

Metric System

This metric legislation which has been before the House for some time will affect the western grain farmer to the greatest extent. The Metric Commission instructed the grain trade to convert to the metric system as of February 1 of this year. However, this has been delayed for some time because the bill is not yet through the House.

Members can find ammunition with regard to this bill. All they have to do is read *Open Forum* or the *Western Producer* to see where westerners stand on this matter. I do not know why the minister and the government want to railroad this through the House.

In effect, the main change for farmers will be that his acres will be no more. They will be replaced by hectares, 2.2 acres, while the buying of grain from the farmer will be in tonnes, which is about 2,200 pounds. From the time the bill has been in committee, the official opposition have been pointing out the unfairness of trying to railroad this bill through the House at this time. We attempted to stop the bill since it would appear to be of little use to those who deal with country elevators. The system will cause nothing but confusion to the farmer who, of all segments of the grain trade, is least able to cope with it.

● (2220)

Furthermore, the United States is not likely to convert to hectares or tonnes for a considerable time, so we shall be out of step when it comes to farm machinery, herbicides and fertilizer. The prime mover in this chain seems to have been the Metric Commission, followed by the Wheat Board and the Grain Commissioners; the various grain handling companies have acquiesced.

The railways will still ship in bushels as they have no intention of changing over until 1981.

The Wheat Board has given as its reason for the changeover that it will save \$1,000,000 in computations.

The Conservatives have asked that the acre be retained and that the farmer sell grain at the country elevator at the bushel measure until we standardize with the United States. The Metric Commission, however, with the Wheat Board agreeing, say this will not be as tidy a system and that it is necessary to introduce the metric system for grain across the board.

The Liberal members of the committee supported the changes aggressively but it is interesting to note that this change from acres and bushels only affects the designated Wheat Board area, while the rest of Canada will not likely face any changes for some years so far as acres to hectares is concerned.

I am rather suspicious that the government instituted it in the Wheat Board area to see how it will be accepted. We saw this going on at the committee stage. When I look at the bill and think of the effect it will have on all classes of people, I am sure those who have been supporting it have not been reading their mail or taking note of what has been going on at home.

Like my hon. friend from Churchill I also represent a northern riding and I have no doubt as to how the bill will be accepted in the north. It will not be well received. The

fishermen will certainly be against it, too. This is something which the government cannot railroad through the House. I am reminded of an elderly woman I heard from and who was downright disgusted with the whole thing. She was just about heartbroken. This is about the truest way in which I can explain it. She said, "We will never know how much our grandchildren weighed, how tall they were."

Mr. Hnatyshyn: And its all your fault over there.

Mr. Cadieu: I enjoyed the speech made tonight by the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie). His comments were so close to public opinion with respect to their needs when marketing and making their purchases. Such confusion I have never heard of, and I cannot understand it for the life of me. I congratulate the members on this side for the wonderful speeches they have made on the bill, and I congratulate the hon. member for Qu'appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton) on his amendment. He has offered the government a way of getting out of the mess into which it has put us. The government should strongly consider withdrawing this bill altogether at this time and bringing it back again when the time is right, which is likely to be some while to come.

If I had received any encouragement from my constituents to accept this bill, Mr. Speaker, I would have a different view of it. I believe in advancement and in promotion, but I cannot understand what the government is trying to do at this time. I have received no encouragement regarding this bill from any segment of the population in my riding. This is why the minister should consider withdrawing this ridiculous bill.

I used to hear some of the people from European countries in my constituency saying that this bill would be all right, but even they do not want it now. They have learned the system we use and are backing away from this bill. They have been so long away from the metric system which is used in Europe that they are not so happy about adopting it again. I have not found one person who is really happy with it. They have changed their minds and I should like to see the government change its mind, instead of trying to railroad this bill through.

I know the confusion that exists about it. I was in my constituency last week and spoke to people who will be affected by this bill, the various measurements for fertilizers, herbicides and so on, hectares and tonnes and all the rest of it. The whole thing is a mess. The government should listen to the enlightened advice given it by the official opposition regarding what the bill means to the country as a whole. It is not too late to accept this amendment and to get down to some common sense thinking. May I call it 10.30, Mr. Speaker?

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Hnatyshyn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, may I ask the acting House leader what business it is the intention of the government to call tomorrow?