

units in scientific and legal terms in accordance with the latest internationally accepted system, the so-called *Système International*. Honourable senators may wish to examine Doctor Douglas, Director, Division of Physics of the National Research Council on the implications of that part of the bill receive his somewhat technical explanation of those features of the bill.

Both the customary Canadian units and what are generally referred to as the metric units will continue to be valid for use in Canada, although the Governor in Council may add new units of measurement or redefine existing ones in accordance with the needs of changing times. The use in trade of customary Canadian units, that is the yard and the pound, can only be curtailed by specific reference back to Parliament, and honourable senators will see that provided for in the legislation.

By bringing the existing act up to date and incorporating certain new features required by contemporary trade practices, the bill will increase the protection given to the consumer and bring Canada's legislation into line with weights and measures control in other developed countries of the world.

That is all I have to say by way of an introductory statement, Mr. Chairman, but I would be happy to answer any questions that honourable senators may have or to refer any more detailed questions to the officials I have with me.

The Chairman: Now, honourable senators, we are open for questions.

Senator Connolly (Ottawa West): Mr. Chairman, I understand that the United Kingdom is moving towards the metric system, to conform in other words to the system in use on the continent. There is some resistance to this which I can understand. Do you expect that we in this country and perhaps even on this continent would move towards that system of measurement in time?

Hon. Mr. Basford: Yes, I do. As you know, Senator Connolly, my colleague, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, tabled last winter—January or February—a White Paper on the metric system in which the advantages of that system were pointed out, and in which the Government undertook to put in motion certain steps which would lead us gradually at least to a conversion. Parliament also passed in the last session the bill establishing a Standards Council of Canada. As you will recall, one of the objects of that Council is to examine the implications of conversion to the metric system. My own view is that we should not be debating whether to convert or not, but how to convert in order to minimize the cost and the disruption. It is also obvious that we are going to have to move and convert somewhat, if I may use the expression, hand in hand with the United States because of our trade position with that country.

Senator Connolly (Ottawa West): Do you think they might be as quick to move as we might want?

The Chairman: Are you asking if there is any indication of that?

Hon. Mr. Basford: There is a good deal of agitation in the United States and, as I understand it, the Secretary of Commerce, Mr. Stans, has established an advisory committee composed of all those in the private sector who might in any way be involved in the question of conversion. The United States Congress has appointed a committee to examine the question as to whether the United States should convert or not. There is, I know, in the area that I am involved with on a day-to-day basis, the consumer area, a good deal of agitation among American consumer groups for conversion. There is a great deal of interest in the question in the United States.

Senator Connolly (Ottawa West): There would be some considerable interest in it for a nation like Canada which relies upon and is so heavily involved in foreign trade.

Hon. Mr. Basford: I think there is. I mention the consumer interests because the metric system makes for ease of comparability and ease of measurement. I think the truly important aspect is trade, and, of course, when Britain converts and if it enters the European Common Market, which it is trying very hard to do,—and as you know Japan has gone metric—we in North America are going to end up, as I said in a speech, as an island in a metric sea, which can be very costly. It can be terribly costly if our manufacturers have to produce in one measurement for domestic consumption and the North American trade, and another measurement for our export trade.

The Chairman: I think the date in the United Kingdom is 1975. Is that the objective date?

Mr. G. E. Anderson, Assistant Director and Chief Engineer, Standards Branch, Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs: I think 1980 is their final deadline for complete conversion.

The Chairman: Well, there are two aspects, and I suppose they are equally important; one is the domestic situation which you have detailed and the other is the international aspect, and we must not lose sight of the importance of the international aspect.

Hon. Mr. Basford: There are, of course, some areas in Canada that already have converted. The pharmaceutical industry conducts itself pretty well metrically and I think by now over the last few years most Canadian hospitals have converted. So there is some conversion going on.

Senator Connolly (Ottawa West): Yes, if you go to a hospital nowadays they talk about milligrams.

Hon. Mr. Basford: And I would hope that this is something that the Standards Council in a voluntary way could promote—that the various sectors convert on their own.

Senator Connolly (Ottawa West): The very fact that the Australians have adopted the dollar system for their currency...

The Chairman: You mean the decimal system.

Senator Connolly (Ottawa West): ... with great difficulty and with a lot of criticism of the government, is a