

reservists have the opportunity to train properly and without prejudice to their full-time occupations.

● (2205)

Mrs. Ursula Appolloni (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, for some years the Department of National Defence has recognized the need to assist some of our reservists in securing time off from their regular employment to participate in reserve training activities.

In attempting to assist reservists in this way, the department has encouraged employers and employees through a voluntary approach short of the legislative process. In many cases this approach has proven itself quite productive.

In 1978, the then minister of national defence, Mr. Danson, set up a committee known as the national employers support committee, NESO, for the express purpose of assisting reservist employees in obtaining time off to meet their military training commitment without loss of job progression or vacation time. This would take the form of up to a maximum of 14 calendar days off during the summer.

This national employers support committee consists of a national chairperson and an executive officer plus a chairperson and as many members in provincial committees as deemed necessary to provide effective liaison between reserve units and employers. The chairpersons are all very prominent members of the community who have volunteered to serve on the national employers support committee. These people give willingly of their time to intercede with employers, if necessary, to allow reservists to meet their training commitments. Their dedication and effort is well appreciated by our forces. Indeed, the program is working well and many companies have included references to reserve training as part of their manuals on conditions of employment.

Naturally some employers—particularly those with small staffs—have difficulty in allowing time off for reserve training. This can be particularly difficult when seniority comes into play or when certain production requirements, such as assembly line production, creates undue hardship for the employer. There are not a large number of firms in this position and the department endeavours to provide alternate schedules of training for their reservist employees.

In conclusion, the national employers support committee has done commendable work in assisting reservists with their problems regarding time off the job and the members of this committee deserve a great deal of thanks for giving time from their busy schedules and for their devotion in support of the reserves.

It is more than passing interest, of course, that this House has approved an order of reference for one of its standing committees to study the reserves. This report is due December 15 and will, no doubt, include significant recommendations on conditions of service for the reserves.

I would like to thank the hon. member for his interest in the reserves and I would like to prevail upon him and other

members of this House to provide support and encouragement to reserve units in their ridings and to employers of reservists.

I would also like to add that I would be glad to provide the hon. member with a list of the members of the national employers support committee, any one of whom, I am sure, would be happy to discuss the current situation in any area of the country.

METRIC CONVERSION—OPPOSITION BY GROCERS AND SMALL BUSINESSMEN

Mr. Bill Domm (Peterborough): Mr. Speaker, for two months I have been asking questions in the House of Commons in an endeavour to find out why this government is persisting in forcing metric in the retail food stores across Canada on January 1, 1982, making Canadian measurement illegal. I have reinforced the argument in the House of Commons on several occasions.

As late as April 23, 1981, the Canadian Federation of Retail Stores, some 4,000 strong, were 85 per cent opposed to metric at this time with the United States backing off. The Canadian Organization of Small Business sent letters to the ministers responsible for the implementation of metric in Canada, saying they do not wish to proceed with metric. The Retail Council of Canada sent a strong letter of opposition to force metric in the retail food sector to all the ministers involved. The retail food sector itself has sent a communiqué to the minister responsible indicating it does not wish to proceed with metric. I have not found anybody who supports the implementation of metric in the food sector except the Minister of State for Small Businesses (Mr. Lapointe), the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Gray) and the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ouellet).

● (2210)

I have here the communiqué which was released or sent to these ministers by the food sector of scale conversion advising them that:

The retail food industry members of the Working Group wish to recommend strongly to the government that the scheduling of food scale conversion to metric units in Canada, which appeared in *The Canada Gazette*, Part I of 28 February, 1981, be delayed so that the conversion will take place at a time closer to when retail food scales will be converted in the United States.

After two and a half years, since Peterborough and Kamloops were pilot centres in 1978—and, by the way, Peterborough is totally back to imperial at this time—I have found no support, none whatsoever, for forced metric in the retail food sector. By the way, metric was supposed to be voluntary when it was first conceived by this ill-fated government.

I finally discovered the reason for this. I requested this debate tonight with the ministers or the ministers' parliamentary secretaries in order that I could document in *Hansard* why Canada is going metric. There are 45 voting members in the scale conversion group of the Metric Commission. Who are those 45 voters? I have them here, and I would like to advise this House and have it well documented in *Hansard*. This is in response to the minister's statement in the House of Commons