

on the same carton. It would give them three years to adjust in order to have time to persuade and educate them that the metric system was not bad.

That proposal was turned down by the votes of every Liberal member in that committee. Through the amendments by the hon. member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Neil), we proposed that in the case of grain farmers we make it permissive. The Wheat Board made it permissive because they had to deal with farmers and they could not get along with them by trying to enforce the metric system on them without their permission. That was not the case with this government. They forced those poor Liberal members on the committee to vote against our second compromise one after the other—a permissive system for a number of years.

● (2100)

That was the second compromise, Mr. Speaker. On third reading we tried once again. Taking advantage of the minister's statement that he would not proclaim the legislation but wanted to consult with the grain industry and the farmers, I moved an amendment using his words. After the amendment was accepted—with the deletion of the last two or three phrases—we offered a compromise and said that if they took this bill back to committee to deal with Clauses 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10, and if the farmers were consulted, the Official Opposition would be co-operative in getting the bill through.

What happened, Mr. Speaker? Not one member on the government side responded to that compromise. This is the only way parliament can work yet they turned it down. They now sit silent, docile, a bunch of beaten-down hacks.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): They are so frightened of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) that they dare not voice their own opinions and they do not care any more about what their constituents think. As long as the Prime Minister is in charge, they say, he will get some great issue going, such as abortion, divorce, homosexuality or a crisis that is not a crisis. He will even drag in homosexuality to get the people's interest away from the main issue. He will do anything at all to get off the main issue. That is why I say participatory democracy is dead as far as this government is concerned.

Last night a minister I have had many a battle with over the years, particularly on his farm legislation, brought in a bill that affects western farmers. I looked at the legislation, this party examined it and we decided it was good legislation. We knew it would be opposed by the New Democratic Party.

An hon. Member: Where are they?

Mr. Woolliams: Stanley is always alone.

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): This party voted with the government and I think this demonstrates that Her Majesty's Official Opposition will co-operate on good legislation. When we do support the government on bills that

Metric System

we think are good, however, then I think the government has an equal responsibility to listen when we oppose something they do.

All the evidence that can be brought forward, all the tests that can be made of public opinion on the prairies, show that a huge majority of people are opposed on this dictatorial conversion to a metric system that they do not understand and which they know is going to cost hundreds of millions of dollars. They also know they have no chance to express an opinion.

This alienation that exists all across the country against the governments of the provinces and the federal government has surfaced because we are not listening to our people and they feel there is no way for them to make their voices heard. As members of parliament all we can do is express the views of our constituents and our part of the country on behalf of equity and justice in the hope that the government will listen. When has this government ever bent its knees a fraction and yielded to the advice that might come from this side of the House?

An hon. Member: Never.

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): The government seems to be unable to follow the democratic traditions of this place which depend upon a certain amount of give and take if there is to be harmony in reaching decisions which are best for the country.

To claim that what civil servants put forward as legislation is God's word and cannot be challenged is to go too far. I would say that democracy has suffered, with this fairly elementary principle of metric conversion, a deadly blow. Farmers from all parts of Saskatchewan and all across the prairies are writing to me about it but I have not bothered to read any letters into the record. Of 700 letters that came in, only three supported the metric system, and they were all from delegates of the Wheat Pool. We have always sold wheat by the metric system so why do we have to force metrication at the farm level when it is not necessary? If farmers can be shown there is some advantage in it they will adopt it.

In all the years I have been around here I have never seen such a complete failure of human beings to bend a little on such an elementary issue and make a compromise. All we asked the government to do was to consult face to face with the farmers; meet them in small groups where they can say what is on their minds. This issue of metric conversion, which I thought would have the harmonious co-operation of all parties, has turned out to be a complete farce in terms of democracy.

On the subject of humanity toward your fellow man, we know that the Liberals worked hard for two or three months seducing a simple country boy to join their Cabinet.

Mr. Woolliams: Where is he tonight?

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): Apparently he believed that if he crossed the floor they would listen to him. He promised the people of western Canada that if he got in there he would put the view of western Canada to the