The unorganized, little guy who is not part of any group—the farmer and the consumer—will not realize any benefits from the conversion and, in fact, will be actively hurt by it. This does seem like a Canadianized version of that familiar old American theme, "What's good for General Motors is good for the U.S.A.", inasmuch as an endeavour that we have embarked upon because it is supposed to be in our national interest will most serve those who have the least concern for any strictly national Canadian interest.

It is impossible for us to calculate just how much metric conversion is going to cost, Mr. Speaker, because there are no reliable cost estimates available from any source, that I am aware of. The experiences of other countries are not of much help, either, except perhaps in a somewhat negative way. It seems that those countries which converted the fastest, Australia and South Africa, suffered the least expense; whereas in Britain, where the conversion process has been long and delayed, and is still going on, costs have been very great. Of course, the costs in social and human terms of a very fast, disruptive conversion for which this country's people are unprepared would surely be high and must be taken into account with the dollars and cents' expense. The costs of conversion will be different in each industry, of course. It might not be that expensive in the food industry because much of the packaging is of a disposable, non-durable nature. Paper packages, cardboard cartons and so-called "soft" conversion—that is, dual labelling—with metric equivalents marked on Imperial measurement cartons is now almost complete.

● (1640)

One of our amendments which was defeated, would have provided for the continuation of dual labelling when "hard" conversion, the switch to metric-sized containers, takes place. We feel that having the Imperial equivalents marked on metric containers would have protected Canadian consumers against the commercial rip-offs which will most surely take place when manufacturers begin to sell products in containers that look like the old Imperial cartons but are, in fact, smaller and continue to charge the same price. We have dual labelling now with Imperial packages. Why could it not be continued with metric?

The situation regarding metric conversion in durable goods manufacturing is very different from the food industry, but here it depends upon which manufacturing sector one considers. In the Canadian steel industry, for instance, I understand that the view is fairly optimistic. The industry started to convert more than a year and a half ago and feels that the three-year conversion period which they have adopted will give them adequate time to minimize the costs of conversion to metric sizing for steel products. The three-year timeframe was chosen in 1975 because new rates for steel products cannot be introduced until approved by the Canadian Standards Association, which the industry does not expect to come before 1978.

The situation in the automotive industry with regard to metric conversion is a very interesting one. All automobile companies began at least planning for the conversion some time ago—General Motors about three years ago. The problems in the automobile industry will be mostly due to differing paces toward metrication between this country and the United States, since the two industries are so highly integrated. At any rate, this industry should experience the least hardship in absorbing the extra costs of metric conversion.

Unfortunately, the same optimism cannot be felt about the situation of the industrial worker. Regardless of the size of the industry, whether a national or multinational corporation or a local business enterprise down the street, the worker is going to suffer hardship. The additional cash outlay for metric-size tools, which can easily go as high as $3,000, will be an initial financial hardship. The frustration of trying to work in a new system, and the resultant work slowdown and time loss, as well as the inevitable increase in work error and the accompanying production loss, must also be considered.

For self-employed workers at present, the full value of tools can be used as a tax deduction, while salaried employees can deduct 3 per cent of the value, up to a maximum of $250 a year. At the present and very rapidly increasing costs of industrial tools and equipment, this is now inadequate to prevent financial hardship for many salaried workers. Perhaps a special tax exemption might be provided for the Canadian worker to cover this particular expense of metric conversion. In addition, this would demonstrate in a very real and concrete way the government's full support for the metric conversion process and provide the worker with the best of all possible psychological boosts to support metrication—a financial incentive.

When one considers the costs of metric conversion in our society and economy it is, unfortunately, all too easy to foresee a vicious chain developing. The organized workers will, naturally, expect the employer to shoulder the major cost of the conversion and the employer will, in turn, pass on the cost to the consumer. The odd man out will be the unorganized worker, the Canadian farmer and the consumer. Both Canadian labour and consumer legislation may require some revision if we are to prevent these inequalities from developing.

For the Canadian farmer metrication will have few benefits. He uses measurements constantly every day to an extent perhaps greater than in very few other occupations. Now he is expected to stop using an old, familiar system which has been used for generations and start using an entirely new and strange system of measurement with which he has no experience. He must now stop farming acres of land and begin farming hectares. No longer will he harvest bushels of grain. Now it is metric tons, or tonnes. His land will not be measured in miles any more; now it is kilometres. Fuel must now be bought in litres, not gallons; and fertilizer and feed, not in pounds but kilograms.

All these measurements are strange and none has an easy or direct equivalent in the Imperial system. Is it any wonder that the Canadian farmer is so unhappy and so much opposed to the metric system, Mr. Speaker? This is why our party proposed that both the imperial and the metric system be used in agriculture in order to somewhat lessen the confusion and