

Metric System

I have a final word of advice for the government, Mr. Speaker. If it had followed the policy adopted by the United States government with respect to metrication, it would have found it effective. There is an old saying, "It is not what you do, it is the way you do it." In a democracy you cannot proceed by coercion, authoritarianism, or the techniques all too frequently used in this Trudeauocracy. You must move by persuasion, by education, and without compulsion if you are to carry public opinion. The government must recognize this. It realizes now that it is in trouble and is trying to get out of the difficulty.

The approach of the government is almost like the sort of thing you find in what has been described as benign despotism or a benevolent dictatorship where the government knows better what is good for the people than do the people themselves. This has got it into difficulty in such matters as metrication. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) himself says that the system of government he feels most comfortable with is a benign despotism.

I urge the government to accept the amendment and return the legislation to the committee. The farmer realizes he has been misled, so does the grain industry, and the Metric commission. Even the Manitoba government feels it has been led down the garden path. We tried to give the government a way out, a face-saving device, by introducing an amendment which would provide a dual system for the phasing in period, but it was voted down. Again we tried in a positive, constructive way, to make it feasible for this legislation to proceed and to remove the growing protest in the farming community by introducing a three year transition period amendment which was proposed by the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton). That was also turned down, and so the government has missed the opportunity to provide ample time for an information and education program.

The government claims that it is going to delay implementation of the legislation. This is like an incubus hanging over the heads of farmers. Why does the government not start as it should have, by letting the farmers be heard and taking the bill back to committee? This is the democratic way to proceed. We must get away from this order in council, authoritarian, Trudeauocratic approach practised by the government.

Mr. Bill Kempling (Halton-Wentworth): Mr. Speaker, I should like to support the amendment which would refer Bill C-23 back to committee and thus give members and farmers an opportunity to express their views. I believe the answers given to the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) on May 3 as reported at pages 5226-5227 of *Hansard* are the most incredible statements that have been made in this House for some time.

What particularly bothers me is that when this bill was before the committee, representatives of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture appeared before it and, at the same time down the street, at the Chateau Laurier, a farm group was meeting. When this matter was brought up on the floor at that meeting it was such a hot issue that the chairman tabled it so that there would be no further discussion and they could get on

with other business. In other words, a tremendous amount of resentment was shown by the farmers who said they did not agree in particular with the land measure. Representatives of the Metric Commission and the CFA were telling a committee of this House at that very moment that the vast majority of farmers agreed totally with metric conversion and asked us to get on with it.

The matter of land measure is the crux of the whole problem. I do not know why the minister and his advisers have not decided to allow it to go back to committee, or why they have not accepted the numerous suggestions put forward on this side of the House.

Replying to the hon. member for Vegreville on May 3 as reported at page 5227 of *Hansard*, the Minister of State (Small Business) (Mr. Marchand) said:

Mr. Speaker, 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.

We offered the suggestion that the matter be referred back to committee for further consideration of grains and land measure in particular. From the lack of response, obviously nothing is going to be done.

There are several variations of metric measure used in other countries. There is the French metric, the Japanese metric, the Australian metric, and the British metric. In Great Britain, after consultation with the European Economic Community, they have decided to retain miles, acres, pints, and also miles-per-hour on the roads.

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The commission is telling members of parliament that everybody is in agreement with this, but yet we find that the metro Toronto transportation committee has turned back a budget item of \$80,000 intended to convert municipal speed and bridge clearance signs to metric. When you go across the country and talk to people in any municipal area, you find that they are at a loss as to when the change will be made and who will pay for it.

Many countries have retained measurement terms that, if changed, would cause some confusion, but in Canada we have this pious, uninformed group of people in the Metric Commission, who are basically idea peddlers, who think they know best what is best for Canadians and who, by their actions, have misled parliament. That is a matter that clearly upsets me.

As a member of the committee dealing with metric conversion I have received numerous telephone calls from people in the Metric Commission. At one time a member of the commission berated me for daring to criticize some action of the commission. I have had at least 15 phone calls from people on the Canada Grains Council telling me that we were the ones who were holding up the legislation. They told me that we were going to cause the economic collapse of the grain industry in western Canada, that we were misinformed, that all the farmers in western Canada were wholeheartedly in support of this. Then we learned that, quite to the contrary, they were not. So the matter has not been thoroughly dealt with, and it