

*Oral Questions***METRIC CONVERSION****REQUEST FOR DELAY IN IMPLEMENTATION BY HOUSING INDUSTRY**

Mr. Doug Neil (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce who is also the minister in charge of metric conversion. No doubt the minister is aware of the arbitrary decision of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation requiring all applications for assistance under the National Housing Act to be in metric after May 1, 1979. Also, the minister must be aware that some building products are available in metric, but basically plywood and dimension lumber are manufactured only in Imperial measurements due to the fact that Americans are our chief purchasers.

Because metric conversion has become metric confusion to the majority of Canadians, will the minister meet with the minister in charge of CMHC and discuss the possibility of delaying the implementation of metrification into housing until such time as the lumber industry has made that conversion?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Jack H. Horner (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, some time ago—in fact, in 1970, if my memory serves me correctly—all parties in the House unanimously agreed to set up a metric commission.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Horner: All parties in the House agreed to setting up a metric commission.

An hon. Member: Answer the question.

An hon. Member: Where were you, Jack?

An hon. Member: You must have been away, Jack.

Mr. Horner: Then the metric commission took it upon itself to form sectors to study—

An hon. Member: Did you approve it?

Mr. Horner: At that time my leader did not even ask for my approval, nor did my leader at that time seek the advice of caucus.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Horner: I, like the hon. member, was not considered important by him at that time.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Horner: Then the metric commission set up sector studies in each sector. In this case, it went to the construction industry and asked for their co-operation in determining when the construction industry could foreseeably make the move to convert to metric. It was with the full co-operation of the construction industry that the metric commission set up the deadlines for that particular sector of the economy.

[Mr. Gillespie.]

If the construction industry now wants to ask for a major delay, I would hope they would come at least to the metric commission or myself; neither has been done yet.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neil: Mr. Speaker, I have never known the hon. member to be backward in telling his leader what he thought about various points.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neil: The minister must be aware of the attitude of the American government toward metrification and the fact Australia and Great Britain are taking a second look at metrification. In view of the fact metrification is costing Canadian taxpayers millions of dollars, and Canadian consumers unknown millions of dollars, will the minister, as one who stood shoulder to shoulder with the troops on this side objecting to the metric bill, give an undertaking that he will meet with his counterparts in the United States in order to discuss metric conversion, so that we can move in concert with the United States?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, let me first put the House straight. There was no metric bill; there was a resolution.

An hon. Member: That is right.

Mr. Horner: It was a resolution which had the complete approval of all parties, as I said.

An hon. Member: Just to set up the commission.

An hon. Member: Except you, Jack.

Mr. Horner: That does not mean to say that it had the consent of all members of the House. I never said that at any time.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Horner: I want to assure hon. members and the House generally that my leader consistently hears my views.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Horner: The gratifying position I find myself in—

An hon. Member: And he rejects you.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Horner: The gratifying position I find myself in is that my leader now actively seeks my views on all subject matters.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): And consistently rejects them.