

Statement by Chairman, (Mr. Bary Kion Peck)
Metrication Board. 15

Parliament has passed the two Bills which will pave the way for Singapore to convert to the Metric System. Metrication is so far-reaching that each and every one of us will sooner or later be involved, and all of us must put in some effort in order that this change may be a success.

In converting to the metric system, Singapore will fall into line with most of the World in applying rational and logical system of weights and measures. There are now more than 120 countries using the metric system, comprising more than 90% of the World's population.

Singapore remains one of the few Asian countries still using the old Imperial System of weights and measures.

The U.S.A. is the only major country which has not made a decision to turn metric. However, the National Bureau of Standards is presently involved in a three-year study programme to decide on the recommendations to be made to the U.S. Congress.

The most obvious advantage of the metric system over the Imperial System is that it is decimal-based. It will bring greater efficiency in trade, commerce and industry, and will encourage speedier transactions.

Education will also benefit. Pupils will no longer need to spend time learning of irrational Imperial and Local Systems of weights and measures, and working out examples and problems involving these.

Besides leading to greater efficiency, industry will also benefit from the elimination of unnecessary varieties. An example would be the reduction to 750 in the present 4,000 odd sizes of nuts, bolts and other fasteners. This will of course mean a substantial saving in capital expenditure on stocks and storage space.

Overseas experience has shown that the cost of metrication is likely to be the heaviest in industries where metric conversion may affect expensive equipment and stocks. However, at this early stage of industrialization in Singapore, overall cost will be relatively small. Costs will increase with each year of delay.

The purpose of the Metrication Board is to give general assistance to all, and to receive views and opinions from those who will be affected. Government and statutory bodies will first be assisted and then the private sector. There will be plenty of time for such adaptation.

In the retail trade the process will be even more gradual and will extend over a number of years. The process of metrication in this particular sector will not be finalised until it is quite clear that the country is ready for it.

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