

*Trade Policies*

in Canada came off the tracks, however, was that for some convenient reason, that top down type of government failed to abide by the spirit and intent of the white paper. Now, in the fall of 1979, that is what we must address as we approach the mandatory stages of implementation which are going to affect wide segments of the population. I could probably take the hon. member to the very desk at 235 Queen Street where that speech was written for him, but I will resist.

The allegations and the attitude toward metric that we have heard today do not serve the situation well. There is a very serious problem. In this, I would address my remarks to the hon. member for Ottawa-Carleton (Mr. Pepin) so that he may listen, rather than talk.

We are not going to interfere with the meat packers council, the meat packing industry or any other industry; what we will interfere with is the mandatory nature of the intervention on January 1, 1980. What must be slowed down are the regulations as they apply to the weighing of individual portions or the weighing of individual measurements. There is nothing to stop any meat packer who has already converted to metric, or any processing firm that has converted, from continuing with it. But it is the mandatory nature of the regulations that is causing the problems that are reported to us by the Metric Overview Board. While on the subject, Mr. Speaker, may I say how pleased I am with the intensity and the low key approach and the seriousness of the Metric Overview Board.

As a junior minister, Mr. Speaker, I do not have opportunities for press coverage and so forth. I should like any member of the House to identify any reporter whom I have ever sought out in order to make the news or get a headline. That is not my method of operation. The implementation of the Metric Overview Board has been very low key. We were able to accumulate a great deal of information and to rationalize it before the first question was asked in this House. Any announcement that was made, was made in this House, Mr. Speaker. I would like hon. members to be aware of that situation.

Now I come to the other allegation, and I shall have to refer again to the hon. member for Ottawa-Carleton, Mr. Speaker. What did he say?

**Mr. Pepin:** You said that you regret the public was not better informed, and the fact is you say you didn't try to connect with the public through the press.

**Mr. Huntington:** He says that I regret that the public is not better informed. The professor is very concerned about this. Mr. Speaker, that is the downfall of the system. If the white paper had been adhered to and implemented, there would be no problem. There was no monitoring system in the three test areas of Peterborough, Kamloops, and Sherbrooke to find out what the problems of the people were. It was not until the Metric Overview Board went into the streets, into the factories, into the auction markets, into the ranches, into the farmers' meetings across Canada, that the government or the Metric Commission started to get the feel of the temper and concern lying below the surface.

If the political process cannot address the concerns of the people, and the people have to knuckle under to top down governments and systems that they do not understand, then, Mr. Speaker, the system is failing, and I fail, as a member of Parliament.

This country has had 16 years of Liberal government. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) has said that the motion before us today should have been made against the previous government. I agree with that.

**Mr. Knowles:** Could have been.

**Mr. Huntington:** Could have been and should have been. I believe some of the wording was a little stronger in the dying hours of the last Parliament. The damage that has been done to the stability, the perception, and the decision-making process in the marketplace, cannot be undone in six months, in 12 months or in 18 months.

We should take a good look at the estimates system in this House. The programs in the 1979-80 estimates were in the planning process some 40 months ago. It took that long from planning to implementation. They had just been presented to the House when the election intervened, so we were dealing with history when they were before us. We are now dealing with new programs that will appear in the 1980-81 estimates, but plans for them began two or three years ago. They have now come to the surface like bubbles in a bottle.

The new government is not going to have an opportunity in one year or two years to change the direction of the utilization of resources in this country. Those who sit on the crowded front bench opposite—the two hon. members—know very well of what I speak. They were both good, hard-working and responsible ministers in their day. There will not be the rapid change that the hon. member for Ottawa-Carleton seeks in his motion. Those in the back benches over there must feel a little shame for the motion although for most of the day there have only been about four members sitting there. There is not only a degree of shame to this motion, Mr. Speaker, there is a degree of sham also.

There was an allegation that I had not considered small business when proposing to slow down the mandatory imposition of metrication. Hon. members opposite may be surprised to learn that the small business sector had not even been considered by their party, in the process of implementation. The small retailer was supposed to go out and buy a \$2,000 scale, or else have a padlock hammered on his door. He was not even told that he could write off the cost of the scale in one year. The big companies which employ accountants and lawyers knew about this, but not the small independent retailer. These are the people who make the country tick. They are the backbone of the country and they want a degree of independence, but they have been completely ignored in the process. I will not stand for the allegation that I have not been very concerned about the independent individual in the business world, when the party opposite completely ignored them in this process.