

● (1620)

North America has a common machinery market. All our seed drills, all our herbicide applicators are, naturally, based on the very large American market to the south. The manufacturers will not be using hectares, litres or kilograms until a changeover takes place in America, and this will perhaps take many years, particularly in the field of agriculture. The introduction of the metric system in the United States will, I understand, be largely voluntary. In other words, the system will have to prove itself to be the best before it is widely used.

The Canadian farmer is not averse to new ideas. Indications are that agriculture in general, and grain farming in particular, are among the most scientifically managed industries and certainly among the most productive industries. Farmers resent this change to the metric system because they feel it will be a barrier to their ability to produce. It is significant that in Britain, a much smaller country and one in which the introduction of the metric system will be met with considerably more acceptance than in Canada because of its dependence upon foreign markets for manufactured goods, they intend to keep the mile, the inch, the pound and the gallon. If those measurements were retained in Canada, it would certainly help western farmers through the transition period.

I would point out that the metric system is merely another means of measuring. It is certainly convenient in a computer age, but the metric measurements are often incomprehensible to people accustomed to working with their hands. For example, everyone knows that a bushel basket represents a certain volume. The farmer does not know how much a kilogram or a litre represents. A tonne is too large for him to visualize easily, but a bushel represents a familiar volume; he can look at a bag and form an immediate judgment of what it contains. But a tonne of grain represents anything from 38 bushels of wheat to 50 or so bushels or another grain such as oats. Metric is not a good system of measurement for those who work with their hands on a farm.

Moreover, the metric system is confusing in itself. This is shown by a letter from the deputy minister of agriculture in Manitoba to Mr. Baxter, chairman of the metric committee of the Canadian Grain Commission. This is what the deputy minister had to say:

I understand that the Canada Grains Council Metric Committee has made a tentative decision to adopt the kg/hl as the unit for measuring grain densities. Since Canada, along with most of the other countries in the world is adopting the SI metric system it is clear that we should be using SI units in our grains industry. The hectolitre is not an SI unit and should not be used. The official Metric Practice Guide which is a national standard of Canada gives the kg/m<sup>3</sup> as the correct unit for density (see pages 11, 15, and 25). The introduction of another density unit would only add confusion and extra calculations to the designation of grain densities.

I also understand that your committee is proposing to give grain storage volumes in metric tonnes equivalent of wheat. The arguments against the hectolitre also apply to this unit. The unit you are proposing is, in fact, 1.34m<sup>3</sup>, and the only way to determine the volume of a bin in metric tonnes equivalent of wheat is to measure it in m<sup>3</sup> and divide the result by 1.34. This is obviously an unnecessary calculation, and results in a long, confusing unit. To state the volume simply in m<sup>3</sup> is according to approved SI practice, and given as the national standard of Canada. To determine the amount of grain in a storage, with the density given in kg/m<sup>3</sup> and the volume in m<sup>3</sup>, one simple multiplication

### Metric System

is required. To determine the amount of grain in a storage, with the density given in kg/hl and the volume in metric tonnes equivalent of wheat, many complex calculations are required, as well as knowledge of the appropriate conversion factors. The logic in selecting the approved SI units is clear.

This shows there is division of opinion among the experts as to how this issue should be used. If there is division among experts, how can we expect the farmer to understand the significance of these distinctions? The letter continues:

I also understand that the Canadian Wheat Board is proposing to use metric tonnes per acre as the unit for grain yield. Any combinations of metric and Imperial units are totally unacceptable and I trust that you will use your influence to have the acres replaced by hectares. All of our department publications since January, 1974, have been giving yields and chemical application rates in tonnes or kilograms per hectare and we will continue to do so.

That was from the deputy minister of agriculture in Manitoba. It shows that the Manitoba government is behind this move and agrees to the introduction of metric. But it has not been accepted wholeheartedly by the western farmer. No one complains about the grain trade using the metric system once the grain is in the elevator. But it seems foolish and useless to introduce the system at a time when the railways have indicated that it will be many years, five at least, before they themselves go metric. In other words, even if grain is brought to them in metric tonnes, this will be changed when it is loaded into the boxcars. Then when it is unloaded at the terminals the contents will be translated again into metric terms. So there seems no reason for introducing the change at this time, particularly since other parts of the North American continent, of which the great plains are a part, will continue to use the Imperial system for some years to come.

In his press release of February 1, 1977, the minister undertook to move gradually. He said:

While I believe the proposed legislative changes should be implemented as quickly as possible, I also want to ensure that producer interests are not prejudiced and that farmers are not subjected to an unreasonable burden.

He should be as good as his word. What does he propose to do about this unreasonable burden of which he speaks? The minister has not told us. He said he will not have certain aspects of the bill proclaimed until some time in the future. This is not good enough. We want to know what he intends to do, and see it in writing in the legislation. The bill has had a rough ride in rural areas. They feel let down and put upon by the bureaucracy. They feel let down by their own farm organizations which have not, apparently, felt the weight of their members' opinions but are more interested in complying with what they regard as a *fait accompli*. They were told that they would save a little money; but in the end, of course, the farmer always has to pay because the expense of handling grain is eventually reflected in the price the farmer receives. Therefore, his wishes should be paramount and every effort should be made to accommodate him.

● (1630)

This legislation is being greeted with a tremendous amount of unhappiness on the part of the farmers. I hope the House will see fit to return the legislation to committee so the minister can tell us exactly what he intends to do to relieve the burden on the farmers.