

Standards Council of Canada

may be a horrendous one because all our building has been geared to the English standard of measurement. The products of building material factories, saw mills and like industries, the thicknesses of metals and specifications for steel, will have to be considered. These measurements will have to be converted carefully to metric measurements, and in many cases the process will be slow.

• (3:50 p.m.)

The field in which the metric system will bring tremendous and enormous advantages is the field of education. But more important than that, the metric system of measurements will prove superior to any other system used for the housewife who is purchasing anything in the market place. It will be much easier to make comparisons between different sizes of containers and so on. You do not have to be a first class mental mathematician to figure out whether it is better to buy two small items, or one large item for a given price. Comparisons will be easily made and this will be of tremendous advantage. Introducing this system will also enable the number of different sizes of tins used for canned foods and like products to be reduced. That will produce economies in the processing industry as well as in other industries making these containers.

In the field of engineering, it is vitally important for measurements to conform to a uniform standard. Pipes, nuts and bolts, the number of threads to a unit of length on a screw, and so on must all conform to one standard. At present the specifications for items like these, produced here are different from the specifications pertaining to those items produced in countries adhering to the metric system. This has created complications, especially in the export and import of items like automobiles that require special wrenches and tools. Sometimes when an automobile has been made in a country adhering to the metric system you find that the standard nuts and bolts made over here will not quite fit it. The universal introduction of the metric system in the field of engineering will simplify international trade to a great degree. I look forward with pleasure to the day when modern countries, especially advanced countries like Canada, United States and Great Britain, will utilize the metric system, thus facilitating the exchange of trade in many ways, especially in those matters involving engineering, building materials, structural steel and that sort of thing.

However, I think we should proceed with great caution to make sure that a minimum of friction is created as we change from the present system to the metric system. The process should be long and gradual, but should be persisted in until it is finally accomplished. The speed of changeover should not be such as would produce great dislocations for trade and industry. Of course, there are many segments of our commerce in which it would not be advisable ever to introduce the metric system. The metric system was not applied to the measurements of time in France, because it was not feasible to do so. I think practically all countries in the world now use the double 12-hour system.

There are other segments of society in which this system may never be applied. One that comes to my mind is that involving land and land measurements. Although I do not pretend to be an authority in this field, I see little need for changing our whole grid of surveys of farmland so that it conforms to the metric system, because nothing useful would come out of that. The farmers of Canada have enough difficulties already without having to struggle with decimal points in trying to figure how many hectares equal a section.

In summing up, may I say that the duty which it is contemplated will rest on the council to be set up will be most important. The duty to do these things, although not its most important duty, will be very important. If it acts wisely, with persistence on the one hand and patience on the other, I think it will have an opportunity to do a great service to Canada and to create a climate which will facilitate the trade and commerce of the country. I take special pleasure in the government's proceeding along this particular line because I myself have had a private member's bill, as have other hon. members, on the Order Paper for some years on the subject of Canada's proceeding with the consideration at least of the process by which it might change over to the metric system.

Mr. Barney Danson (York North): Mr. Speaker, I enjoy participating in a debate of this type, if it can be termed a debate. I think it is a reasoned discussion by reasonable men on a reasonable proposal. We are dealing with an area in which I have had some experience in my private life. It is an area that I think deserves the sort of consideration that it has been shown this afternoon. I am a little disturbed, however, that we should have to deal with an amendment which seeks to hoist the legislation for six months. I have the greatest