

Metric System

future date when the education process regarding metric conversion is more complete we can move to the "hectare". But that is not what we are suggesting here.

● (1710)

Mr. Paproski: Another century.

Mr. Marchand: The "hectare" is being removed, and the "acre" is being put back, largely because of pressure by the farmers.

Motion (Mr. MacEachen) agreed to.

Mr. MacEachen moved:

That Bill C-23, to facilitate conversion to the metric system of measurement, be amended in subclause 10(1) by striking out lines 30-32 inclusive on page eight and substituting the following:

"stituting for the word "bushel", wherever it appears therein, the word "tonne".

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Explain.

Motion agreed to.

Bill reported and concurred in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): When shall the bill be read the third time? Now?

Some hon. Members: By leave, now.

Mr. MacEachen moved that the bill be read the third time and do pass.

Mr. Bill Kempling (Halton-Wentworth): I thought the minister was about to rise, Mr. Speaker, and I was waiting for him to say a few words. I shall be brief, because I understand there has been an all-party agreement to proceed with the third reading of this bill without delay and to accept certain amendments put forward to remove "hectares" as a land measure from the bill.

This whole matter could have been dealt with many months ago. My hon. friend from Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton) in his opening speech on Bill C-23 offered speedy passage of the measure if the government would abandon its insistence on the use of "hectares" for land measurement. Today, eight months later, we are adopting the same proposal as was made so long ago by my hon. friend. I might mention, also, that an amendment to this effect was put forward in the standing committee, where government members voted against it. There is no doubt that the metric commission has misled the minister, misled the standing committee and misled the House of Commons in connection with this matter. Despite the overwhelming objection of western farmers to the change from "acres" to "hectares", the commission brought witnesses before the inquiry who gave evidence to the contrary. They told us that farmers wholeheartedly supported metric conversion. Yet at the very time the standing committee was hearing evidence with regard to the details of Bill C-23, there was a meeting going on in Ottawa of a large farm federation at a large hotel not far from Parliament Hill. The subject of metrication was brought up at that meeting by farm repre-

[Mr. Marchand.]

sentatives and provoked such violent discussion and division of opinion that the chairman postponed consideration of the matter so that the meeting could proceed with other business. While this meeting was going on, the farm federation sent a representative here—we are told he was a witness selected by the metric commission—and this witness misled the House.

We have now reached agreement to pass Bill C-23. There is no desire on this side to prolong the debate one moment longer than is necessary, but I feel obliged to mention two points. First, it is evident to everyone that the government's willingness to negotiate with our party with respect to the amendment on the use of the "acres" is a clear victory for those Conservative members from western Canada who listened to their constituents and made their objections known in this chamber. It is also evidence that the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) has been gelded and put out to pasture. In spite of his boast that he would influence the decision, it is obvious he had no influence whatever. In fact, after he had crossed the floor, the government brought this bill forward on three separate occasions and attempted to force it through the House. It should be noted that the hon. member for Crowfoot neither spoke in the debate on this issue nor participated in the committee proceedings. It should also be noted that he did not take part in any of the votes on this bill.

The final point I wish to make, before we move on to other business, has to do with the metric commission itself. We believe the commission should be revamped and shaken up. Someone should really build a fire under it. The commission should now be prepared to make known the balance of the metric conversion program. A complete bill should be brought forward so that parliament might have a chance to comment on the last phases of the metric conversion program. Such a bill should contain a schedule of the statutes which require amendment. In fact, it should include the amendments, together with a time schedule so that we might know when they were to come into effect. I have contended since 1973 that the metric commission is not fulfilling its mandate as set forth in the order in council. In my view, it has failed miserably. The commission owes it to the House and to the people to recommend legislation covering the balance of the conversion program. It should revise its approach to the program and have its annual report ready on time, not eight months late as on the last occasion.

If the commission fails to fulfil its mandate, I believe its members should be discharged as being incompetent. As members of the Conservative party, we shall continue to monitor very closely the work of the commission along with the whole metric conversion program. We urge the commission and the minister to see to it that we receive full value for the money we are spending on conversion and that the program goes forward in a businesslike manner.

Motion agreed to and bill read the third time and passed.