

METRIC SYSTEM - EVENTUALLY

The first step in Canada's eventual conversion to the metric system of measurement was taken on January 19 but it may be ten years before the familiar inches/pounds form of measurement gives way entirely to metres and litres, according to S.M. Gossage, chairman of the Preparatory Commission for Metric Conversion.

At a meeting of the Commission, which was established following publication of the White Paper on Metric Conversion in January 1970, a general program was adopted. "Our first approach will be to industry through industry associations to determine the impact of conversion, areas where difficulties might be expected and the timing that appears to be most suitable," Mr. Gossage said. "A letter will be sent to such associations suggesting questions the Commission feels are important, but we expect industry will wish to bring up pertinent problems we have not thought of."

The preliminary phase of the work will take as much as three years. "During this time," Mr. Gossage said, "there will be very little achievement that is visible to the public but it is work which must be done if we want to avoid trouble in future."

At the same time as the approach is made to industry, the Commission will be exploring the response to "metrication" in all segments of the Canadian economy. Non-industrial associations, educational institutions and consumer groups will be consulted to determine their opinions on the timing and method of changing the measuring system.

"The Commission was determined that the public must be kept informed of our intentions," Mr. Gossage said. "Our operation plan will eventually affect everybody in Canada and we must have an information plan that is closely co-ordinated with it."

It is proposed that associations and similar organizations establish committees to determine the views of their sectors of the economy. The recommendations of these committees will be discussed with the Commission and finally co-ordinated into a master plan for metric conversion in Canada.

"Even with the adoption of a master plan, it would probably take as much as ten years for its full implementation," Mr. Gossage said.

SUCCESS AT U.K. CATERING FAIR

"On-site" sales totalling \$300,000 were reported by Canadian companies taking part in the International Hotel and Catering Exhibition in London, from January 6 to 14. The Canadian exhibit was organized and sponsored by the federal Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce.

Some 3,000 "firm" orders and "serious" trade inquiries are expected to yield another \$8-million worth of business for the Canadian companies in the next 12 months. These sales are more than double those made by companies exhibiting on the Canadian stand at the previous exhibition in 1970.

Seven food-producers and 12 food-equipment manufacturers were represented on the Canadian stand this time. Canadian foods on display included lobster bisque and seafood chowders, pre-cooked turkey and chicken products, frozen lobsters, "instant" mashed potatoes and frozen Chinese food. Liquors were represented by rye whisky and Canadian wines. The equipment manufacturers showed Canadian cooking-ranges, stoves, freezers, beverage-dispensers, coffee-brewers, sandwich-makers, hot-dog-preparation units, machines to reconstitute convenience foods, wire shelving, and "compactors" and shredders for refuse.

Several products were on view in Britain for the first time. A fast method of preparing hot dogs - by making a hole in the bread with a heated spike for the insertion of the frankfurter and relish - attracted much attention. So did a combination refrigerator, stove and sink, and a dish-handling conveyor-belt that could move dishes up, down, round corners and in spirals. Lobsters frozen without prior cooking were also well received.

The popularity of the Canadian foods was evident from the number of visitors who tried them. During the eight-day exhibition, the Canadian stand served 10,000 hamburgers and slices of pizza, 6,000 hot dogs, 2,400 helpings of lobster bisque and seafood chowder, and 2,000 helpings of mashed potato, as well as hundreds of egg-rolls, and slices of turkey breast and chicken and turkey roll. These were washed down with 2,500 cups of coffee, 2,400 glasses of rye and 1,500 of Canadian wine, and 1,200 soft drinks.