had confusion in its measurement field for many years, apparently, since it first began to utilize metric in the pre-World War I days. In any event, industries held on to some of the nationalized metric units, but they did not agree with the European metric in a number of ways. They even came up with a metric screw thread in Japan for industry which did not coincide with the French-European metric thread sizes, so export customers like the Americans who purchased Japanese cars and motorcycles later requiring repair parts soon learned that there would be problems if they mixed the two types of metric nuts and bolts.

What did the Americans do? Not agreeing with either system, they came up with a so-called modified metric system, and now we have three different kinds of nuts and bolts, and all three thread types are different and cannot be interchanged.

The nationalization of the metric system has been going on almost as long as metric has been known in many countries around the world. Most nations have provisions for changing metric units to suit themselves. We have a metric system, the system *internationale*, which is used, to my knowledge, in only three other countries of the world, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, and now we are going into metric, so I do not buy the argument that Canada's going metric puts us in step with our trading partners around the world.