

Metric System

all about the projections of straight lines, correction lines by survey instruments and surveyors' chains for calculating distance and area. I know the history of the projection of the fourth reference meridian, which was a separate true north meridian running north from the American border for 720 miles, established in 1896. Later, this line became the boundary between Alberta and Saskatchewan.

I know this history because the surveyed meridian went right through the ranch on which I still live; it went through it some ten years after that ranch was established. I am certain no such surveys are anticipated, but that is my personal opinion. If they are, farmers should be so notified. If not, they should still be informed. Will land titles be changed to kilometres, metres and hectares? If so, when? Will it be after new legislation becomes law, after the sale of land and before transfer of title, or will there be no change at all? We should be told. All landowners, especially western farm landowners, want to know these answers now. If this information is now available, farmers are not aware of it. That is because of the information put out about this bill. I am fully aware of the fact that land is the responsibility of our provincial governments, including land titles, assignments and taxation. However, I point out that the first western survey was the responsibility of the federal government.

● (1610)

I draw to the attention of hon. members on both sides of the House the remarks of the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton) before lunch with regard to the question of legality of land ownership, the legislation which supports that type of ownership of land and the basis on which it is done in western Canada. I received a message by correspondence and by personal communication from farmers in the west with whom I discussed this question. I might point out that I received no comments from my city friends or academic friends. The message is that if a metric change is to be made, let it be made after the grain is delivered to the country elevator. That means the continued use of miles, acres, bushels and pounds. That message clearly questions the need for any change to any portion of the metric system unless and until the United States is ready to make a similar change at the same time. It has been suggested that after the withdrawal of the first effective date for this metric bill, the new date will be the end of the crop year, or July 31, 1977. If this is so, the minister responsible for small business should say so now, if possible.

I want to make some brief comments on a front page story in the May 26 edition of the *Western Producer* dealing with the metric grain issue. This has been mentioned by some of my colleagues but I think it important to again draw attention to it. The article reported on a recent meeting of the Canadian Grain Commission Metric Conversion Committee in Winnipeg. The chairman, Earl Baxter, indicated that his committee was a little bitter about the confusion respecting the progress of this bill through parliament. The article points out that the grain industry has already spent \$300,000 in anticipation of metric grain conversion; that it is highly unlikely the

[Mr. Hargrave.]

changeover can take place before August, and the next likely date is February, 1978.

Mr. Baxter blamed both the government and the opposition for these problems. He speculated that with a federal election next year—that is the reference in the article—he had doubts about that 1978 date. I have considerable sympathy for Mr. Baxter and his metric grain conversion committee. I am sure he followed very faithfully the terms of reference assigned to his committee. The explanation for his bitterness is obvious. Some groups in very high places in both farm organizations and governments forgot to communicate with the largest sector of our society directly concerned with the consequences of this proposed legislation, namely, the farmers.

In the meantime, I am certain that my grain farming constituents will want me firmly to support the third reading amendment introduced by the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain. It makes the reasonable suggestion that the bill be returned to committee to further assess the somewhat delayed but very genuine views of the people who will be directly affected by this legislation. Let us never forget that. It is not we in this House who will be directly affected, but the grain producers.

Mr. Gordon Ritchie (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, I rise to take part in the debate on third reading of this very controversial bill. I support the amendment of the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton) that the bill be returned to committee for further study of certain very limited areas.

Never was more blatant political power used than in the introduction of this bill. It appears as though the metric committee only contacted one or two large civil service-oriented groups such as the Wheat Board and suggested that metric conversion be introduced. The grain trade did not see anything particularly wrong, because the metric system had been used in the selling of grain for decades. It is probably an ideal means of selling grain because of the large volumes involved. However, they did not realize the effect it would have on the 200,000 permit holders.

The grain trade fell over itself trying to do what it had been told by the government, not realizing that it had a choice. The various grain people and companies which promote grain sales and act with regard to quality control did not realize the widespread resentment toward this legislation. Only bilingualism and gun control has created more animosity in western Canada at the rural level than the introduction of the metric system. While this is no disadvantage to the grain trade, it certainly is to the person on the farm.

It has not been proven that changing to the metric system will increase production on the farm. In fact, for many years it will have exactly the opposite effect. It will increase the possibility of error such as using too much herbicide or weed killer, and too little fertilizer. This is because farmers are accustomed to using bushels, acres, pounds and gallons.