

wants to bring the attention of the House to that. He expresses a point of view that is quite legitimate but, with respect, I do not think the point has procedural application. Whether it is wise to proceed at this time, whether it is a proper approach, whether it respects the point of view of western farmers in respect of a cultural heritage that is very dear to them, are all arguments that might be addressed for or against the bill or by amendments to the third reading motion, or, indeed, by amendments when the bill has had three readings and is in the Senate.

Those are valid considerations and arguments for or against the bill or an amendment to the motion for third reading. From a procedural point of view, however, I can only say, again, that the approach of a proclamation date that follows some time after three readings in both Houses is not an extraordinary procedural ramification. From a strictly procedural point of view, therefore, I do not see grounds upon which I can arrest progress of the discussion on the bill at this time.

The hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Towers) has the floor on the substantive argument on the motion for third reading.

**Mr. Towers:** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could have your permission for the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton) to lead off debate. I could be recognized later as a speaker on third reading.

**Mr. Speaker:** As I understand the situation, the hon. member for Red Deer had the floor, having been recognized, but had not started to speak. If that is so, I am sure the House would have no objection if the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton) were called now and the hon. member for Red Deer were called later in the debate.

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Hon. Alvin Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, I think Bill C-23 is supported in general principle by all parties in the House. It is really an example of how not to put legislation through that affects the culture of the people. I do not want to belabour that point, but it is my intention to put forward an amendment to try to get the subject back on the rails and, hopefully, to get the support of all members of the House so that conversion to the metric system can go forward in a sensible, democratic way.

When the resolution regarding the metric system was brought in, we in the official opposition asked that legislation be introduced so that we would know what we were doing, where the responsibility lay and what compensation would be made to the people who were going to be forced to suffer in an economic sense as a result of the legislation. When the legislation was introduced before the Christmas recess a protest was raised by the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Towers). That was the last we heard of this bill until January 26, when we were suddenly informed that it had to be passed very quickly because it was to take effect five days later, on February 1, 1977.

### *Metric System*

At that time I asked in the House the reason for this obscene haste, and suggested that if the government wanted to get the bill through, they would at least have to agree to taking the word "hectares" out, first, because it was not necessary and, second, because farmers all across Canada, not just in western Canada, would be opposed to it. I understood that the government thought well of the idea, which was supported by the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom) of the New Democratic Party. We agreed to drop debate at that stage and let the bill go to committee.

When we got to committee, farm leaders and union representatives took the very strong position that we had to put the bill through immediately because they had spent a lot of money converting the scales and papers and it would cost more money to go back to the original position. This annoyed members of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, at least, because they knew this was not the view of farmers on the prairies. To repeat, on behalf of this party I said we would go out and share with the government in the explanation and try to persuade people that in the national interest we had to accept the concept of working in an international community that would use this international system. Because of our opposition in committee the matter came to the attention of people in the west, and now literally 95 per cent of farmers on the prairies are opposed to this metric conversion.

Some farmers are opposed to the whole thing and some are only opposed to the land measurements. The government has said that land measurement is a provincial matter. That is true, but it was a federal agency, the metric commission, that went to the provinces and got Alberta, Ontario and Saskatchewan to agree to conversion to the metric system in regard to land. In the case of Ontario, it was permissive legislation. In the United States it is also permissive legislation. No person in the United States, whether he is a farmer in the Spanish surveyed lands of Southern California, the French surveyed lands of Louisiana, or the imperial system of most of the United States has to convert his land measurement unless it is to his economic advantage to do so.

In the case of Alberta, the legislation was changed, but never proclaimed. In the case of Saskatchewan, after the legislature adjourned last year, distracted by a big debate on the potash takeover, it was put through by order in council.

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The great majority of the people of Saskatchewan living in our cities, towns and on farms do not know this change has been made. The person who has bought a group of lots, say in the town of Kamsack or a farm north of Runnymede, will find he cannot register that new ownership unless he gets the land surveyed in the metric system, according to Saskatchewan regulations coming under the land titles act. This means that the farmer or person buying the land is forced to hire a surveyor. We have not had much to do with surveyors in the last 70 or 80 years, having nearly always accepted the original surveys.