

perche, etc. It is novel to find all these included in a temporary developing situation, but I would like the minister to give some indication of the length of time that all these things will remain lumped together. I would like to hear from the minister his estimate of how long it will take to move from the use of the customary Canadian system to the use of the metric system.

At this point, I wish to recall something that may assist him. In our history books we have read that on January 1, 1922, the city of Vancouver and, I believe, the whole province of British Columbia, switched from driving on the left-hand side of the road to driving on the right-hand side. A great deal of preparation had to be made for that switch. But when the switch was made, it was made in a single day. People were well prepared for it, and as a result the confusion it caused was minimal. I hope that the period during which we will be struggling with both the metric and the customary systems in Canada will not be long drawn out and that, however we decide to move, we undertake the move as quickly as possible. I am glad that the minister is taking the first steps to move us into adoption of the metric system.

During the committee hearings, I shall ask how long the public will be undergoing preparation for the change to the metric system. I do not believe we should muddle along indefinitely using both systems. There is a need for consumer education in this respect. The committee on prices, which the minister so ably co-chaired several years ago, vigorously insisted on the need for consumer education. I hope he will now alert the public to become familiar with the terms of the weights and measures used in the metric system. This brings up another point.

Those who will be living with the metric system in Canada are today's school children. On this point I do not want the minister to hide behind the constitution and say that, unfortunately, education is a provincial matter about which he can do nothing. I point out that consumer education is the job of the minister and his department, and in my view his department should be considering ways and means of introducing consumer education at a lower level than that of adults who have become fossilized in the customary system of weights and measures that we are presently using. I think that the minister, agile and able as he is in so many ways, particularly with respect to details, should be able to discover a way by which consumer education can be directed at young, unformed minds so that in later years they will be able to use the metric system to the best advantage.

**An hon. Member:** What about the unformed minds in the Liberal party?

**Mrs. MacInnis:** I would prefer not to touch on that for the moment.

The hon. member for Peace River questioned whether there will be a need for all these inspectors. One way to keep down the number of inspectors is to increase the amount of public education. Well informed housewives will reduce the need for a large number of inspectors. I scarcely think the minister and the government believe it

### *Weights and Measures Act*

a good idea to keep the public uninformed so that a large number of inspectors may be appointed. The ordinary consumer, well educated and self-interested, would be much more vigilant than any civil servant wandering around and making less interested inspections. These are some of the points we should look at when discussing this bill.

● (4:30 p.m.)

As I say, the principle of this bill is a good one if the minister can assure us that we are not just going to add the metric system to our own weights and measures system, leaving it to some future minister to sort out the confusion. I would like to be sure that the present minister will see this through, and if he does I think we will have a good bill.

**Mr. William Knowles (Norfolk-Haldimand):** Mr. Speaker, my remarks are more in the nature of a question to further underline the remarks already made by the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis). I should like to ask the minister, as we close this debate, if he could give some indication of what progress we have made toward the adoption of the metric system in Canada. The hon. member pointed out some of the factors that are holding us back, one being that the United States is loth to accept this standard. Our manufacturers are at a disadvantage when they undertake contracts for foreign companies and find that the specifications are in the metric system.

It seems to me that we should be moving a little faster in this field, Mr. Speaker. Many of our scientists have already spoken about this as it is the common scientific measurement throughout the world. The system is being taught in schools, but in a theoretical manner. I heartily concur with the suggestion that more steps should be taken to introduce this system of measurement in a practical way. I wonder if the minister could state if his department has taken any steps or conducted any research on how the system should be introduced.

At the present time the United Kingdom is moving to the decimal system of currency and both types of coinage are in circulation in order to facilitate the gradual introduction of the new system. This makes me wonder if we should not be moving in the same direction. Perhaps a good place to start would be to measure gasoline in litres instead of gallons, since everybody buys gas.

That is all I have to say, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the minister could indicate what progress is being made.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I have to advise the House that if the hon. minister speaks now he will close the debate.

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Basford:** I will be brief, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the remarks of hon. members and, in particular, those of the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin). However, I think his remarks can be dealt with more appropriately in the committee. The hon. member who