

*Metric System*

Members of this House may recall the annual meeting of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture which was held last winter in Ottawa at the same time as second reading of this bill was being debated. There were numerous delegates from Saskatchewan and Alberta at that very large convention. Those delegates were critical of Bill C-23 and were asking why there was such a rush and why representatives of the agricultural industry from western Canada were not consulted on their home ground. A motion before the convention that would have brought the issue to a vote was tabled without debate and the issue was not resolved at that convention. Of course it may not be resolved by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture until their next convention, probably next February. The executive of the federation obviously were not prepared to see a vote go against their previous stand in support of what I call a premature bill.

I should like to refer to some correspondence I have received and to quote from four letters that are typical of the response to this metric conversion bill.

The first letter dated February 1, 1977 from Bow Island, Alberta reads as follows:

Dear Mr. Hargrave:

With the announcement today that the metric measure for grain has been delayed I wish to register with you my resentment for the manner in which the Canadian people are being expected to accept this metric malarky. I feel as well as all the people I can talk to, that we do not need the metric system.

As much as we have been brainwashed to believe that the U.S. will follow our footsteps I have read articles on this conversion in several major U.S. papers and the consensus is that the conversion to the metric system there will never pass Congress.

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This country was never designed originally for the metric system and barring the fact that the people of Canada will have to pay millions of dollars I do not believe it is necessary to have the system to compete in world trade.

In the issue of the *Western Producer* of December 2 the editorial states that Britain has not passed their metric bill and has been kicking this around since 1965.

Please consider my opinions and that of most or all of my neighbours.

I quote another letter from Acadia Valley, Alberta, dated March 29, 1977. It reads in part:

The main reason for my letter however is in regard to the metric system. In this democratic country there are always hearings into pipeline building, railway abandonment, etc., etc., so I would like to know . . . why the metric system has been forced upon the people of this land. In discussions with my neighbours not one has been in favour of the metric system and no one was ever asked if they wanted it or not. The elevators have already changed their scales and tickets, and yet this has not yet become law. I would like to suggest that you discuss this with the people of your area, they are entitled to express their opinions on this matter, and I am sure you are in favour of people voicing their opinions.

I quote from another letter written by a resident of Foremost, Alberta, on March 22 this year:

I am writing to you to express my feeling in regard to the proposed legislation by the members of national government, and its supporters in the House. We learn through our Canadian news media that we are to have the so-called metric system imposed in our way of life by our most faithful members of our government.

I wish to express my own personal opinion in regard to the proposed changes which will greatly affect all our daily problems. Firstly our economic angles, and secondly our ability to cope with this new measure regardless of how simple it is made to appear. I am a farmer and have been educated to our old and reliable

system of farm mathematics, and never found this method in error. I am confident that I can speak for a great many other people in this matter who are all severely affected by this proposed change.

One does not have to study this new proposal very far to realize what a cost it will be to our economy as farmers, also the gradual cost effect to our equipment with which we have established our operations.

I would suggest that all our opposition members in the House oppose this measure and forestall this wild dream of simplicity until the next election, and then bring this matter before the people in a special plebiscite ballot and await the outcome. Let the majority decide whether Canada wants this change.

I hope you will give this matter your utmost consideration in your influence in government matters and consider us ignorant farmers who need your support.

I quote one more letter written by a farm leader of Bow Island, Alberta, who is held in exceptionally high regard by his community. The letter, dated February 23, reads in part:

An additional comment that I would like to make is with regard to the metric conversion in Canada. I realize that objections should have been voiced long ago, but I was unaware that parliamentary approval had not yet been achieved. I can see no valid reason why Canada should change to the metric system. The excuse that we must go metric because of our dependence on foreign markets is hogwash. In this computerized world that presents no problem whatsoever. In spite of what proponents of the metric system say, there will be nothing but confusion for many people, and many will never accept the system. It is interesting to note that Britain and Denmark have never fully changed to the metric system, and it would appear that they probably never will. Our whole land area is surveyed on the Imperial system and obviously cannot be resurveyed under the metric system and maintain the same rural road network, etc.

It just doesn't make sense to change a logical, evenly laid-out land mass to a factional system. It is easily conceivable, too, that a number of "entrepreneurs" will victimize a great many consumers who are not familiar with a new system of weights, volumes and measurements. Much more could be said in defence of the Imperial system. Suffice it to say I am certainly not in favour of the metric conversion. Change, merely for the sake of change is foolish. I can see no benefit whatsoever to the average Canadian in a metric conversion, and after all it is not the average Canadian we are most concerned about?

I point out that the letter referred to "our computerized world" and suggested it was not difficult to convert from the Imperial to the metric system. That point is valid. It is well known that our international grain trade for many years has been conducted in metric units; therefore, the comment concerning "our computerized world" is valid indeed.

I raise one particular item of concern. I learned of this in personal conversations with farmers, especially those who own their own land, which includes most of them. They are deeply concerned about the implications of the metric changeover for our land measurement or survey system in western Canada. I do not know the official plans in this respect, but I say that if any exist, western farm owners are not aware of them. Most farmers are of the opinion that our lands will be resurveyed, if not after passage of the appropriate legislation at least after land is sold and before a new land title is issued, in metric measurement units. This should never happen. Consider all the implications of undertaking a physical resurvey of land. I repeat, it should never happen. I may not be a dominion land surveyor—I think that is the official title—but I happen to be a professional engineer and know something of our western Canadian third land survey system.

I know from practical experience how to locate section and township monuments and road allowance requirements. I know how to "jiggle in" a surveyor's transit or theodolite over an official government land survey benchmark monument. I know