

been proven to be necessary to the satisfaction of a great number of Canadians.

● (1630)

In the 1970 white paper on metric conversion emphasis was placed on the fact that the change to metric was to be achieved by voluntary means. That is why this motion by my friend and colleague, is so important. Let the Canadian people choose the type of weights and measures they want.

We were told in the debate which took place in 1975-76 that weights and measures for the grain industry were to be changed so as not to cause an extra conversion and in order to avoid mistakes. That was the argument made to us. That is why they wanted to buy grain at the elevators under the metric weights and measures system.

What did we find when we got to the committee? We found that farmers were going to deliver their grain to the elevator where it would be measured under the metric system. It would go through the entire elevator system by the tonne. However, and here is the crunch, the minute the grain went to the railroad and was put into the hopper car it reverted back to the hundred weight. This is what has turned so many people off the metric system, and that error has never been corrected. This posture seems to have been lost in the shuffle and the flurry of executive action which has followed. The system is only voluntary in the old army sense; you have no choice but to volunteer.

Emphasis must be placed on the fact that this system has to be adopted on a voluntary basis. The government and the Metric Commission have demonstrated that they are unaware of the rights and the opinions of the people of Canada. The metric program is losing its credibility because it marches to the tune of a different drummer; it chooses to ignore the rising opposition to metric at home, in the United States and in the United Kingdom.

Today my colleague mentioned the rising opposition in Japan to the metric system there. If this were a universal system it would be different. I have debated this issue with some of those who say we should be selling our grain by the tonne, as is the case all over the world. I have said that it causes problems for the farmers because it used to be that when a farmer sold a carload of grain the weight would have four figures ahead of the decimal, and one following. That measurement was in an easy form for calculation, because the four figures before the decimal were bushels and the one after was one-tenth of a bushel. If the figure was .4, in the case of wheat with 60 pounds to the bushel, that meant four tenths of a bushel, or 24 pounds. That was easy to calculate. Now there are two figures ahead of the decimal and three after, and the three after have to be placed over 2,204 pounds because that is what we have in a tonne. Could any person on the other side of the House calculate that in his head without a calculator or a pencil? I would like to see someone do it. This government has taken away a simple system that worked, and has given us a complicated system that does not work.

This is the point I want to make, Mr. Speaker. The individual I was talking with said we should be selling our grain by the

tonne because in Holland, where he was from, they used the tonne. I explained to him the complications this created for the farmers in this country with the three figures after the decimal point having to be placed over 2,204 pounds. He said no, it would be 2,000 pounds. I said that it was 2,204 pounds, that being the tonne we have to deal with. He said that a tonne in Holland was 2,000 pounds. Therefore, anyone who suggests that this is a universal system should take another look at it.

The initial work and planning of the Metric Commission was done in a vacuum, independent of what the people required. What the Metric Commission failed to do was recognize the fact that the United States is not going metric very quickly. Certainly some countries have done so, but the U.S. grassroots have not done so.

When people from the United States come across the border to buy cattle at our auctions they want to know how many pounds an animal has gained per day since birth. They do not want anything to do with kilos. They want to know how that animal has gained in pounds, and that is what affects the price. This is why the auction marts all across western Canada are opposed to this system and what the government has done. I just wish we could have had some members opposite come out west to meet with some of those people who have to spend thousands of dollars they do not have in order to change their scales, when they see no need for it. As I said earlier, if this were a requirement and it provided a benefit, that would be all right, but no one up to the present time has proven that this is a requirement in order to continue in business.

Even leading members of the two United States metric bodies now see a change taking place in the United States. They suggest that this conversion will take anywhere from seven to 20 years; however, the average citizen in the United States says it will never take place.

We have a classic case of Canada being all alone out in left field; everybody else is out of step except our son Johnnie. In the area of 70 per cent of our trade is with the United States, and it is folly to attempt to trade with our major trading partner using a foreign and unfamiliar system of weights and measures. That was the reason given to us for changing to the metric system, in order that we could trade with foreign countries. We now find ourselves using this unfamiliar system in trade with our major trading partner. As one of the metric commissioners said, we are ten years out of step with them. It is utter folly for Canada to allow that kind of situation to develop. The United States is by far our most important trading partner, in every respect, and it behooves us, as a matter of common sense, to bring our metric posture into line with that of the United States.

The North American economy is so interlocked, with products, factories, corporations, equipment, communications, information systems, advanced technology, research and development, measurements and statistics, that any basic move to use a different system out of step is incomprehensible. I fail to see any great advantage in converting to the metric system with such undue haste. We must plan any change in concert with our neighbour and trading partner. If we fail to do so we will disrupt traditional trading patterns and cause turmoil in