

*Weights and Measures Act*

The hon. member for St. John's East referred to a number of important provisions of the act and to amendments which were made during the course of the committee's hearings on the bill. For example, he mentioned clause 10 (p) of the bill which relates to the measurement of liquids dispensed by vending machines, in regard to which up to now there has been no regulation at all. I think this is a conservative statistic that will appeal to hon. members opposite: according to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, as of 1968, which are the latest available figures, there were some 14,000 coin-operated, liquid vending machines in Canada. These machines dispense coffee, soup, soft drinks and a multitude of liquid products.

● (8:40 p.m.)

Whereas there has been no regulation covering those machines in respect of whether they must give a proper measure or money's worth, so to speak, this bill of course will provide the power to regulate that kind of measuring device, as it is called within the bill, to ensure that it gives an accurate measure and that there is no misrepresentation or deception in connection with the measurement it provides.

The hon. member for St. John's East also mentioned clauses 18 and 32 and the provisions relating to the delivery of oil by oil delivery machines. Another statistic we may place on the record is that there are some 3,000 fuel oil vending trucks in use in Canada and of course most of those, if not 99.44 per cent of them, are operated by honest merchants delivering oil in an honest and proper way. Our inspectors, however, have found—as the hon. member for St. John's East pointed out—that there are some cases of what is called riding with the ticket. This bill will deal with that practice.

The hon. member for St. John's East also referred to clause 27 and the device on a motor vehicle which measures the mileage. I am sure all of us have had the experience of buying a used car and wondering whether or not the mileage shown on that car is in fact the true mileage. Clause 27 is designed to deal with that problem. The hon. member asked whether we had had consultation with the provinces in this connection and in connection with the whole bill.

I assure him, as I assured members of the committee, that we had written to all provincial motor vehicles branches with relation to proposed section 27 and the regulations relating to odometers, and had a response from one which indicated they did not like the wording in clause 27 because they believed it might create problems. Consequently I proposed an amendment before the Standing Committee to which this bill was referred. This clause is designed, hopefully, to avoid any difficulty such as the earlier draft may have created.

As I say, every member of this House has probably wondered when buying a used car whether the mileage was correct. Clause 27 at least is a substantive provision of the law which will make it an offence to tamper with odometers or mileage indicators on a car for purposes of deceiving the public. The hon. member asked whether we could enforce this provision. That is a very good ques-

tion. I am not sure whether or not we can enforce it, but at least we will have a substantive prohibition in the law of Canada against such a practice, which we did not have up until now.

If there are those who have any indication that a dealer or salesman is tampering with the odometer of a motor vehicle, I would hope they would report that fact to us so we could investigate and determine whether there is a case which would warrant bringing these people to court. I am the first to admit that enforcement will be a problem. But up until now there has been no prohibition against this practice, and now we have the prohibition I can assure hon. members we will endeavour to enforce the clause.

There are, of course, other steps which we hope will be taken. I know that the provincial motor vehicles departments are considering the provision of a registration or log book for each motor vehicle, in which the mileage and the repairs to that vehicle would be recorded. In other words, there would be a history of motor vehicles something like a ship's log book or registration book. This is a matter which is under provincial jurisdiction and I understand provincial governments are looking at this sort of thing in order to cut down the abuse and malpractice that goes on.

There is also the hope that the motor vehicle manufacturers could develop an odometer which is tamper-proof. I understand that the North American car manufacturers and instrument manufacturers are devoting a good deal of attention to the development of an odometer which cannot be tampered with and which will in fact show the proper mileage of a motor vehicle.

The hon. member for St. John's East also mentioned an important provision in this bill which allows the usual well known measurements in Canada in units of the pound, the inch and so on, and also makes legal the Canadian use of the metric system. Of course, the government indicated in a white paper tabled in this Parliament last February that we think Canada should convert to the metric system and that a number of steps will be taken to encourage Canadians to use the metric system, make it available to them and make them knowledgeable in respect of it. This bill makes legal the use of the metric system. It does not make it obligatory or mandatory. When it is made mandatory in Canada, another amendment to this act will be required.

The hon. member mentioned enforcement. I advise him we have 178 inspectors in Canada. These are the weights and measures inspectors of my department. All these inspectors are working at full tilt. We are trying to make our operation as effective and efficient as possible. Whenever we receive a complaint of under-inspection or under-enforcement, we endeavour to correct it. If the hon. member has specific evidence that the act is not being enforced in some respect, I would like be the first to hear about it so we could take remedial action. Naturally, the effectiveness of enforcement depends upon our financial resources to a great extent, but I believe generally the Weights and Measures Act has been well enforced by my department. I assure him we endeavour to make it effective.