

The other area of concern I have is with regard to the policing of the changeover. To my knowledge there is still no agency set up to protect the consumer from any unscrupulous business enterprise which does a metric conversion and does not put a corresponding fair price on that conversion. They may be using the changeover to reduce the volume and keep the price the same, or they change the volume and increase the price. The public should be made aware of the place where they can send their complaints but, more important, there should be a public agency monitoring the conversion with power to impose penalties on anyone who uses the metric conversion in an unscrupulous manner. I think public confidence would be much greater in the conversion system if people knew there was adequate policing.

For example, in clause 4 of the bill there is a proposal for a change in the Gas Inspection Act. No longer will we talk in terms of British thermal units but rather we will refer to something called megajoules. I have enough trouble with kilopascals in the barometric pressure system, but now I think I will have to get used to megajoules as well for measuring the sale of gas by what used to be the old British thermal unit. I also notice there have been changes in the term for cubic feet to cubic metres, etc., and I wonder again what that will mean to the consumer of natural gas. The gas meter measures units in cubic feet. It is stated here that there will be a changeover to cubic metres. I note that the bill provides for an "either or" situation, but I hope that no consumer of natural gas will have to bear the cost of the conversion of gas companies to the metric system.

That leads me to my third area of concern with regard to the cost of conversion to the metric system. On other occasions we have expressed our concern about the cost to small businesses of having to keep dual inventories of parts. As we convert to the metric system, people who have appliances, automobiles and other machinery which have been designed under the old system will need parts as those machines wear down. I hope it will not be an extra cost that will be added to the consumer who has some old equipment and has to keep finding parts for it.

We have spoken in the past about mechanics, carpenters and repairmen having to buy metric tools and use metric measurements. The only provision under the Income Tax Act to help people convert to the metric system is the \$150 deduction for employment expenses. Surely if the government embarks on such a major revamping of our whole measuring system it could just as easily amend the Income Tax Act to allow for the cost to small business and to individual tradesmen of converting to the metric system. The Income Tax Act should be amended to allow greater deductions for that kind of expense that will be incurred.

I have outlined three areas in which the Metric Commission has to do some work, not only with the general public but with convincing the government to take certain legislative initiatives in order to protect the consumer and compensate the individual and certain businesses for the cost of conversion. We have no objections to the changes proposed in Bill C-23, but in

order to facilitate further changes in acts of parliament I hope the Metric Commission will take serious note of the concerns I have expressed tonight on behalf of my constituents and the general public.

● (2140)

Mr. Cliff McIsaac (Battleford-Kindersley): Mr. Speaker, I wish to make only a few brief remarks on the principle of Bill C-23. Conversion to the metric system is something which has been going on for some time, and as the hon. member for Halton-Wentworth (Mr. Kempling) mentioned, we are gradually getting used to some of the invented terms used with respect to weather reporting and so on. However, according to the minister in his introduction of this bill, it was about six years ago that all parties in this parliament adopted a White Paper which set the country on the road to the implementation of the metric system. I suppose a change of this magnitude is bound to create some problems and inconvenience, and certainly there has been some confusion and apprehension over the nature of that decision.

I was pleased to listen to the minister tonight and to hear the long list of farm organizations which are supporting and co-operating with the metric commission in implementing the conversion program. I hope that those same farm groups he mentioned will stand up and help explain the program and the rationale and the advantages behind it, explain why they are supporting it, and help our grain producers become accustomed to this very major change.

The words and phrases which are very familiar to prairie grain producers—quarter section, section, acres, and so forth—have been part of the geography and part of the traditional language for a long time, and those words and phrases and that thinking will not disappear.

Mr. Mazankowski: It is part of our culture, Cliff.

Mr. McIsaac: That is right; it is. The hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) says it is part of the culture of his part of the country, and the same is true for my part of the country.

I was reassured when I heard the minister tell us tonight that our American neighbours are moving roughly in parallel with the Canadian conversion program. That is a fact which is not generally recognized by farmers in my part of the country, and I want to urge the farm groups, and the civil servants who are involved with the implementation of this program, to maintain a closer liaison with the United States agricultural conversion program.

Western farmers have proved many times—and they do not need to prove it again—that not only are they the top food producers in the world but also that they are adaptable and progressive, and they look with favour on any change which will benefit them in the longer run. I hope the over-all metric committee, the provincial departments of agriculture to which the minister referred again, and the various producer organizations will work closely together to sell and explain this program, because it is a very large job. The farmer does not just