

The livestock people of this country rejected the system for sales in metric. They put up such a lobby that the Government backed off on changing the measurement of beef in sales rings. According to the Department of Agriculture, the livestock industry is one of the Metric Commission's problem areas. Many more are starting. People are beginning to have second thoughts about a program which is being forced upon them. They are starting to reject it. They say that it is their right to accept something, but if it is to be forced on them, they want the right to reject it.

The trucking industry, in a letter to the then Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen), said this:

The Alberta Trucking Association has been opposed to metric since it was first introduced to Canada. It has led to a great deal of confusion in the marketplace and it has cost far more than ever contemplated.

The cost of forced conversion has been tremendous. If we had not been so rigid in the forcing of metric on our citizens, the cost could have been distributed over 20 or 30 years. Why the rush? I fail to comprehend why we have to rush into putting this system in place.

I support the Hon. Member's motion for reasons of convenience, rather than having to convert. I have seen farmers take a metric can and pour the spray into a gallon can so they have the correct level. Then they pour it in the sprayer. They often forget that the chemical is not the same as it was five, six or ten years ago. The number of parts per million of concentration in that spray may be higher or lower than previously. Hence, an error is made.

On the basis of safety, a very small indication on a can of pesticide, farm poison, chemicals, sprays or fertilizers should be put in place. Dual labelling should continue for a number of years until the people are used to the change to metric. That is not too much for the farmers of this nation to ask for.

Mr. David Berger (Laurier): Mr. Speaker, in dealing with this motion I want to refer to a couple of words mentioned by the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) in his opening statement. He suggested that the motion is realistic, practical and makes common sense. He also used the word "voluntary". One of the strong arguments made by Members opposite is that this process should be voluntary. I want to deal with those aspects.

First, I want to deal with the voluntary part of it. As we have heard on many occasions, the conversion to metric is being shoved down the throats of the Canadian people without adequate consideration. This argument was made by the Hon. Member for Vegreville and the Hon. Member for Wetaskiwin (Mr. Schellenberger). This is a compelling argument. The only problem is that it is not true.

Subsequent to the acceptance of the white paper by this Parliament and the establishment of the Canadian Metric Commission, many industries indicated their interest in forming voluntary committees to plan and manage the conversion of their industry to metric measurement. The number of such volunteer groups eventually reached 104 in every sector of the

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Canadian economy. One such group was formed to represent the chemicals and chemical products sector. This group held its first meeting on July 10, 1973 in Ottawa. In total, some 14 different associations maintain representation on this committee. Three groups in particular were responsible and highly supportive of conversion to the exclusive use of metric units in agricultural chemicals and pesticides. They were the Canadian Fertilizer Institute, the Canadian Agricultural Chemicals Association and the Canadian Chemical Producers Association.

In addition, it is important for people listening to this debate to know that each of these committees worked through an extensive program which included investigation, planning, scheduling and implementation. In the course of its work, the committees prepared their own timetables for implementation of their plans. This was not imposed by the Government. Members opposite always say that the scheduling of implementation was imposed on the affected sections of the economy, but that clearly is not true. With the few exceptions where ordinarily regulated items are involved or where the sector committee felt regulation was desirable for orderly and fair treatment of all concerned, the schedules were implemented by those sectors represented on these committees.

This process goes back to 1973, and before that to the white paper of 1970. We must understand that the white paper did not originate in the mind of the Government but in the fact that teachers, businessmen, farmers and representatives from all groups of the Canadian economy came to the Government and said that this process was important to them and that it must take place. It is a process in which thousands of Canadians have been involved for 15 years.

• (1650)

When Hon. Members opposite say that there is a mad rush to impose metric, that is a nice and compelling argument, but it is not true. The Hon. Member for Vegreville claimed that his proposal was realistic. How can we determine that? I suggest there are one or two factors that should be considered. The first factor is safety and the second is economic considerations. I should like to deal with safety first.

It is precisely because of safety that the chemicals and chemical products industry sector and its 14 associations insisted that labels should carry only one system of units and recommended against the use of dual units. I know that the Hon. Member for Vegreville is not listening to this because obviously the correct facts are of no concern to him. What is of concern to him is simply—

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Hon. Member from wherever he is cannot impute motives. I hear what he is saying. I am in my seat and that should be recorded. It is not customary for any Member of the House to talk about another Member's presence or whether he is paying attention. I have heard every word the Hon. Member has said and it is not very enlightening.