

### *Metric Conversion*

aged goods, the Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act has required a metric contents declaration since March, 1976. A program of guideline dates for metric conversion recommended by Metric Commission Canada, after consulting with industry, labour and consumer groups, was approved by the government and debated in the House of Commons on March 17, 1975. I am not sure of the time of day on which that occurred.

The Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs studied this matter at length and voted unanimously in favour of it. It reported back to the House of Commons on December 17, 1976, with a recommendation that the House consider the advisability of adopting this program and also introducing additional legislation to metric conversion. Subsequently the Metric Conversion (Statute Law Amendment, 1976) Act was passed by the House of Commons on July 25, 1977, and received royal assent on August 5, 1977. The Metric Conversion (Statute Law Amendment, 1976) Act which was debated in the House over a period of nine months, gave the governor in council the power to set dates in any sector of the economy after which the use of the customary or imperial system would be illegal.

Out of a total of 33 sectors which have published metric conversion plans, there are only three sectors for which regulations have been issued under the Weights and Measures Act establishing cut-off dates for the sale and advertising of goods in other than the metric system. Regulations were requested by the working group on scales in the retail food industry, by the home furnishing and piece goods industry, and by the petroleum refineries wholesalers and gasoline service stations. These committees have consumer and industry representatives as well as appropriate government representation on them.

The moves to make metric conversion mandatory were initiated by the industries concerned and not by Metric Commission Canada. Where regulatory action has been requested, the industries cited are concerned about achieving an orderly conversion without unfair competition. They preferred government action to ensure that the ground rules for metric conversion are the same for all in the industry, thus reducing the possibility of consumer confusion to a minimum. We respectfully submit that that is a very logical and excellent approach.

To go into one further case, the working group on scales in the retail food industry comprises representatives of food retailing chains and independents, scales manufacturing and servicing enterprises, consumers as well as weights and measures regulating authorities. In 1977 it formally requested suitable regulations under the Weights and Measures Act to deal with advertising as well as the conversion of scales which were deemed necessary for achieving a co-ordinated and orderly transition to metric units. I should like to emphasize the fact that the decision to make metric conversion mandatory in this sector was made by the minister of consumer and corporate affairs and the cabinet on the recommendation of the food retailers and with the full support of the Consumers' Association of Canada.

The information I have provided in my remarks shows that the Canadian metric conversion program is almost entirely

voluntary in nature already, and where legislation has been enacted and regulations used, it has been at the request of the interested parties. I should like to submit that we do not need a statute law on voluntary metric conversion because it is mostly voluntary already.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Gordon Towers (Red Deer):** Mr. Speaker, in rising to support the motion of the hon. member for Hamilton-Wentworth (Mr. Scott), I should like to indicate that I am very pleased to participate in this debate.

First, I would like to comment on the statements made by the hon. member for Thunder Bay-Nipigon (Mr. Masters). The hon. member is not dealing according to fact. When he said that the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs was unanimous in the passage of that bill out of committee, he was not telling the truth. I was on that committee and I fought that—perhaps Mr. Speaker is very much aware of that—along with my colleagues. It was not unanimous and never has been.

Early in the debate the government proposed to pass the bill in 1975, 1976, or whatever it was. It was sort of a conglomeration of weights and measures that was passed at that time. As far as I could understand, certainly it was not a metric bill. But the crucial thing in the passage of that bill was that it was done under closure. Had the government not brought in closure at that time, we would still be debating that bill in the House today. At that time it was Liberal government policy that they were going to force that upon Canadian people.

I just find it intolerable to think that Canadian governments would impose themselves, as the Liberal government has done over several years, on the consumers and business people in Canada. It is abhorrent that anyone would do this. This is why there is so much resistance to this in western Canada. I must rise on every occasion that I can in the House of Commons, at every opportunity, to impress upon the government of the day that consideration must be given to the resistance which is inevitable all over Canada, even in Peterborough, Ontario. They are forcing it upon Canadian people all over Canada, and a tremendous resistance is developing.

I read in the paper this morning where it has been said that there is a new group in the Liberal back benches which is willing to take a new approach to some of Canada's problems. I would hope that that new group in the party on the other side would give some consideration to those people, those consumers and business people who want no part of this system.

It has been said and written that one of the great strengths of Canadians is their integrity, steadfastness, strong inherent individualism, and pragmatism. It has been said and written that Canadians have provided ample evidence in the past that they will adapt to change if the change is perceived to be beneficial, but will resist it when it is not. The nub of the argument against the metric system is that the metric system is not perceived to be beneficial among a majority of Canadian people. Is it necessary? I suggest it is not, and it has never