

*Trade Policies*

be unwilling to admit it at this point after allowing its candidates to run at the mouth about the evil of metric, it has in many instances improved Canada's trade relationship.

**An hon. Member:** I love this.

**An hon. Member:** What a crock.

**Mr. Chenier:** I thank the hon. members for their applause. I am very happy. I see that they understand. In many instances metric has improved Canada's trade relationship, and within the industries themselves they see conversion as one would view the learning of a new language. There is no clapping now. There seems to be a problem on the other side with learning new languages. We are able in trade terms to communicate with many new markets which we have just begun to develop.

**An hon. Member:** Name one.

**Mr. Chenier:** I add as a footnote that the European Economic Community, with which we do a significant amount of business, imposes a penalty on the import of all non-metric goods.

One of the complaints most often raised by members of the government about metrication is the effect our conversion has or will have on our trade relationship with the United States. Although I am reluctant to dignify these kinds of comments by responding to them, they do deserve a severe repudiation. I have yet to hear or be informed of any real disadvantage posed to any one particular industry in Canada by converting to metric as far as its business in the United States is concerned. We are the envy of that country for the smoothness of the conversion process which has taken place in Canada.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Pepin:** Prove the opposite if you can.

**Mr. Chenier:** There are people on the other side who laugh, but they do not seem to know what we are talking about. The stories I have heard have turned out to be based on misinformation or just the wishful thinking of some people who do not understand the system or do not want to.

However, let me comment on an alleged horror story reported in a western newspaper. The writer, whose political leaning is obvious, suggests that lumber manufacturers, because they currently produce both metric size lumber for Canada and non-metric for the United States, must run their lumber through cutting machines twice in order to produce two sizes. Besides having the wrong political leaning, the writer obviously has never worked in a lumber mill or, if he has, it was in a very small and inflexible one, because edgers and planers can be adjusted readily to any measurement. However, rather than check his facts, this writer concludes:

To satisfy government, the lumber industry will have to run its Canadian goods through the saw twice, at extra cost to peel off those offending millimetres.

One can only wish that this person had found out about how lumber is cut but, then again, there are not very many lumber mills on the prairies.

[Mr. Chenier.]

Conversion to metric vis-à-vis the United States has not been of the nature described by the system's critics. In each and every area where important areas of mutual interest are concerned, our two countries are working through liaison committees composed largely of industry representatives to ensure smooth transition. Contrary to the views expressed by some members of the government, the United States is not that far behind Canada in conversion, and it is only behind in areas where there is little or no interaction with our country.

I note in reply to the argument about potential problems in our trade with the United States that at present, since the rest of the world is metric except for Canada, South Yemen, North Yemen and the United States, the Americans are already conducting 70 per cent of their import business in metric.

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

**Mr. Chenier:** While the motives of the government in its plot to undermine the metric program are themselves worthy of considerable scorn, what I find most alarming about the statements made by the minister is his attempt to subvert the program on the ground that, and I quote:

Not enough consideration has been given to the human impact of metric conversion.

He said this in the context of making his announcement that the government is considering a slow-down in conversion in several sectors, most importantly in retail food packaging.

[Translation]

What does the minister say or who puts those words into the minister's mouth? I think that he means consumers when he refers to the human factor. However, I doubt that the minister has ever realized that the Canadian Consumer Council was one of the first and strongest advocates of conversion.

[English]

That association is now alarmed at what the minister plans to do to metric conversion. I note in today's *The Globe and Mail* that the minister has dismissed the Consumers' Association as representing only a small sector of consumerism. Well, who is speaking for the large sector of consumerism? I suspect it is the minister's bruised ego that is doing the speaking in this House. The Consumers' Association has backed metric conversion from the beginning because it will be of great benefit to the consumer, who will be able to compare prices per quantity with greater ease as compared with the difficulty facing shoppers with the hodge-podge of sizes and shapes under the present Imperial system. In fact, the minister wants to delay, I understand, for one year the introduction of a change for the benefit of Canadian consumers. He wants consumers to have another year of confusion—of course, we are getting used to it; we have had it for six months—and be subjected to another year of a perplexing mix of metric and Imperial goods in the supermarket. This minister is speaking for no one when he makes such suggestions about mucking up metric conversion. I most wonder what the minister has in mind when he says that Canadians are not prepared to accept the metric system, although conversion was adopted as a policy with the support