

we do not want to delude ourselves but some of the remarks made by the minister during this debate are hopeful since they suggest to our satisfaction that our work was not worthless. We are unavoidably moving, in the interests of those governing as well as the governed, towards a more open information and a gradual unmasking, if I may use this term, a gradual unmasking of the whole myth surrounding government machinery. I am pleased to see at least one or two cabinet members who are listening at present, and they are most progressive. Secrecy is no longer in fashion, Mr. Speaker. It is more and more in governments' interest to act in the open. Of course I understand that some restrictions might exist in the area of national defence and security—and I am convinced of it—but they certainly do not apply in every single instance. Thus it is more and more in the interest of governments to act in the open. Injustices as well as so called scandals or even scandals and allegations of all kinds will be avoided in and out the House. Since the public foots the bill, it is entitled to that. It demands it. We must comply in as much as possible with this legitimate wish. And the sooner, the better.

• (2120)

[English]

**Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):** Mr. Speaker, it is rather singular to find that those on this side of the House who are most interested in the subject we are discussing should be members who were first elected in 1957, or thereabouts. My hon. friend from Halifax-East Hants was elected in the same year as I was, 1957. My hon. friend from Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain was elected in 1957, and the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) in 1958. And I know that others in the House, as their years of service in this Chamber lengthen, are becoming very uneasy about the implications of this debate.

In the other place Senator Forsey, when he was introducing this report, asked why members of the Commons and the Senate were only now bringing forward this material about orders in council. Mr. Speaker, it took a tremendously long time to convince the government that the committee should be set up. It took hammering after hammering. I was pressing the point in speech after speech, in committee of the whole and in debates in this House, objecting to the general powers we were giving to the government, in any and all bills. These representations have been taken up and emphasized in the findings of the committee. Also, on Tuesday of last week this party put forward a motion dealing with \$1 items and condemning their use. In fact the Chair did find that two of these items were quite illegal. Another four of them, with a little more strictness, could have been thrown out, too.

But I should like to bring the attention of hon. members to section K of the report having to do with enabling powers under appropriation acts and, in particular, to paragraphs 104 to 113. Every one of them amounts to a ringing condemnation of the practice of the government in extending the use of \$1 items. As has been pointed out, parliament is being asked, very often, under a \$1 item, to give power to a subordinate official to do something, subject to the rules and regulations of that subordinate power, on the strength of a \$1 item when there is

### *Metric System*

not even the money there. I commend in particular the reading of paragraphs 112 and 113. As a matter of fact I shall read them into the record.

112. The Committee notes that power to make subordinate legislation is not granted in Votes in Appropriation Acts in the United Kingdom or in the Commonwealth of Australia and has concluded that it should place on record its opposition, as a matter of principle, to the making of delegated legislation under Votes in Appropriation Acts, whether under substantive or "dollar" Votes or under Votes used in conjunction with items listed in the Estimates. The Committee has made this position known to the Auditor General, the President of the Privy Council, the President of the Honourable the Treasury Board and the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and has invited each to place his observations on the problems and practices now reported before the Committee. The Auditor General has replied in terms which confirm the Committee in its disquiet.

113. The Committee endorses the views of the Auditor General. If enabling powers to make statutory instruments are to continue to be granted in Appropriation Acts, the vote texts should be specific and unequivocal, and contain all the wording having legislative effect, with none being contained in the Estimates. Legislating by means of dollar Votes and altering the purpose of previous Votes by a number of successive Votes are practices with which the Committee does not agree.

The other day the government repudiated its own members. It repudiated its own members on this committee. One cannot say this loudly enough. It should be said loudly enough for all to hear. For the benefit of the Minister of Fisheries and the Environment (Mr. LeBlanc) particularly, I shall repeat it. He must hear it loud and clear.

**An hon. Member:** He does.

**Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):** All that is contained in this report is for the benefit of the House and for the benefit of the government.

May I adjourn the debate?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It is moved by Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West) that the debate be adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### STATUTE LAW (METRIC CONVERSION) AMENDMENT ACT, 1976

#### AMENDMENTS TO WHEAT BOARD ACT TO FACILITATE CONVERSION TO METRIC SYSTEM

The House resumed from Friday, March 25, consideration of Bill C-23 to facilitate conversion to the metric system of measurement, as reported (with amendments) from the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs.

• (2130)

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It being 9.30 p.m., pursuant to the order made earlier this day, it is my duty at this time to put forthwith all questions necessary to dispose of deferred divisions at the report stage of Bill C-23.

Call in the members.