

Motors Chevette is now on the market, and Chrysler intends to launch an all metric subcompact in 1977.

President Ford signed the United States metric conversion act in December, 1975, and this provides for a United States metric board. Its members have been nominated, and observers in Washington anticipate that these members will be confirmed by the United States Senate early in the new year. In light of all these facts it is reasonable to conclude that the United States is not far behind Canada, if not ahead of us in certain areas.

In conclusion, our trading partners both south of the border and overseas are watching us to see if we will continue to maintain our stature as a modern trading nation by moving unequivocally to the international system of units. Equally as important is the fact that our provincial governments, private industry, and commerce have put their faith in our leadership. Now is the time to respond.

Mr. Bill Kempling (Halton-Wentworth): Mr. Speaker, it is a great and exhilarating experience to speak in the House of Commons on a Tuesday night just before the Christmas recess. I will not be too long in my remarks. There are several others who wish to speak and I think they will all be reasonably short because I believe there is a disposition to move with some haste on this piece of legislation.

This bill is one of a series to be presented to parliament to facilitate conversion to metric. The standing committee which dealt with the metric resolution recommended in its report to parliament that the government proceed with plans for metric conversion by bills that would be presented to parliament, rather than proceeding by order in council. I am pleased to see that the minister has recognized this desire on the part of people in parliament. His predecessor did not appear to have the same recognition of the suggestion that this matter be aired here in this House rather than proceeded with by way of order in Council.

There has been considerable controversy over the introduction of the metric system, but we are more than half way down the road and we certainly cannot turn back now. I have not been at all impressed by some of the information that has come out of the Metric Commission, and all of us continue to get mail criticizing the fact that we are proceeding with this conversation. Generally speaking I think everyone supports the idea or concept of metric conversion, yet we find in talking to various ministers that they still want to proceed in this rather cavalier and high-handed way. The point I have tried to make in the past is that the best way to get the metric conversion settled is by having a wide open debate in the House so that interested people can speak on the measure. Let us get things out in the open. This would do a great deal of good, much more than some of the promotional material from the Metric Commission.

I would caution the minister that when he introduces another bill he should not leave it until the 11th hour. We recognize that this bill must be passed. We are going to recess soon, to return in late January, and this is supposed to be in

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effect on February 1. However, I think the bill could have been introduced one, two or three weeks ago. Certainly it was before us on November 22. I hope the next time around the minister will bring his bill in for debate in the proper way. I do not think that would involve too much time in the House, but there are members who have some misconceptions about metric conversion. I am sure they would like to be heard and to put forward the views of their constituents.

I think the minister and I have a slight disagreement in respect of countries, but there are only a few countries in the world not now on the metric system. I think this is a progressive step for us to take in order to complete our conversion. This bill amends several acts. I think it is pretty straightforward. It changes some of the designations in the Canadian Wheat Board Act and a few other acts dealing with grain. For example, it changes "acres" as it appears in various statutes to "hectares". The new term is a combination of the words "hecto" and "ares", "hecto" meaning "hundred" and "ares", which I think is of Greek origin, meaning a square unit and from which is derived the word "area". So the definitions are pretty straightforward. The word "bushels" is changed to "tonnes". That is an old English term. The old English is "tunne" and the middle English is "tonne".

● (2120)

To give the House an example of how people get upset about metric conversion, one of the metric terms that has puzzled me is the unit of measurement of barometric pressure. For years the common term has been "millibars" when referring to barometric pressure; it is now reported in "kilopascals". I do not know where the hell that term came from, frankly. The metric designation for pressure is "newtons per square metre" or "dynes per square centimetre". These can be designated as kilonewtons per square meter, or newtons per square centimetre; but where they dug up the term "kilopascals" is beyond me. I have looked through several scientific digests and cannot find it anywhere. I do not know whether it is a creation of the Canadian Metric Commission or what it is, but that is the sort of thing that gets people upset. They are used to working with one term and then, all of a sudden, another one is thrown at them and they cannot figure out what it means. I have received letters from engineers and people in the scientific field, and they have asked me what the term kilopascals means. They want to know where it came from and who designed it, because they cannot find it anywhere.

They have the same sort of frustration that we had in the finance committee. We had a caucus committee meeting one night and the Metric Commission was with us. They had a map of Canada and, believe it or not, Mr. Speaker, they had Edmonton where Winnipeg is, and Winnipeg where Edmonton is. The Metric Commission is an agency of the Government of Canada and was telling us what a great thing metric conversion was, yet they had the audacity to show a map of Canada like that to a group of MP's.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Perhaps they did not know where they came from themselves.