

Metrication

Canada goes metric, too

by Jenny Pearson

The metric race is on. Will Canada beat the United States into the world market with products marked in metric units?

Such is one line taken by the resourceful Metric Commission in its publicity to urge, frighten and generally pummel the Canadian public to "Go metric!" For once, the North American continent has fallen behind the rest of the civilized world in this aspect of progress. Both the United States and Canada are busy doing the thing in their own way, so it seems natural enough to make a race of it.

"Canada is ahead of the United States in scheduling for conversion to the metric system for length, capacity and weight measurements, and plans to stay that way!" Stevenson Gossage, chairman of Canada's Metric Commission, announced a little while back. He told Canadians there would be "a distinct advantage in international trade" if they could complete their programme of conversion ahead of the United States. Going first into the market with goods marked in metric units, they would have an advantage of trade with the European Economic Community as well as with Japan, China and Russia.

Conversion is expected to be completed within five or six years: the schedule is being pretty elastic because in Canada, as in Britain, the process is being kept "voluntary". The various sectors of Canadian industry and commerce, indeed every branch of activity affected by the change, are being allowed to proceed with it in their own way and at their own pace.

Even so, the leaders of the movement towards metrication are leaving the country in little doubt as to the direction in which they are all moving – and the implication is quite clear that you will find yourself in a pretty uncomfortable position if you don't hurry up and move, too. Peering across the Atlantic to study the British example, with M-day under two years away for us, there is a feeling that Britain's way of going about it has been just a bit too *laissez-faire*.

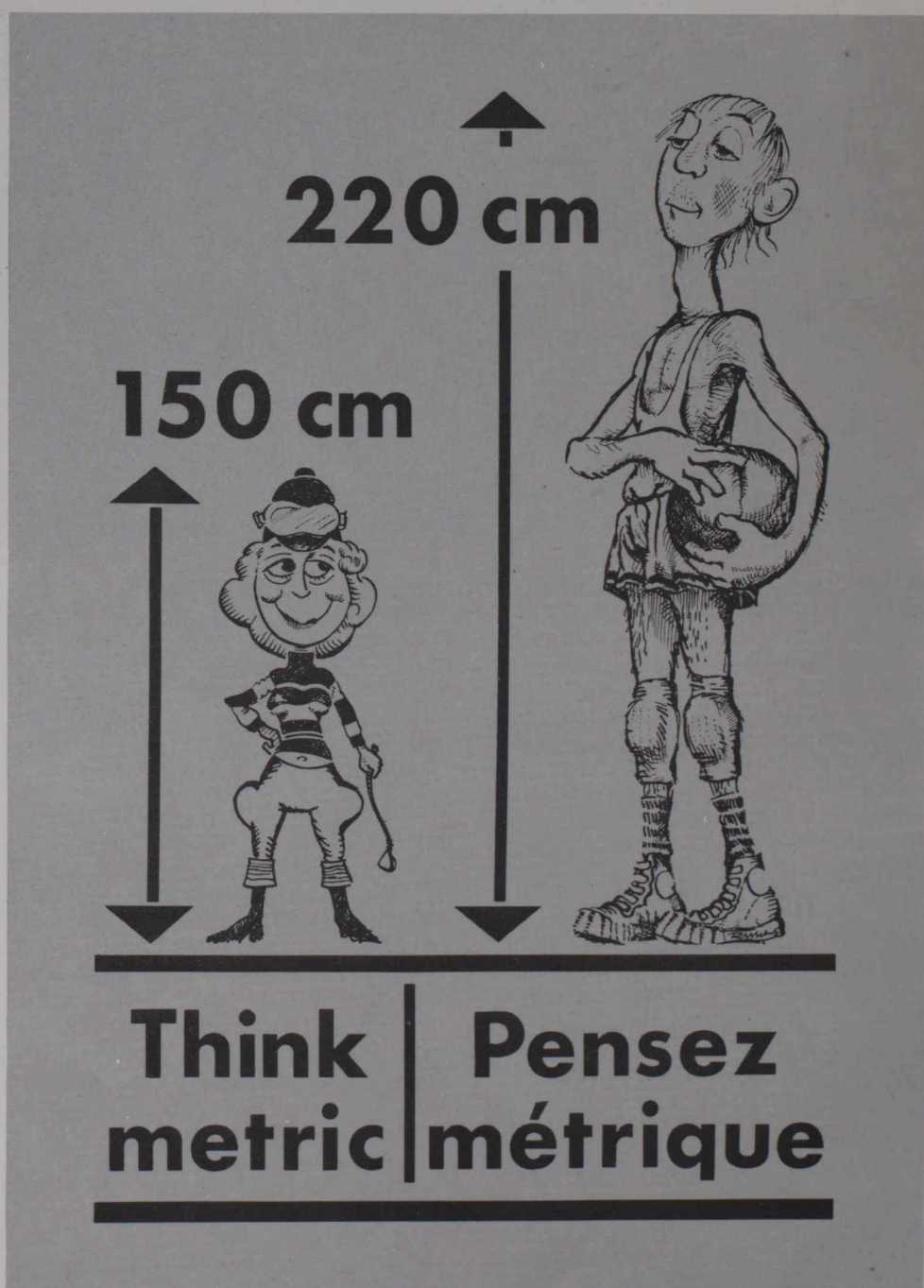
Albert J. Mettler, secretary of the Canadian Metric Association and a self-appointed spur (or thorn) in the side of the Metric Commission, has pronounced that, "The permissive attitude of the British Government (shall we ever escape that adjective?) with their repeated assurance that no compulsion was envisaged, is perhaps their most serious mistake." He has also complained about Canada dragging its metric feet in comparison with the United States, where "even baseball scores

have begun to be given in metric equivalents."

Whatever the state of the race, the Canadian public on their side are fair bombarded with pamphlets and leaflets and booklets from Government sources to bring the idea home to them. The publicity takes many forms, ranging from learned disquisitions on the history of measure-

ment. (Once we measured with parts of our body: now we are more accurate and scientific: the ultimate in this development is the international system of units, the basis of metrication) to the more jazzy visual appeal of a poster pin-up with vital statistics marked on in centimetres.

One way to get people to adopt a new style is to run down the existing one and



Metric Commission Poster