

ment to proclaim the legislation until the slack season in the fall, any way. I ask that we take some time in the summer and the fall to get to the farmers directly and use the occasion to explain the advantages of the metric system.

Mr. Mazankowski: Use it to call an election.

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): Be honest about the difficulties. Guarantee the farmers that you are not going to ask them to change the land measurement system. If the government did this, we would all take part in trying to persuade people. After several years we would get used to using tonnes instead of bushels. It would not hurt too much; it would be a mental exercise. We would have great difficulty persuading the farmers who use very accurate measurements in the spraying of their fields and use ounces per acre, the precise amount, the precise pressure and the precise speed in putting on that spray. If he does not do it accurately, he loses his crop and his whole year's living. If you shift him into millilitres per hectare, he has to do this calculation in the fields without the quiet serenity of an office with a calculator. He might make mistakes and he would have a tremendous economic loss.

All these jobs of persuasion and education at the face to face level have to be done, and the politicians should play a part. If the procedure of consultation is not followed in getting them persuaded, willingly or at least half willingly, we are in for a terrific fight. What we in the opposition want to do is make sure that the government does not use its majority to force through legislation which, in the minds of the people, was not properly prepared. That is our purpose.

There is one thing we will not accept. That is the land measurement. It is not needed. It is uneconomic. It will raise a political storm that will add one more factor to the divisions in this country and the alienation of people toward this parliament and this government. I move, seconded by the hon. member for Red Deer:

That all the word after "That" be struck out and following substituted therefor:

"Bill C-23, an act to facilitate conversion to the metric system of measurement, be not now read a third time, but that it be referred back to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs for the purpose of reconsidering clauses 2, 6, 8 and 10 in the light of further evidence which may be heard from the grain industry, and especially the farmers."

That, in essence, is putting the minister's promise into the legislation. I conclude by pointing out as strongly as I can that this is not a matter of life and death to the nation. It was primarily an effort to assist international companies which buy and sell on world markets to work in units acceptable to the whole world. It was to increase our productivity and efficiency as part of the whole of business. I do not think it was ever designed to be an effort to attack the cultural attachments of people which go back into the centuries.

In spite of what I have been told by farmers and people in my constituency about their opposition to the use of tonnes and millilitres instead of ounces, I am prepared to go out and say that in the long run it will be simpler and better, and if they are careful and do not make mistakes they can learn it.

Metric System

Certainly, their children will have an easier system to work with than the Imperial system.

I think I speak for a good many people on that issue. However, I know that the antagonism toward myself and others who take that stand will be pronounced. This government has stirred the people up on this issue to such a degree that it is very difficult to talk rationally. That is because of the government's mishandling of this matter. The government did not accept my proposal during second reading debate to take out the word "hectare". They did not accept our seven or eight amendments in committee. They turned them down, with every member of the Liberal party voting against them. In spite of all this, I hope they will consider and accept this hoist until the minister completes what he has promised to do and then brings back the legislation. With the views of the farmers we can then push it forward to the degree that they will let us.

Do not force this system on the farmers. It will not help the country. We have always sold our grain on the metric system. For a hundred years we have used the system, but we have never bothered the elevator man or the man at the farm gate. Now we are asking him to be bothered, in the name of economic unity. Let us get this matter back on the rails again. All parties support the principle. Let us have all parties support the conversion, instead of trying to ram it through. My views are well known. If you turn things over to a certain type of civil servant, he is trained in only one thing, that is, to have everything minutely complete and in place. Civil servants want everything neat and tidy. Sometimes that causes those of us in the political field a lot of trouble. If the politicians did their job and spoke for the people, we could get this back on the rails.

There is a further matter. The government has welcomed into its midst a leading opponent of the metric system. Everyone across the west knows that if metric conversion is not stopped, it is evidence he has no weight in the cabinet, and he is destroyed. Maybe that is the purpose of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau); I do not know. But I do know the politics of western Canada. If the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) cannot stop this metric conversion, they say the whole purpose of his entering the cabinet is nullified and all this talk about getting leading citizens in western Canada to join the Liberal Party dies because there is no trust in the implied promise of the Prime Minister to the hon. member for Crowfoot at the time of his appointment.

● (1150)

This is a critical matter, it is an economic matter and a matter of plain common sense.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): As well as a matter of conscience.

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): Since the government has made this mistake in the handling of the matter, for heaven's sake let it consider this amendment seriously, accept it in the House, stop the debate and get on to other business.