

Metric System

change for that industry. However, the Board itself would not impose such a change on their members.

That is how the Americans are handling it. I have said that there are several variations to the metric measure in various countries in the world. Many countries have retained the terms of measure which would, if changed, cause confusion among the public. However, in Canada we seem to be pressing this matter with no apparent direction.

To my mind the Metric Commission has not fulfilled its mandate under the order in council dealing with powers and purposes. Specifically, the order in council instructs the Commission to initiate, co-ordinate and undertake investigations, surveys and studies relating to the metric system in different sectors of the Canadian economy. I charge that the Metric Commission, as established under Order in Council P.C. 1971-1146 dated June 10, 1971, has failed to carry out clause (A) of the section on powers and purposes. The evidence is before this House in the reply of the Minister of State (Small Business) as set out on pages 5226 and 5227 of *Hansard* for April 3 of this year. My charge is proved as well by the process of this bill. In spite of the strong suggestions from hon. members on this side of the House, the Metric Commission has misled the minister, the committee and this House. It has swept aside the arguments put forward in the committee and in this House regarding land measure, and swept aside the argument put forward by the Consumers Association of Canada regarding packaging and the listing of dual weights or measures on packages.

On the advice of the Commission the government voted down amendments which would have put some sense into Bill C-23. One of the very real dangers this country is facing is that we are being ruled more and more by regulation, boards, and commissions. By their very structure they are subverting the rule of parliament. The actions of the government in this bill are a true example of that subversion. There are nameless, faceless people who put in place regulations which have the force of statute. They have never been placed before the Parliament of Canada for debate. This country is really being run by a small group of people, in relation to the total population, who are not elected by the people. They have powers which are far beyond those of parliament. They have the power to change the market system, the economy of Canada and social life in Canada, and they interfere in the private lives of Canadians. They have the power to make regulations which have the force of statute, and they do not answer to the people of Canada through parliament. I think that is a terrible way to run a commission or this parliament.

I have talked to Canadians in the electrical industry and to some of their American counterparts. I asked the Americans how they were proceeding with their metric conversion and why they were taking the route they were taking. They told me that the only reason they are converting to metric is because we are doing so in Canada. The members of the Metric Commission travel across the country periodically speaking with industrial groups, and there are panels. The Commission loves to say that the cost of metric conversion will not be high. The commission implies that industry is going to absorb the

[Mr. Kemping.]

cost because it is going to get great benefits from conversion. People in industry tell us that they are not going to absorb the cost and that the cost will be passed on to the consumer. The consumer is going to pay for metric conversion, and let there be no doubt about that.

I have talked to the small business community, and I know the minister has as well. He has not seen fit, however, to do very much in this bill for that community. It remains to be seen whether the Metric Commission is going to do anything for that community. However, small business is not included in the process of metric conversion at all.

I do not know how many ministers have dealt with this matter. Perhaps there have been three, four or five, but at various meetings the Commission has been told to get the small business community involved in this because some of the claims small business is making are not true. It is just that some small businessmen are misinformed. They should be involved in this process. All this is done on a "you pay your own expense" basis, and we think that some of these sector heads and chairmen should be drawn from the small business community, brought into the process, and asked to get involved in metric conversion.

In closing, I urge the minister to support this amendment. I think this matter should go back to the committee and be discussed thoroughly. We should have an opportunity, if necessary, to travel and to meet some farm groups because we are being told by the Canadian Grains Council and by a few other high-powered groups—and we learned from the *Globe and Mail* the other morning that many from these groups are government appointees—that they are going to toe the line wherever required. They are not necessarily going to convey the true thoughts of the people who are going to bear the costs of this and who are going to have to work with it. I think the committee should have the opportunity to hear witnesses again and to satisfy itself and the people involved about the difficulty which will be faced. Having done that, I think we could proceed with the bill in an orderly way. I support the amendment to refer this bill back to the committee for further consideration of the matters outlined in the amendment.

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, just before the debate on this matter closes I want to join with the hon. member for Halton-Wentworth (Mr. Kemping) in urging that the government see the propriety of this amendment. This amendment is not meant to hold up the bill in any way; it would simply refer clauses 2, 6, 8 and 10 of Bill C-23 back to the committee. It would put some substance into the words of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang), the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Chrétien) and the Minister of State (Small Business) (Mr. Marchand), and there would in fact be some real consultation with the producers of the country.

● (1700)

Consultation is most important. In several instances in the last six months—I will not go into detail although I can be specific, if the hon. member opposite wishes—the government