

Metric System

I take great pride in entering this debate tonight because I hold in my hand Christie's Assessment and Tax Roll for Saskatchewan. When the settlers flocked from Europe, Ontario and Quebec to settle the west, they came from various walks of life.

Mr. Marchand: We were there first.

Mr. Woolliams: I do not know what you are talking about, but I am talking about history which the prairie people are proud of.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Woolliams: I would hope the minister would be as proud of the prairie provinces as I am. That is where I was reared. I was one of the grandsons of people who came from Quebec, Ontario, Europe and Asia.

The first school established at Rosetown was 2196 Muirland school. Last summer I was back visiting the old homestead, which is a beautiful home but no one is living there, and I went into the old library. It touched my heart to find the Christie's Assessment and Tax Roll which goes back to 1906. My father put together the list of the first settlers who settled there. In those days each settler was given a quarter section of land under the Torrens Land System, the metric system. If you did certain things to the land, then you could buy another quarter at \$1 an acre. That country, which I am talking about with great pride, became the bread basket of the world. At 17 years of age I had the privilege of teaching school in a place called Zealandia, Saskatchewan, and 90 per cent of the people there were French Canadians, and great settlers.

In the area just south of there where I was raised, the settlers came from Ontario and Europe. When I look down the list of names of people past and gone, I see names like the Russells, the Ritchies, Frank Woolliams, Charlie Palmer and many others. They put together a school in western Canada—Muirland school 2196. The taxes on each quarter were \$8 in those years. It is all written down as to who paid and where.

The Torrens Land System was not something created by Canada, and that is why I mention it. It was created by a man from New Zealand, Mr. Toms, Q.C., who is also gone now. His partner, Frank Bestido, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan, wrote a book, "The Torrens Land System". Long before people came from Ontario, Quebec, and various countries in Europe, surveyors carved out a system called the registration system according to which they divided the country into sections of 640 acres, each quarter section being 160 acres. That is the history of the west, the history of the bread basket of the world.

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The bread basket of Canada has poured millions of dollars into Ontario and the industrial centres, buying farm machinery, cars and trucks. I see today in western Canada—I was home on May 24—a man with a tractor pulling 85 feet of drills, and I think of my father who told me that when he landed in Saskatoon he saw a mile and a half of Van Brunt

[Mr. Woolliams.]

drills for sale and I think of the government which is ready to destroy our history. I think of the history of the development of the west, and I think of the time when telephones came in 1915. I remember hearing my father tell me when I was a boy that if you seeded land between one telephone pole and another at the edge of a quarter section of land, you had seeded ten acres and you had done half a day's work. That is the history of the west which the government is about to destroy with the metric system.

Today a farmer in the west and his family take great pride in speaking of their acres. He speaks about having threshed and combined the grain and having 30, 40 or 50 bushels of wheat to the acre or, if it was oats, of having 80 or 90 bushels to the acre. It is a great thrill, yet all that is to be done away with. Why, I do not know. Sometimes a person should use stronger language. I have crossed Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. If the minister, who is here tonight and who heckled me when I rose, does not believe that people have a great feeling and a great affection for that region which gave this country power and money from the grain—

Mr. Marchand: I know a little bit about history too.

Mr. Woolliams: Then don't heckle and don't support this bill which will destroy the history of the west. If you want to make a speech I will listen to you. What I am saying to you is that the government is bringing in the metric system. What does it all mean?

Mr. Marchand: Logic.

Mr. Woolliams: It will destroy all we stood for, destroy our traditions. That is what the minister wants. Let him go out and make a speech anywhere in the farm belt and he will find out the reaction.

Mr. Paproski: What do they know about the farm belt?

Mr. Woolliams: I want to talk about the metric system for a few moments. Until now I have discussed the history of the west. I will read from an article which was written in 1906 which is pasted to the cover of the book. What does it mean? All the farms are divided into 160 acres. If they have more than a quarter section, say a section, that would be a farm of 640 acres. Every township has 36 sections. There are nine townships to a municipality, and of late they have formed countries. That has been the history and tradition of the west. Now, my friend, the minister, who says I must not lecture him, says, "What does it matter? This change is logical." In time, as my good friend who just finished speaking said, there will be a deficit of \$6 billion or \$7 billion. When I spoke on second reading I said it will cost each province at the very least \$100 million to convert to the metric system.

Every seed drill will have to be changed. You know what a seed drill costs today? It used to cost \$90. Now it costs \$14,000. You know that every seed drill has a little gadget on it that has not been changed in 60 or 70 years. You move it when you put in the grain and it shows what you seed per acre. All that will be gone. What is history to this government?