

We need at long last an industrial strategy for nationhood. And the starting point for this must be a decision that we will stop being industrial tenants in our own resource-rich land. Canadian resources must be owned by Canadians, controlled by Canadians and developed for the benefit of Canadians.

I am still quoting the words of the hon. member for Oshawa.

I say that economic planning for industrial development based on our resources can work. We can create thousands and thousands of new jobs if we stop exporting our resources and convert them to manufactured goods here in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, that is the conviction of this party—that we have the right location on the map of the world, that we have the resources and the people to build the kind of strategy that will provide a good life here in this country, and that we can play an effective role in making this a better world for all.

So I say on behalf of our party that we believe it is time for us as Canadians to take control of our own economic future and to make Canada an exciting and decent place for all of us. When I say “all of us”, I mean men and women alike, on an equal basis; I mean native-born Canadians and those who have come to this land; I mean the young; I mean the working people of our population; and I also mean those who are older and retired and who have the right to enjoy the security and dignity that they have earned.

Mr. Ray Chenier (Timmins-Chapleau): Mr. Speaker, may I preface my remarks on metric conversion by noting how we on this side of the House are becoming accustomed to the uncertainty of the government to turn calmness into calamity, serenity into insecurity and sensible policy into knee-jerking reactions based on some obscure notion of public interest.

An hon. Member: Groucho.

Mr. Chenier: I am very happy to see that my fan club on the other side is starting to respond.

[Translation]

Even if the confusion that the government has succeeded in creating about conversion to the metric system is not of the same magnitude as the blunder about the embassy, the conversion program is just one more case of this government's inability to base its actions on proper research, or even on its expectation of political gain.

[English]

If what we are reading in the papers these days about the government's intentions toward metrication is true, one must truly question the kind of advice this government is getting. Frankly—and I say this in a non-partisan way—I believe that what the government is about to do to the metrication program is not only what amounts to a callous disregard of the thousands of small businessmen who have put a lot on the line already in the move to conversion, but is an insulting judgment of the intelligence and adaptability of Canadians. All this from a government said to represent small business, the average Canadian, as rhetoric contenders over there like to call themselves.

While I simply cannot understand the intent of the government in its plans to fumble around with metrication, its

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motivation for doing so is very obvious. As we on this side of the House know only too well, there are on average about four ministers responsible—and I use that word loosely—for industry, trade and commerce. We have a super minister conveniently hidden away in the other place and several in this chamber, all presumably acting in unison, or, as they say, three people to co-ordinate three departments—confusion again. Presumably they are acting in unison to further the industrial development of this nation.

● (1450)

Naturally, when there are so many ministers involved in the same area, some ministers get the good stuff and others do not. Perhaps the Minister of State for Small Businesses and Industry (Mr. Huntington) felt a little left out of the headlines when assigned his portfolio and wanted to do something about that unfortunate situation. That being the case, it seems he wanted to make a big impact, maybe the same type of impact the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Miss MacDonald) wanted to make. He wanted to make a big impact out of metrication because that area is one of the few things he has been assigned. He is now making headlines.

These headlines remind me of some of the headlines made during the election campaign by some of his colleagues concerning the metric system which decried the metric system as another example of the previous government's ignorance of the west, and of its shoving foreign things down innocent people's throats. There are even stories—and I admit I cannot verify them—that some of the government party's candidates, some of whom are now members of this august House, made the logical connection between bilingual labelling on packages and metric labelling, both obviously plots by the previous government to provoke the ire of certain segments of the population. This type of politics speaks for itself.

[Translation]

What I want to say is that the government persists in keeping other promises it made to its members who built their election platform on their opposition to metric conversion. Such being the case, I can only say that the government is ready once again to jeopardize a program which industry unanimously supported.

[English]

Before I go further into my attack on what I see as the prospect of another Tory assault on common sense, allow me to elaborate on the success of the metrication program. I have consulted with many of the organizations which are actively involved in the conversion process, and they tell me something that is at the farthest extreme from what the government has up its imperial sleeve. Grain handlers, manufacturers, the construction industry, education officials: all these groups tell me that they are alarmed at the indecision and the flip-flop on the part of the new government regarding the metrication program. Fortunately, most of these areas of the economy have reached complete or very advanced states of conversion, and only the most foolhardy of governments would venture to tamper with them at this point. Though the government would