

### *Metric System*

**Mr. Kempling:** Perhaps they picked up "kilopascals" somewhere along the way, but this is the kind of silliness we have had regarding some of the matters dealing with the metric system.

I have spent a great deal of time trying to convince people that it does not cost \$3,000 to convert a set of tools to metric measurement. I know for a fact it does not cost that because we use tools in my own business. Yet we are still getting letters, and representations are still being made to us by people who tell us that it will cost them \$3,000 to convert a set of automobile mechanic's tools to the metric system. That is absolutely wrong; we know it does not cost that much. I have checked with tool manufacturers and tool distributors, and I do not think it will cost even 10 per cent of \$3,000. But the only way we can get these things out into the open and get these concerns expressed is by bringing in bills to this House, sending them to committee, and then have the Metric Commission come before the committee to hear our views.

Talking to the Metric Commission at the time we examine estimates is totally inadequate. I urge the minister to continue bringing in bills as we proceed along with metric conversion, let us have a day or two's debate on each, send the bill to committee, and discuss our concerns. Perhaps this will give the Metric Commission some direction as to where their advertising efforts should go. I know there has been a tremendous amount of co-operation with industry, and although the separate committees have had some criticism, generally they have worked quite well. I cannot be too critical of them, but I do urge we continue to proceed by bill rather than by order in council.

I received a long letter from a man who is an engineer, and who simply tears the whole idea of metric conversion apart. I intend to answer him, but this is only one of many letters we are continuing to receive. This makes me feel that some of the advertising done by the Metric Commission is too slick, too professional to reach the people it should. It is great for young children and kids at school; they are very well adapted to the metric system today. But older people, people in the professions in some instances, are just not being reached.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks. We have three or four other members who wish to speak on the bill, and I believe some members of the NDP are going to speak. Nevertheless we hope we can move with some haste on this bill.

**Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie):** Mr. Speaker, I want to make just a few brief comments on Bill C-23, an act to facilitate conversion to the metric system of measurement. The bill before us seeks to amend a number of acts of parliament dealing with measurement, and on the whole I cannot find any objection to the amendments in the bill. What I should like to do is to use the few minutes available to me to make some observations and suggestions on the whole policy of metric conversion.

I should like to zero in on three areas for the benefit of the minister and his officials to which they might address them-

[Mr. Hnatyshyn.]

elves. First, there are certain problems that I think are associated with metric conversion and information given to the public; secondly, I wish to refer to policing the changeover that is occurring so as to protect consumers; and thirdly, I want to address a few remarks to the cost of metric conversion.

On the first aspect, that of informing the public about metric conversion, I know the Metric Commission has launched quite a public information campaign on television, in newspapers, brochures and elsewhere. I think probably it is effective so far as young people are concerned, students in elementary and secondary schools, but I think it is failing in terms of educating the adult population who, of course, have grown up under the old system and are very set in their ways. They have difficulty relating Celsius to Fahrenheit, metres to yards, and so on. I must confess that when I hear temperatures expressed in Celsius I am still not sure how cold or hot it is. Or when the wind is so many kilometres per hour I still have to look outside and see how far the branches of trees bend in the wind to get an idea of its velocity. I think the Metric Commission should address itself to this problem that many adults are facing, and try to design information that relates in a very concrete way to some of the basic commodities adults are going to deal with in the consumer field, or in terms of temperature and distance.

• (2130)

For example, we know that a litre is about 88 per cent of the volume of a quart. When this bill passes, there will be an end to double labelling, the metric and the standard labelling on standard articles. When a housewife buys a litre of milk, she will still be thinking in terms of a size which in her mind relates to the quart. What she will be concerned about is the cost of that litre of milk as it relates to what she conceives as the usual cost of a quart of milk. I do not know whether we will still have the same volume, whether it will be the old quart expressed in terms of metric measurement, or whether eventually the quart will be transformed in size to the litre. Which ever way it happens, it would be very helpful if the Metric Commission would produce a set of tables or some figures for comparison purposes on a quart of milk or any other item which the housewife buys. For example, a quart of milk costs so many cents, but if you buy a litre of milk it would be expressed in terms of a litre being so much of the volume of a quart, therefore the corresponding price should be such and such. If you do such an arithmetical calculation for the consumer, when they go out to shop they will not be bewildered by a whole host of different sizes and prices. It would take a mathematician to figure out whether you are actually paying what you should be paying.

Some kind of educational policy should be directed at the adult population, because I do not think the kind of advertising which tries to change our whole mental conception of things is working. I remember some of the charts they have of a thermometer which shows so many degrees Celsius at which you cannot walk on ice and so many degrees Celsius at which you can skate on it, and so on. I do not think that kind of technique really works for the adults.