

*Metric System*

without legislation having to be passed. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, if you talk to a farmer or you visit an elevator and examine a permit book which was issued last fall, several months before this legislation was introduced in the House, you would find that the permit book records the size of fields in both acres and hectares. Obviously, the minister did not feel that it required legislation to make that change in the Wheat Board documents. As I say, this release was issued after the bill went to committee, but before it had passed.

I should like to tell the grain companies that it does not require any legislation for them to record and to deal with grain in the metric system from the elevator to the point of export. There is no law preventing use of the metric system. When a farmer delivers his load of grain to the elevator, it is a simple matter for the elevator agent to issue a cash purchase ticket or a storage ticket in both bushels and tonnes. That is perfectly legitimate. From that point on the grain company can do all its recording in the metric system. So when news announcements and public statements are made to the effect that the delay in the passage of this bill has prevented the grain trade from converting to the metric system and has cost them money, that is a pack of nonsense, Mr. Speaker.

I want to close by addressing some remarks to the minister. I am sure that the volume of correspondence which he has received from farmers, as well as the representations made to him by members on this side of the House, are an indication to him that the western farmer is not prepared to accept this bill, particularly the change from acres to hectares. In fairness—I know the minister is fair—I am sure he will accept the motion presented a few moments ago by the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain to enable the finance committee to hear representations from the farmers to confirm what their letters have said and what we on this side of the House have told the minister. Indeed, I do not think the matter needs confirmation; the minister has himself received sufficient letters on the subject, and possibly the Minister without Portfolio (Mr. Horner) has put to him very strongly the feelings of the western farmers.

This is not a political matter, Mr. Speaker, but a matter that affects every farmer in western Canada and, indirectly, every owner or potential owner of land in Canada. I ask the House to set politics aside, to accept this amendment, to refer the bill back to committee and to let us for once bring forth legislation which the majority of the people of Canada want.

**Mr. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville):** Mr. Speaker, I am compelled to speak on this piece of legislation once again, first of all to support the amendment moved by my good friend and colleague for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton). I hope Your Honour will, in your deliberations, see fit to find the amendment in order. I think it is fair to say that, if there is some slight modification of wording required, this would be quite acceptable in order that we may implement the principal purpose of the motion.

I am also compelled to rise and speak to this legislation once again in view of the statements of the minister in the House since this bill has moved into third reading. The minister

indicated that he has some slight reservations about certain sections of the legislation, sections which, I might add, we in this party have vigorously opposed on behalf of the farmers of western Canada. The minister has also said he is receptive to suggestions from the opposition regarding how he might engage in those consultations which he spoke of when he answered my question in the House on May 3. If I may quote precisely what the minister said, I had asked him what mechanism he had in mind for ensuring that the views of the producers would be taken into consideration, and as reported at page 5227 of *Hansard* he replied:

—the exact mechanism has not yet been decided. I assure the hon. member opposite that I will be happy to receive suggestions from him on how he feels this matter ought to be dealt with.

● (1210)

The amendment we have proposed really answers that request. We have taken a position wherein we presented to the minister a mechanism in which he may be able to engage in the consultations he referred to. I hope the minister will not rely upon the members of the metric commission, the bureaucrats, to engage in the kind of consultation he refers to with western producers. As the hon. member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Neil) pointed out, these people have a rather biased and bent view on this particular issue. The farmers of western Canada would rather be dealing with elected representatives than paid representatives of the metric commission.

My second purpose in rising to speak on this legislation once again is the fact that the opposition to the provisions we have fought has not lessened. In fact, it has intensified. We have received countless numbers of letters and representations from producers who are concerned and who want to retain, particularly, the acre. They see absolutely no justification for changing the acre to hectare. Quite frankly, they do not see much reason in changing from bushels to tonnes, but the feeling is not quite as strong as it is in the case of acres to hectares. The farmers do not sell their land in the international market, and it will not make one iota of difference as to the amount of grain we sell. It will not involve any greater or lesser convenience or inconvenience on the part of the grain trade whether the producer is producing his grain by acres or hectares. It does make a tremendous amount of difference to the producers.

The opposition is widespread. While there was a growing amount of support for the whole question of metric conversion in western Canada because of the attitude of the government in this particular issue the support for a total metric conversion program has somewhat diminished. I am in the process of conducting a survey on a number of important issues in my riding. These are issues which affect the people in my riding. I have asked the question whether or not they favour the metric conversion system as a whole. Over 65 per cent said no. On the question of the conversion of acres to hectares, 74.3 per cent are opposed to the conversion, and 69 per cent are opposed to the conversion from bushels to tonnes.

I do not apologize for recording my constituents' feelings in this chamber. For anyone to suggest we are playing politics