

*International Economic Conference*

**Mr. MacEachen:** When it is available in both official languages, I think it would be a good idea to have the communique appended to *Hansard*, and I would like one or two other documents appended at the same time, possibly the Canadian statement and the Canadian conclusion.

**Mr. Speaker:** I do not know if the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) is now in a position to put forward the documents which have been suggested or whether we ought to see the documents first to determine whether it is feasible to append them to *Hansard*. If it works out that it is feasible to append them, perhaps permission could be sought tomorrow.

● (1550)

**Mr. Prud'homme:** Mr. Speaker, I should like to warmly congratulate the minister—

**Mr. Paproski:** We have already done that.

**Mr. Prud'homme:** I am sure the hon. member for Edmonton Centre (Mr. Paproski) would not object if I, as chairman of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence, add my congratulations to the minister for his leadership. He is also to be congratulated for his great patience because this international conference demanded it. I do not share the defeatism of those who believe that this conference was not a success. To be able to have 19 developing countries sitting with eight countries—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I have to remind the hon. member that the provisions under which we are operating provide the opportunity for the minister to make a statement and members to ask questions. It is therefore open to the hon. member to ask questions and that is all.

**Mr. Prud'homme:** Mr. Speaker, I would refer the minister to the report on the debt problems of developing countries recently submitted by the subcommittee on International Development, which I have the honour to chair. The minister's statement showed clearly that he shared the subcommittee's assessment of the importance of the debt issue and of the need for concrete action in this area at CIEC. Canada's welcome announcement that it would write off the \$254 million of debt owed by the least developed countries was in accord with one of the subcommittee's recommendations—in fact, as a unilateral action, this bold Canadian initiative went even further than suggested by the subcommittee.

In light of this, Mr. Speaker, was the minister able to persuade some of the other industrialized countries at CIEC to re-examine the debt problems of these countries in the near future—to, perhaps, consider a write-off, or the postponement of payments on debt related to aid, or other measures suggested by the subcommittee?

**Mr. MacEachen:** Mr. Speaker, I know that the Canadian position on the debt was well received by the developing countries. In fact in the final commentary following the presentation by the industrialized countries, the co-chairman of the conference, Dr. Perez Guerrero singled out Canada for special

[Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich).]

reference in the field of the debt and in the field of agriculture. We took this decision as Canadians but we knew the enormous difficulty that other countries might have which have greater volume of debt, to take similar action.

There are still some constructive proposals on the table and the debt problem will be considered in the near future. I think there is some hope that workable arrangements can be achieved through the proposals that have been put forward by the community and the United States. My reference to the Venezuelan co-chairman of the conference leads me to express my appreciation for his work and my admiration for his great dedication and flexibility throughout the whole conference.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Orders of the day.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### STATUTE LAW (METRIC CONVERSION) AMENDMENT ACT, 1976

#### AMENDMENTS TO WHEAT BOARD ACT TO FACILITATE CONVERSION TO METRIC SYSTEM

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Marchand for Mr. Chrétien that Bill C-23, an act to facilitate conversion to the metric system of measurement be read the third time and do pass.

**Mr. Bert Hargrave (Medicine Hat):** Mr. Speaker, when we adjourned for lunch I had just begun my remarks. I pointed out for the benefit of my colleagues that I had been unable to participate in any part of the second reading debate or the committee proceedings on Bill C-23 which deals with the metric changeover in the grains system in Canada. I pointed out also that the considerable delay since the time of first reading has been beneficial. It allowed the groundswell of opinion from grain farmers in western Canada where most of the interest is, to get back to parliament.

It has also been a delayed reaction, as through second reading debate and at committee there was very little if any response or comment from the grain farming public. It now seems clear that grain farmers in particular and farmers in general resent the manner in which this metric change was introduced. They resent it because it is the first major metric changeover in Canada. They ask why some other sector of society was not affected first and that is a valid question. They resent it because they feel they were not consulted about it first of all and especially not by their own leaders. Finally, they resent it because they feel their own farm leaders moved as fast as they did on the assumption of grassroots support which simply was not there.