

### *Metric System*

Bob Moffat, president of the Western Grain Elevator Association, made up of the general managers of elevator companies with country and terminal operations. (Mr. Moffat is general manager of Manitoba Pool Elevators.)

Here is a man who is a spokesman on behalf of farmers saying that the farmers are not ready for it. I am sorry the hon. member for Crowfoot is not here. Before he decided to become a member of this administration and to cross the floor, I recall very vividly the position he took with respect to this bill. He was adamant, and I think that is a fair word, with respect to the strategy that we should block this bill at any cost. I want to inquire now of the government and of the minister precisely what is happening. I do not want any more equivocation that if we pass this bill, they will not proclaim it. That is a lunatic proposition in my view.

● (2150)

In view of the strong feelings of the hon. member for Crowfoot with respect to this bill—because when he was on this side of the House he spoke very movingly and strongly about the western farmer resenting this bill and he said that it should be blocked at any cost, regardless of the time involved—I would like to know exactly whether or not the Minister without Portfolio—and in fact he is coming into the Chamber—will speak in cabinet on the bill.

As I mentioned at the outset, I like the Minister without Portfolio from Crowfoot. I was interested to read the article by Richard Gwynn in which he speculated about the minister's friend, Mr. Jim Coutts, and his motives in bringing the Minister without Portfolio into the party. I think the scenario is that Mr. Coutts wants to get a seat. He wants to run in Calgary, and he hopes the hon. member for Crowfoot will have sufficient political clout to help him. Perhaps the hon. member for Crowfoot feels that he will be successful in the election because he will stand side by side with a shorter, more corpulent city boy, the confidant of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), who will be running in Calgary next to the western rancher, the farmer from Crowfoot, or whatever his constituency will be.

I do not want to see the hon. member for Crowfoot get hurt by the Liberals. I know how cynical they are. I do not want to see this man Coutts elected, because there can only be one cabinet minister from the west, and the next thing you know it will not be the hon. member from Crowfoot but our friend, Coutts. I am saying that while he is in the cabinet I hope the Minister without Portfolio will try to talk some sense into his colleagues and will tell them, as he told us before he crossed the floor, what the western farmer thinks of this legislation, how strongly he opposes it, and that the time of parliament should not be wasted any further. I know that the hon. member for Crowfoot has a high respect for parliament—he believes in parliament.

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

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** I do not think he would want to be part of any government that wasted the time of parliament with this kind of insult to parliament, the metric conversion bill, which

[Mr. Hnatyshyn.]

they have no intention of proclaiming. He is not that kind of man, and if he were I would be most surprised.

What I am saying is that so far as the consultative process is concerned, we in the Conservative party have put an amendment before the House which allows for consultation with the average farmer, and this is an ideal vehicle. I imagine that the minister would be anxious to get this bill to the next logical stage in its journey through the House by referring the bill back to the standing committee dealing with the bill so that during the course of the summer they can re-examine it when they would not be interfering with the farmers' operations.

**Mr. Fox:** And the winter and the spring.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** Yes, it may take some time. The Solicitor General (Mr. Fox) has a farming background.

**Mr. Paproski:** Yes, in Morrin Heights.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** He has a rural background and he will know that sometimes when there is real consultation it cannot happen in the course of a week. It is something that takes a little time. When people are first aware of the fact that they have the right to come before the committee, they will not be intimidated and they will come forward and give their point of view. But this is a two-way process. Not only are we as a committee going out and hearing representations, I suggest, but we are also going out to learn, on behalf of our colleagues in parliament, precisely what the problems are, and what has to be done, on a first hand basis. We will be involved in the hearings not only with farmers but also with those responsible for the implementation of the metric system.

I do not want to take too much time but I felt compelled to participate in this debate, not having done so before, because I was prepared to listen and hear with an open mind the proposal of the government. But eventually even those of us who are prepared to give the government the benefit of the doubt have to stand up and say: just a moment, you have gone too far, you must tell us what you have in mind, you cannot expect us to go through the whole farce of arguing in parliament on the understanding that we are supposed to pass the bill which eventually will not be proclaimed. If you said that to some stranger who came to parliament, he would suggest that you should take medical advice because this is a lunatic proposal.

I see you are rising to your feet, Mr. Speaker. I want to conclude by urging that the minister take advantage of the offer made in this amendment, that he support it, and that he let us get on to the next piece of business. Then the metric conversion process will be a lot easier and more straightforward.

**Mr. Cecil Smith (Churchill):** Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak tonight on the amendment of the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton) and on this important subject of metric conversion and the impact that this program is having on all sectors of our society, I must point out that when I speak of all sectors of our society I include people in the