

Mr. Cafik: If it is anticipated by the opposition that we might conclude this stage of the bill tomorrow, we would move on the National Housing Act amendments.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

METRIC CONVERSION—REQUEST FOR DELAY IN IMPLEMENTATION BY HOUSING INDUSTRY

Mr. Doug Neil (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, on February 13 I put a question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Horner) regarding the metric system. I did so for two reasons, first, my concern, and that of the general public, concerning the metrication program, and second because beginning on May 1 it will become mandatory for all applications under the National Housing Act to be in the metric system so as to conform with a directive put out by the CMHC, notwithstanding the fact that the lumber industry has not converted to metric nor is it likely to do so in the near future.

The reason is very simple. About 80 per cent of our lumber trade is done with the United States, and they have not converted. We shall therefore be faced with a situation after May 1 in which builders will be using plans and specifications in metres and centimetres while the lumber will be in inches and feet. This is metric confusion, not metric conversion. We have Celsius instead of Fahrenheit, kilopascals instead of inches of mercury, kilometres instead of miles per hour, and wind chill factors measured in numbers rather than temperature. Individuals do not know whether to put on a sweater, an overcoat, a jacket, or a hat and gloves. Radio stations give the temperature in degrees Celsius. At times they give readings in both Celsius and Fahrenheit. I understand, however, that radio stations will be fined in future if they give readings in other than Celsius. It is great to be living in a democracy!

● (2205)

I did not plan to upset the minister when I asked my question on the thirteenth, but he became quite excited. He said at that time that all parties in this House had agreed by resolution to go metric but, as I understand it, it was a general motion, and speakers from all parts of the House agreed in principle. I was not a member at that time, but I am surprised that no vote was taken. Yet, based on that resolution the bureaucrats, in their quiet way and without formal authorization from this House, commenced a program of metrication which has caused confusion and which has been costly for the taxpayer. The costs to industry can never be calculated, but if

Adjournment Debate

one considers all the changes industry had to make, the cost must be in the billions of dollars.

We can determine some of the costs because some of them were recorded in the answer to a question I put in this House. I asked what the cost of metrication had been since 1971, that is, the cost of the administration of the system, not the cost industry has passed on to the consumer. The cost to date has been \$24 million. In reply to a written question the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce advised me that the setting up of the sector committees and the travel those committees did cost \$1,306,625, over \$1.3 million to have these sector committees travel the length and breadth of Canada. The *Metric Monitor*, that newspaper which extols the virtues of the metric system, a propaganda organ, cost \$242,688 for printing and publishing. Distribution of that document cost some \$423,736.26.

In response to my question the minister said that there had been no metric bill. I would like to direct his attention back to Bill C-23 in the fall of 1977 when the then minister of industry, trade and commerce introduced a bill entitled "An act to facilitate conversion to the metric system of measurement." Among other things it changes acres to hectares and bushels to tonnes. No one was more vocal than the present Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Horner), unless it was the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski), the hon. member for Halton-Wentworth (Mr. Kempling), the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Towers), or myself. The minister stood shoulder to shoulder with the rest of us and fought that bill. Could he have changed overnight? Apparently he did.

Britain went metric and is having many problems and second thoughts. The same is true for Australia. On the other hand, the United States brought in legislation making metrication not obligatory but voluntary. I would like to quote briefly from an editorial in the *Hamilton Spectator* of Thursday, March 28, 1978, which says:

The contrast between the United States' handling of the metric question and Canada's is the contrast between a democracy and a dictatorship. . . . Canada even denied public opinion a forum; metric rules were simply imposed by a bureaucracy not answerable to the people.

Americans got a choice; Canadians got their orders.

In closing I would like to say that my plea is simply this: let us put a halt to metrication until such time as we can sit down with our counterparts in the United States to discuss ramifications. The hon. minister has said, and I quote from *Hansard*:

The gratifying position I find myself in is that my leader now actively seeks my views on all subject matters.

I hope that the hon. minister will talk to his leader and halt metrication until such time as we can discuss it with the Americans and move hand in hand and step by step. Otherwise metrication will cost Canadian taxpayers and consumers millions and billions of dollars.

● (2210)

Mr. Frank Maine (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, effective May 1,