

the Metric Commission, told them that and they confirmed that, yes, an American quart was exactly equal to one litre less a little bit. Mr. Shouldice, needless to say, was not very impressed.

Millions of Canadians have been metrified about what has been happening to their way of life, but the fact is that metric is a way of life, it is a fact of life in this country. I do not believe that we can put the toothpaste back into the tube, metric size or otherwise. Our government's minister of state for small business and industry, the hon. member for Capilano (Mr. Huntington), has stated that he is convinced that international realities, present and future, "will demand that Canadians accept the fact that metric is here to stay."

It may well be that total metric conversion in Canada is inevitable. But that may take another 20 or 30 years. In the meantime, I see no reason for the Metric Commission and this government to continue to force-march the Canadian people through a total conversion to metric. There is clear evidence of massive public resistance. Metrication is economically unrealistic in many sectors of Canadian society. Many of our middle aged and senior citizens are needlessly bothered, inconvenienced, angered and confused by a system they do not understand and never cared to know about. Above all, the mandatory imposition of metric, I feel, has contributed to this Liberal government's image of bureaucratic interference in the lives of the average Canadian.

It was in the famous debate on St. Patrick's Day on March 17, 1975, that the hon. member for Burlington (Mr. Kempling), as reported at page 4162 of *Hansard*, said:

We should not be proceeding by order in council or resolution; we should be proceeding by means of a bill. We should have a bill which sets out all the details of the program. The guidelines and the program should be laid down so that we may proceed in an orderly fashion. Instead, we have a loosely worded order in council which allows the Metric Commission to proceed as it sees fit. I believe it would have been better to have a bill, to have a full debate and then to have the Metric Commission appear before a committee and reappear each year to justify its program and expenditures. We see in this commission another government body removed from the scrutiny of Parliament. We see it as a group that is a law unto itself and which proceeds as it sees fit.

I am sure that many hon. members who were here during that debate in 1975 quickly approved in principle the guidelines for metric conversion. There was nothing mandatory mentioned there, and then the matter was referred to the other place. The Metric Commission has never looked back since. I think every party in this House must shoulder responsibility for this oversight. We were taking far too much at face value without probing to see what lay underneath.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that this metric issue cannot be treated lightly. It is a matter of grave importance to many Canadians. The spirit of my notice of motion is to urge the Metric Commission, through the House, to develop a public consensus as to, and support for, a new metric policy approach for Canada. I believe that this is ultimately the responsibility of Parliament representing all the people of Canada. Accordingly, I recommend that this House give serious consideration to an early and full discussion and debate on metrication in Canada by the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs.

Metric Conversion

I want to see the rest of the Metric Commission's timetable in all the sectors of the Canadian economy brought before hon. members with a view to getting a consensus in the House on current and future metric policy. Above all, I want to see the rest of Canada's metric program made responsive to the needs and the desires of the Canadian people—a voluntary approach to metrication as set out in the 1970 white paper. In short, as I began these remarks, I want to see some democracy brought to metric in this country.

Mr. Jack Masters (Thunder Bay-Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, first of all let me say that I am a little confused by the remarks of the hon. member on the other side who somehow thinks we can find it in our hearts to sit between two systems. I must also make a confession to the House that I was converted to metric by my own family because I, too, resisted the thought at first, but they convinced me that my thinking was not in tune with the world.

The Weights and Measures Act of 1871 made the metric system legal for use in Canada. It was amended in 1971 to specify the international system of units as the improved system to be used. The policy that metric conversion was inevitable and in the national interest was established with the House leaders of all parties on January 16, 1970, speaking in support of the white paper on metric conversion in Canada.

• (1620)

I think it is well worth noting that the reason the white paper first came to be produced was in response to representations which had been pressed upon the government from widely diverse segments of the nation. These included such groups as the Consumers' Association of Canada, the Canadian Home and School Association, the Agricultural Institute of Canada, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce representing the business community, the Canadian Pharmaceutical Association, and the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers. These learned groups had given the matter some great consideration. They had become convinced of the practical benefits to be derived from a system with advantages that range from simplifying the learning process in school to improving and consolidating Canada's competitive position in world trade.

We should also keep in mind that there are some 102 voluntary sector committees with over 2,000 volunteer representatives from industry, labour, consumer and governmental bodies. Metric Commission Canada has had the over-all strategy of involving every sector from every region of Canada as early as possible in planning for metric conversion. All sector plans are developed through a consensus process, and voluntary sector committees take the responsibility for monitoring the implementation of their plans. The voluntary participation approach is characterized by plans which are developed by those who will have to implement them. This helps to ensure that the benefits are achieved at minimal costs. This plan is proceeding forthwith.

Sector plans have resulted from voluntary consensus on the means and timing of their conversions. In the case of prepack-