

Adjournment Debate

The Premier of Alberta, Peter Lougheed, has clearly stated that anyone prosecuted in his Province would be defended by the Department of the Attorney General of the Province. Because of that claim or statement by the Premier of Alberta, the Government dropped its charges in the case involving the floor covering industry over a year ago against Mrs. Kasparian in Calgary. It decided not to proceed and allowed her to continue selling carpet by the square yard. Also in the Province of Alberta, the Government itself, through inspectors, went into a service station and removed wires which it had placed on the pumps of a service station operator in that Province. The service station operator was a Mr. Carritt. I would ask the Government, or offer a word of caution to it that, as inspectors, it has been removing wires from pumps in the country. Who should be in the courts today if not the inspectors from the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs who removed wires from the pumps of retail operators in the Province of Alberta?

If we add this dilemma to the Government's problem of trying to decide whether or not to prosecute, I would ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Berger) what the response of the Government might be on the legal matter of prosecutions and the statements by the Premier of Nova Scotia on the six o'clock news on the CTV network this evening that if they are going to prosecute any retailers in the Province of Nova Scotia, they had better start prosecuting the provincial Government in Nova Scotia.

Does the federal Government intend to prosecute provincial jurisdictions on consumer matters which both Mr. Lougheed and Mr. Buchanan claim are their jurisdictions, or will it do what it does in other areas of the law where federal regulations or legislation conflict with that of a provincial regional area? Will it respect those provincial regional areas and not prosecute?

It is not sufficient to tell the majority of Canadians, some 70 per cent to 80 per cent who do not really understand metric, that they are a tiny group of fanatics, that they are a dying group of dinosaurs, that their opinion does not really matter and that only the opinion of the Metric Commission, the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and a few Members of Cabinet who support mandatory metric matters.

• (1825)

There has never been a vote in this House of Commons making it illegal to sell by the pound in the grocery stores of this nation. We have been denied that opportunity to represent our constituents. There has never been a vote in the House of Commons making it illegal for gas stations to sell a gallon of gasoline. This has all been done by Orders in Council. They can talk about the permissiveness of the regulations and legislation passed in 1970 all they want. The truth is that we agreed on two basic principles when we went metric in Canada. First, we would move keeping in pace with our major trading partner, the United States, where we do 70 per cent of our trade in Imperial weights and measures. We do not do one

cent of weighted food for the United States in metric. It is all in imperial measurement.

Why is the Government converting back to using only imperial measure in the stockyards of this nation where we buy and export all our red meat in imperial measure? They do not use metric. They do not auction meat at the stockyards in metric. Why is the Canada Post Corporation, the former responsibility of the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, who is also responsible for the Metric Commission, dispensing gasoline at the main Post Office in downtown Toronto in gallons?

All of these questions need to be answered. The most important question is, when will this Government listen to the majority of the Canadian people? They do not want metric rammed down their throats. They do not want Orders in Council making it illegal to use imperial measurement. The farmers do not want their fertilizer bags marked in metric only. They do not understand. It is a disservice and an insult to people with regard to safety when dealing with crops and air traffic. They do not understand. I hope the Government will listen. I hope the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) listens to the judge in Toronto and stops this nonsense about mandatory metric.

[*Translation*]

Mr. David Berger (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): In his remarks, Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member said that the Government cannot seem to make up its mind on whether or not it intends to appeal the decision rendered by Mr. Justice Ross on November 2 last. I can tell him that the written grounds for the decision were received late last week and they are now being fully looked into by officials of our Department and those of the Department of Justice.

[*English*]

The Hon. Member said that the Government was forcing metric on the various sectors of the retail trade. It is quite something how he takes isolated facts, makes them into general principles and distorts this debate. I have said on many occasions in this House that metric conversion was introduced as a result of requests from many sectors of the economy; industry, the teaching profession and every other sector of the economy. Less than a month ago the Minister met with a number of representatives from the retail food industry and the Consumers Association of Canada. This group expressed a strong desire to complete the implementation of the metric program as early as possible.

I am sure the Hon. Member also understands the many issues that have been raised by the judge's decision, one of them being the effective administration of the Weights and Measures Act which is designed to protect the business community and consumers alike, to prevent the use of inaccurate measuring devices and prohibit the use of devices that have been deliberately altered or modified to measure in a faulty manner. These questions must be considered prior to making a decision about the appeal.