

farming industry be referred back to the committee. Today in the House that was voted down.

The farmers had high expectations of an amendment to this bill when the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) crossed the floor. However, as was noted in the House today by the hon. member for Vegreville, the hon. member for Crowfoot was not in the House to vote for this legislation.

**Mr. Woolliams:** It was a sad day that Jack Horner turned against us in reference to the metric system. We oppose the bill.

• (2040)

**Mr. Elzinga:** Not one member opposite took part in the debate on the amendment put forward by the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton). We have tried to put forward constructive proposals. The hon. member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Neil) suggested many ways in which improvements could be made.

We are all aware that the farm population in this country constitutes only 5 per cent of the total population. Perhaps this is one of the reasons the government was so intent on persisting with this legislation; it has no concern for those who are engaged in the farm sector. To anyone who has followed this debate it is obvious there is no one on the other side who speaks for the western farmer.

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

**Mr. Elzinga:** The minister for small business has sat mum in his seat signing his letters. I just wish he had seen fit to answer the letter the hon. member for Edmonton Centre (Mr. Paproski) read into the record today complaining about the metric system. But he did not choose to answer a letter which was contrary to his own view. The minister has told us he would not implement certain sections of the act, should this bill be passed, until he has consulted with the various farm groups.

**Mr. Alexander:** I would not trust him.

**Mr. Elzinga:** We cannot, after previous performances. I cannot understand why we should be debating legislation which is not going to be enacted. What is the purpose? It is just a waste of parliamentary time. If we can find nothing better to do than debate legislation which the government tells us it has no intention of enacting, it is time we recessed.

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

**Mr. Alexander:** Good point!

**Mr. Elzinga:** Another important consideration is the probable cost of these proposals. The United States estimates that metrication will cost them anything from \$40 billion to \$100 billion. Using the traditional factor of 10 per cent, we can expect that metrication will cost Canadians between \$4 billion and \$10 billion. However, to judge by its past performance, cost is an element least likely to be taken into account by the government. After all, in the past nine years or so we have seen

### *Metric System*

record government spending. Of the nine budgets brought forward, eight have been deficit budgets. Today we are witnessing record inflation because of Liberal administration, record unemployment because of Liberal administration, and record government spending—spending out of all proportion.

We are imperilling the welfare of future generations to suit the whims of this administration. The economy is plagued by record high interest rates and record mortgage interest rates. Our current level of foreign borrowing is the highest of any industrialized nation. Is all this a record of which hon. members opposite can be proud? The national unity issue is probably the only issue which can save this government, and that is so sad. Because if one looks at the record of this administration, it becomes apparent we shall not have a country worth saving if the affairs of the nation are carried on in the future as they have been in the last ten years.

Again, I ask: Is there anyone over there to speak for the farm population? Is there anyone to speak for the housewife? My hon. friend from St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) has very ably set out the difficulties which the Canadian housewife will encounter under the metric system. Instead of using teaspoons and cups to measure she will have to deal with kilograms and millilitres. But the government is not concerned with the difficulties of individuals who so often have no one to represent their interests.

The minister has assured us on several occasions that all the local farm organizations support this legislation. Had we accepted the minister's claim and allowed him to have his way, this measure would have been law before Christmas. But we hesitated to accept his statement at that time and we have discovered since that the heads of the local farm organizations were not speaking for their membership.

I have received briefs from several locals of Unifarm in my constituency supporting the position taken by my hon. friend from Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain and suggesting that the clauses of the bill referred to in the hon. member's motion be deleted. These representations are a clear indication to me of the manner in which the government attempts to mislead the opposition and the Canadian public. We have evidence of this time and time again. We saw it in 1974. We are all aware of what happened then—of the government's sudden change of heart after its return to power. We remember the campaign of 1972 when we spoke out in favour of a modest increase for pensioners and the indexing of personal income tax. At that time, we were severely criticized by the party opposite, but immediately after they had been elected to form a minority government they saw fit to implement the policies they had criticized so severely.

I am saddened when I find legislation of this kind being pushed down our throats. I believe members on this side are to be congratulated on the contributions they have made to the debate and for making sure that participatory democracy is still alive in this country. They have made their views known forcibly in a number of speeches which I have heard or had the opportunity of reading in *Hansard*—speeches such as that made by the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski),