

*Metric System*

when we are telegraphing the feelings of our constituents is absolute and utter nonsense. I know the hon. member for Gloucester (Mr. Breau) speaks on behalf of his constituents. He is quite outspoken at times on certain issues, even if it means he has to take a position contrary to that of the government. I see no reason for him to engage in the sort of triviality that he engaged in during the crossfire which took place earlier.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Gloucester (Mr. Breau) on a point of order.

**Mr. Breau:** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure whether this is a question of privilege or a point of order. The hon. member should not have the impression, because of an interjection on my part, that I was suggesting hon. members on the opposite side were playing politics with this bill. The hon. member mentioned that a public servant had said that and I actually said that it was a terrible thing to say. The hon. member smiled when I said that, and I smiled back. I did not say hon. members opposite were playing politics with this bill.

**Mr. Goodale:** *Hansard* should record the smile.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** Mr. Speaker, I should point out that the hon. member is still a gentleman. I certainly appreciate the fact that he has clarified that issue.

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

**Mr. Mazankowski:** This legislation has been referred to as metric conversion. It would be more fashionable to refer to it as metric coercion. We have a situation in which the process of conversion has taken place without legislation. That is unfortunate. This is what has confused many people affected by the process of conversion. Many people in the grain trade, particularly elevator agents and producers, can see no reason for proceeding with such indecent haste with conversion in the grain industry when our major trading partner to the south was not embarking thereon in tandem.

As reported in the Friday, June 3, 1977, edition of the *Globe and Mail*, Mr. MacMillan, chairman of the Canada Grains Council, said the following:

Businesswise, there were no advantages for the grain industry to change to metric—it was just an expense item. We have many of our transactions with the United States where they are still dealing in bushels. But the government pushed us into the new system ahead of the U.S. and then backed away so easily. This was very disappointing and it has left feelings running high in western Canada.

That has been the thrust of our argument all along. I have it on absolute authority that the United States is not going to proceed with the conversion of the acre to the hectare. The bill was presented as a fait accompli. There was an attempt to rush the bill through, as the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton) pointed out. The minister tried to push this bill through on December 21. The fact of the matter is that we know this particular piece of legislation was drafted in February, 1976. It was not introduced in the House of Commons for first reading until November 22, and then it was called for debate and second reading on December 21 late in

[Mr. Mazankowski.]

the evening. There was a request to sit extended hours in order to pass the bill through all stages, but many of us had comments to make on the measure. It did not appear again until January 26. The legislation was to become law on February 1. That was not sufficient time adequately to explore all the implications of this particular piece of legislation.

The government, and indeed this parliament, has not served the best interests of the farmers of Canada in this piece of legislation. Farm organizations have not served their memberships well. A vast majority of the producers in western Canada do not support the major provisions of this bill, namely, metric conversion in respect of the grain trade. Thus, their wishes have been ignored. In short, I should like to say, on the part of the producers, that they have been ignored by the government and, their own organizations, and parliament has been unable to alter the direction in which the government is proceeding on this measure. There is a feeling of mistrust and disappointment in the minds of the producers of western Canada simply because they have been ignored. It is in that connection we see diminishing confidence in this institution. Many times people who are being affected by legislation are not listened to and their views are not taken into consideration. This is causing tremendous erosion of public confidence in this place. Surely it is the duty of members who are elected to the House to reflect the views of their constituents. That is what we are doing on this occasion.

● (1220)

As I have pointed out, the farm organizations, in my opinion, have not served the best interests of the producers of western Canada, and I regret that. In a weekly paper entitled *Alberta Farm Life* of Saturday, March 5, the Unifarm organization was seeking direction from Alberta farmers in an effort to assess the impact of metric conversion on the agricultural industry. This bill was supposed to have been law on February 1. This clearly shows that they did not engage in any real and active consultation with their membership prior to its intended implementation. I could quote letters that I have received from a number of farm unions and grain company locals. For example, I have a letter here from Two Hills district Unifarm No. 65-42 which reads:

At this convention one resolution was made and passed unanimously. As secretary I was asked to pass this resolution on to you. The resolution reads as follows:

"We are opposed to the metric system, especially pertaining to agricultural production. We would like the bushel, acre, and the mile retained.

Yours truly,

Ed. Sokalski

I have another letter here from the Unifarm district No. 64-22 which reads:

It was brought to our attention that you are not in favour of adopting the metric system in the grain trades. I am writing to you on behalf of local and neighbouring farmers that we full-heartedly support your stance in that respect. We believe that adoption of the metric system will do nothing more than cause great and agonizing confusion to the agricultural industry and even more so to farmers in general.

I have a letter here from a local of the United Grain Growers which reads: