

*Metric System*

culated. Further, I would like to refer to Beauchesne's citation 426 as follows:

In order to give legal force to a bill, or, in other words, make it a statutory enactment, the following legal and constitutional conditions are imperative:

(a) That the bill has passed through all its stages in both Houses and is consequently ready for the royal assent. If it should receive the assent of the Governor General and be afterwards discovered not to have passed its proper stages in both Houses or be otherwise not in conformity with the constitutional procedure governing such cases, it is so much waste paper.

I contend that this bill is not in proper form, in view of the statements made by the Minister of State for Small Business who has stated in this House that he intends to make changes to the bill after third reading. I contend that this cannot legitimately be done.

**Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, I simply point out to hon. members that this bill provides for quite a number of different possible proclamation times. Some clauses are to come into force immediately and a number of others are to come into force by proclamation. It is a somewhat unusual bill in the sense that the proclamation clause and the possibility of proclamation is repeated in relation to different parts of the bill. So it was contemplated that there might be different proclamation times. What the minister did was indicate a process we would follow before we actually proclaimed particular clauses. It is our intention and our hope to have a good number of clauses in force and in effect at a time which is orderly. Some are to be proclaimed immediately upon the coming into effect of the law. That is why it makes good sense to proceed with the bill at this time.

It is useful to recognize that hon. members opposite, in the debate, did not, as I took it, oppose the basic move toward metric conversion. Indeed, they supported it again and raised an amendment in relation to timing more than anything else. Of course, we will be giving that further consideration in the form of consultations before proceedings. But the bill is still very relevant and very important, and in those terms I think there is in no way an abuse of the House.

**Mr. Speaker:** This point is raised at this stage as we enter into further consideration of the third reading motion. I must say that on its face there is nothing extraordinary in the language of the clauses which have been referred to by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang). The fear that the bill might be changed in a period of delayed proclamation is one which I do not fully recognize, because I cannot visualize—at least, it is not clear to me—how the bill could be changed at any time except by amendment, once the bill is passed. Therefore, if such substantive changes to the bill are to be made, they would have to be made by amendments which would have to be introduced and put through all stages here as an amending bill, as would be the case with amendments to any other statute.

The decision on proclamation is not a new aspect of our procedure. As the Minister of Transport has pointed out, not very many bills have more than one proclamation clause; but it is quite ordinary that bills have the kind of clause which

[Mr. Towers.]

appears at the end of this bill at page 8, which reads as follows:

This section shall come into force on a day to be fixed by proclamation.

That is not an extraordinary clause, by any means, and as I understand the fear of the hon. member, it is not that in a delayed proclamation of certain clauses there would not be time for consultation only on the subject of the date of the proclamation itself, but that those consultations might lead to suggested changes in the bill and that those changes might be made after the bill had been passed but before it was proclaimed, which somehow would be an affront to parliament. I cannot fully recognize that, because my understanding is that the motivation for this is to receive representations solely on the actual date of proclamation.

Again, the principle of metric conversion is not the problem, but the phasing in of metric conversion as it applies to different areas of the country is a matter upon which further consultation might be had. If, indeed, the hon. member is right and those consultations go to substantive matters, then it seems to me that we should know what they actually are. I am anticipating, and we are into hypothetical territory to a certain extent because without knowing exactly what suggested alterations there might be, and if they are in fact substantive changes to the legislation, it would be readily agreed that we would have to do that by amendments which would be brought before the House for consideration.

● (1120)

I do not know if I have alleviated the concerns of the hon. member. If there is a point that I have failed to recognize fully or have failed to deal with, I think it would be in order for the House to proceed at this time with third reading discussion.

**Mr. Towers:** I do not wish to belabour the point, Mr. Speaker, but perhaps I did not make myself clear. I am not so much concerned about the timing of the royal proclamation, as about the fact that changes will be made in this bill in relation to tons, hectares and bushels. The minister has stated that he is going back to the grains industry and the farmers to see what they want in this bill. The issue is that these changes be made, otherwise the bill will go through in its present form, which is not acceptable to much of the agricultural industry in western Canada.

As the Minister without Portfolio (Mr. Horner) said last night, we are dealing with the very culture of western Canada when we deal with acres. The land has been measured in acres and sections. This is what the minister is talking about when he goes back to the farmers and the grains industry. To my knowledge, there is no way that these substantive changes can be made in the bill after third reading and prior to the royal proclamation. It is an insult or an affront to this House to be asked to do this. I think the logical way to handle the bill would be to send it back to committee and have it divided.

**Mr. Speaker:** With respect, as I understand it, the hon. member is making a representation that he is entitled to make by way of amendment to the third reading motion and he