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*BWMA records with gratitude the honorary membership of the late John Aspinall
Nirad C Chaudhuri CBE & Jennifer Paterson*

BWMA points the way

Enclosed with this issue is a new pamphlet entitled *Foot, Pint & Pound*, which we hope you will enjoy reading and will also approve as our latest campaigning weapon. It is designed to provide an overview in convenient form of the case against compulsory metrication, for distribution to all interested parties.

You can enclose a copy with letters that you write about the subject, to politicians, the BBC, National Trust, AA and RAC, editors of newspapers and magazines, publishers of mail-order catalogues, consumer groups, head offices of supermarket chains, etc.; and give them to friends, teachers and local shopkeepers. So please let us have your orders for whatever quantity you can use!

For we are now approaching the decisive battle in this struggle against compulsory metrication. In face of the intense unpopularity of the regulations, a widespread and growing revolt by retailers, and overwhelmingly hostile media, almost no local authority wants to take a trader to court. For the same reasons – plus the prospect of a general election next year – central government seems curiously reluctant to encourage prosecutions.

Now Sunderland city council, itself faced with the threat of legal action for depriving a local trader of his scales, has broken ranks and issued a press release stating that the trader in question, Mr Steven Thoburn, is to be prosecuted. This should provide us at last with a test case, and BWMA is actively assisting Mr Thoburn.

Meanwhile, hundreds of honest traders have been officially informed by their local Trading Standards Officers that they are liable to criminal prosecution, yet almost none of them has any means whatever of ascertaining, from their MP or local Councillor, whether or not a prosecution is to proceed. This is a constitutional outrage. It is against natural justice. Such an appalling situation should not exist outside a totalitarian state.

This is not just a question of selling apples in pounds or kilos: it is a crisis of democracy, a defining moment in our cultural history and in the government of this country.

“Business Against Metrication” Day

“BAM” Day on Thursday, 22 June, was a triumph for BWMA. It comprised two events. The first was the all-party Parliamentary lobby in the House of Commons, in Committee Room XIV – one of the largest in the Palace of Westminster – courtesy of Richard Page MP (a junior Opposition front-bench spokesman on Trade and Industry, who had very kindly booked the room for us).

After our troops had foregathered around the Winston Churchill statue in Parliament Square, we filed in at 12 noon, knowing that we had to get through a high-powered programme within one hour.

The principal speakers were Richard Page MP, Michael Shrimpton (Barrister), Vivian Linacre, Angela Browning (Shadow Secretary of State for Trade and Industry), Lord Shore (BWMA Patron and a former President of the Board of Trade) and Jeffrey Titford MEP (Leader of UKIP).

David Lidington MP (sponsor of the Ten-Minute Rule Bill to decriminalise imperial measures) also spoke. It was a great privilege for BWMA to organise and preside at such a gathering. The next day’s press coverage was immensely encouraging, thanks to the high standard of speeches generally but particularly to Mrs Browning’s participation, as well as to the excellent press briefing circulated beforehand (see below).

After hurried pub lunches, the public meeting in the Central Halls’ magnificent Sangster Room. With Bruce Robertson in the chair, the principal speakers were Donald Martin, recently installed as Chairman of the Federation of Small Businesses’ UK Policy Unit, Nigel Farage MEP and Geoffrey Cox (barrister), who were all most impressive. In addition, we heard from several “rebel retailers,” including David Stephens (who, for the benefit of TV cameras, had smashed a set of metric scales in Parliament Square earlier in the day), Peter Ellis, Keane Fletcher, Russell Duke and Stephen Fretwell. What a day!

John Gardner’s press briefing included the following key points:

“Although the government claims that using lb/oz is illegal, there is no law in Britain that prohibits their use in the sale of foods and goods sold loose. Nor is there any law that compels the use of metric for this purpose. Britain’s 60,000 fresh food traders may therefore use lb/oz perfectly legally.

Following the release in January of constitutional barrister Michael Shrimpton’s 27-page legal opinion, showing why the metric regulations are unlawful, LACOTS, the national co-ordinating body for trading standards, asked the Department of Trade and Industry to provide a competent legal opinion

disproving Shrimpton. Although that was four months ago (in March), the DTI has still not replied.

Evidently dissatisfied, LACOTS is understood to have commissioned its own legal opinion! ... [We have since learned that LACOTS received the legal opinion it asked for, but has so far chosen to release only a summary bereft of legal argument.]

The government is in a corner. In order to win a court case in favour of the metric regulations, the government has to argue that an Act of Parliament (the 1985 Weights and Measures Act) cannot overrule European law, *even if passed subsequently*. The constitutional implication of this is that British law is dead.

Conversely, if the government’s metric regulations are shown to be unlawful, the government itself will face legal action – by the European Commission for not implementing an EC Directive. Otherwise, any Member State would be able to invalidate EC Directives by means of domestic legislation. The metric dispute is therefore forcing a showdown between national and European law.

Companies that support metric conversion perhaps do so to disguise reductions in packaged quantities and so sell customers reduced measure. Some recent examples: Bowers is reducing its packs of sausages from the traditional pound to ‘400g’. These metric packs contain 12% less, yet Bowers sells them at the same price as competitors who still sell in 1lb packs. Sweet producer Trebor Bassett ‘downsized’ bags of Murraymints, Everton Mints and Mint Imperials from 227g [8oz] to 200g – equivalent to only 7oz. Potato wafer crisp producer Pringles recently reduced its 56g tubes [2oz] to 50g with no corresponding reduction in price.” Members have drawn attention to dozens of similar instances.

Among all the reports of our “BAM Day” on 22 June, we must quote from a leading article in *The Times* (headlined “Not an inch”), as follows:

“Standardised measurement may well make sense in science and manufacturing, as the destruction of an American probe to Mars last September illustrated... But loose bulk consumer goods are certainly another matter. From January 1, the European Union has required British shops and stalls to label items metrically... the ruling has been widely disregarded and barely enforced by trading standards officers. Yesterday, Angela Browning, shadow trade and industry secretary, committed the Conservatives to lifting this obligation. When in power, they would apply to the European Commission for a renewal of the derogation which ran out at the end of last year.

The metrication ruling is an unwelcome intrusion by Brussels. The fact that it is not properly enforced brings the law into disrespect. The Conservatives have identified an issue which will win the support of small businesses and shoppers. Seeking to reverse the present situation chimes nicely with their call for a common sense revolution.”

Join the action against metric signage

As members are doubtless aware, a large number of county councils have for some time been installing metric road and pedestrian signs, such as "Speed Humps 20m" or "Tourist Information → 150m". This is despite the fact that Britain is under no obligation to do so under EC directive 89/617 which grants Britain an exemption from metric for road signs.

What is not so well known is that is that, **under British law, the metric road and pedestrian signs being installed by local councils are illegal.** The 1994 Traffic Signs Regulations state:

* It is not lawful to use signs that show distances in metres or kilometres. This applies to both road traffic signs and pavement signs for pedestrians (although not to signs on private land).

* Signs giving restrictions on traffic width, length and weight must be in imperial units. Metric may be used in addition to traditional units but only on separate signs, since the law does not permit "dual-marking".

* Dual-marked signs are legal for height restriction signs. Imperial-only signs are also legal but metric-only signs are not.

The Government's position

The Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions (DETR) says that the government has "no plans to replace imperial signs with metric signs until the majority of drivers have been educated in the metric system. Given that a UK driving licence is valid until the holder reaches 70... it will be some time before the present government considers the need to change our signs" (letter, 6/9/00).

Notwithstanding the fact that most people of all ages think in miles rather than kilometres, the number of drivers who have had metric education will become a majority in 2006. Thus, we can expect kilometre "K-Day" to be on the government's agenda in less than six years' time.

BWMA strategy

Whatever the views of the present government, BWMA believes that the introduction of metres on road and pedestrian signs now will act as a bridgehead for future governments wishing to abolish the mile and adopt the kilometre.

BWMA is therefore launching a campaign to purge metric signs from every corner of the United Kingdom. Rolling back the metric conversion of road and pedestrian signs will send a message to future governments that we will never accept the use of kilometres for road signs.

Member action

To achieve our goal, we need your help. The signs we need to target are:

* All directional signs showing metric distances.

* Any metric sign showing restrictions on traffic width, length and weight (so long as there are no corresponding imperial signs in the vicinity).

* All metric-only height restriction signs.

We suggest that members use the following plan of action:

i. Locate metric signs. Take two photographs. Send one photograph to BWMA with the date taken and location written on the back so that we may compile a national file. Disposable cameras are available for as little as £7.99, e.g. from Boots.

ii. Write a polite letter to the transportation or highway department of the relevant county council, pointing out that the sign is illegal under the Traffic Signs Regulations 1994. Ask them to replace it with a sign showing yards (do not ask them merely to remove the sign; we want yards re-introduced). The address will be in the telephone directory under the name of the county council.

iii. If the local authority does not comply, write to the Traffic Signs Policy Branch of the DETR (at Zone 3/21, Great Minster House, 76 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DR), informing them that your local authority is acting illegally. Ask the DETR to write to the local authority to explain the law.

iv. Do not enter debates with local councils about arguments for and against metric conversion of signage (e.g. to help tourists). If a local authority believes that metre signs are beneficial, then it is up to them to have the law changed. Until then, you need only argue that they must comply with the law.

v. Send copies of letters from local authorities to BWMA.

vi. If and when a metric sign is replaced with an imperial sign, take a photograph of the new sign from the same perspective as the previous (metric) photograph to illustrate "before and after". Send both photographs to your local newspaper with a covering letter to create publicity and to show the metric tide is turning.

BWMA will meanwhile be co-ordinating national press coverage and making representations to central government for active enforcement of the law. We want these signs removed completely.

Local press

If you can initiate a debate in the local press, the following points may be useful:

* Metric signs are less accurate than customary signs. For example, using metres to describe the width of bridges (e.g. 4.4m) achieves an accuracy of only one tenth of a metre, or about four inches. Imperial signs (e.g. 14'6") are accurate to within one inch.

* The view that metric signs help Continental tourists is logically negated by the inconvenience caused to American tourists. In practice, Continental tourists are often interested by signs showing miles, yards, feet and inches, while Americans are delighted to discover

that they are not alone in using them. Dual yard/metre and mile/kilometre signs should only be allowed in Britain on the condition that similar signs be adopted across the Continent.

* Altogether, there are 2.5 million signs in England alone, of which perhaps 2 million make some reference to distance or speed. The cost of replacing this number

of signs is huge. Changing to kilometres may confuse motorists as to speed limits. This will make enforcement of speed limits more complicated and increase the likelihood of accidents.

* A 1995 Gallup survey found 95% of people in Britain think in miles compared to 3% for kilometres.

Kilometre? Kill-the-metre!

Battles in prospect – Sunderland stirs

Much public interest was aroused by the incident at Units 5-7, Southwick Market on The Green in Sunderland at 3.30 p.m. on 4 July (Independence Day!), when two Trading Standards Officers, accompanied by two policemen, seized three sets of imperial scales from greengrocer Steve Thoburn.

It was doubly outrageous that they chose to execute this raid, without warning, in front of his customers during a busy trading period, and that the police were brought along in readiness to charge Mr Thoburn with a breach of the peace in case he dared to offer any resistance in defence of his property.

He had to spend £1,304 on replacement scales (very sensibly the imperial-metric convertible type). However, this outlay will have been more than recouped by the value of the publicity the story generated, nationally as well as locally! Nevertheless, from a legal standpoint that is no consolation for the assault on his human rights and on his livelihood.

This attracted so much attention because it was the only instance of TSOs anywhere going that far towards a possible prosecution.

As we go to press, events are still unfolding, but the UK Independence Party instantly took up the case, introduced the barrister Michael Shrimpton to be retained as counsel by Mr Thoburn's solicitors in any court proceedings, and gave notice to Sunderland City Council of the intention to raise an action for return of his scales, refund of the cost of replacements and compensation for disruption of his business.

Meanwhile – *after* its Trading Standards Officers had taken this action – the City Council had to brief a barrister on its own behalf, in order to ascertain (at local rate-payers' expense) whether that action was lawful and what should be done next! Eventually, on 6 September, the Council announced a decision to prosecute Mr Thoburn.

Funds are badly needed, to underwrite Mr Thoburn's legal costs. If you wish to contribute, please send us a cheque, with a note specifying the purpose. All such receipts will be acknowledged and accounted for separately. We shall ensure that the whole sum raised is directly applied to the matter concerned. If no legal action proceeds, each donation will be returned, unless you instruct us to transfer it to our general revenue.

Meanwhile John Gardner sent the following letter to the Editor of *The Sunderland Echo*:

"I refer to recent coverage regarding a trader who has had his weighing machines confiscated by trading standards officers for the alleged 'crime' of using pounds and ounces rather than the metric system. The purpose of this letter is to urgently communicate to traders among your readership that the use of pounds and ounces for loose foods is, in fact, *entirely legal*. Their use is expressly permitted by the 1985 Weights and Measures Act, and TSOs who tell shopkeepers and market traders to use metric do so with no authority.

The source of TSOs' confusion lies in metric regulations passed in 1994. To clarify, these regulations do not constitute an Act of Parliament and cannot nullify the 1985 Act – only a new Act of Parliament can overturn an existing Act. The 1994 metric regulations are therefore *ultra vires* – unlawful – and any prosecution that Sunderland Council intends to bring against traders using lb/oz for loose foods will be thrown out.

If any traders in Sunderland are told by officials to use metric for loose foods, we recommend that they contact solicitor Tony Bennett at UKIP's legal action desk for free advice and assistance (tel: 01245 266466). In the meantime, readers will be encouraged to know that there are an estimated 38,000 traders using lb/oz weighing machines nationally. They do so perfectly legally. We advise traders to go on using lb/oz."

John Gardner wrote a similar letter to the Editor of the *Manchester Metro*, referring to Manchester City Council and substituting this opening paragraph: "I refer to your recent article [30 June] regarding 15 traders who had their weighing machines stamped as illegal by trading standards officers and told that they had 28 days to convert to the metric system." This is another tense situation that we are monitoring closely. A test case arising from a collective prosecution of these traders would suit our cause admirably.

John Tomlin, our South Lancashire representative, visited these traders in the Church Street market, Manchester – almost all of them fruiterers and greengrocers – on 21 July, to discover that they were all trading happily in British measures again, and all but one of them were using scales in British units – the odd one still using metric scales only because he hadn't yet succeeded in acquiring a new non-metric replacement.

Chatting to them, he was assured that they had not been bothered recently by the TSOs. Naturally, John took the opportunity of distributing our literature, so that they can get in direct touch with us if the situation suddenly changed for the worse. Would that more of our members took such initiatives!

Campaign news

Honorary members

Many honorary members kindly troubled to provide a “quote,” for which we were very grateful, for distribution as background material for the press, especially at our Parliamentary lobby. We are sure this is of great benefit. Quotes also appear in our new pamphlet.

George MacDonald Fraser wrote: “Probably only the French Revolutionaries could have come up with such a gormless idea as a unit of measurement one ten-millionth of the distance from the north pole to the equator – and got it wrong. Our barleycorns, feet and yards may have their drawbacks, but at least we don’t have to trek all over the Arctic to check their accuracy.”

There are two new honorary members to introduce. Sadly we must also record the death, after a long illness, of **John Aspinall**, whose legacy continues in his Wildlife Parks, renowned as the most successful anywhere for the breeding of endangered species. Anyone who heard Aspinall carries an indelible memory of an extraordinary man. Two quotes from honorary member **Andrew Roberts’** recent *Telegraph* interview with his friend “You never really lose a friend until you yourself die ... a friend is a part of your personality, whether he is still alive or not.” And this: “I’m very very proud of being an Englishman. England is a beautiful word to me; it’s like a musical note.”

David Shepherd, MBE, played cricket for Gloucestershire and is now the doyen of Test umpires. The BWMA is delighted to welcome a man of his impeccable judgement. He writes: “As a cricket umpire, I implore you to try to maintain our British weights and measures. How on earth could I convert the length of a cricket pitch (22 yards) or the height of a stump (28 inches) – or even the weight of the ball (5½ ounces)? Good luck.”

Members will recall the wonderful – and unsolicited – support given to butcher Dave Stevens by **Max Bygraves, OBE**, who needs no further introduction. With his usual sharp wit, he offers this thought:

Pounds, shillings and pence
To us somehow made sense
But measuring in metres
Seems to defeat us.

Measure for measure

That is the title of an article in *The Financial Times’s Business Weekend Magazine* of 12 August by the philosopher, author and Wiltshire farmer, Roger Scruton, from which is quoted the following:

“Hay and straw are now measured in bales – in other words, by volume rather than weight. Grain, however, is measured (officially at least) in metric tonnes. Our neighbours are suspicious of tonnes, just as they are suspicious of kilograms, hectares and metres.

For metric measurements are cumbersome, cluttered with dangerous zeros and decimal points, and for the most part remote from the nature of the things themselves. Until you translate them into some more human system, you don’t really know what they mean.

Under the imperial measures, wheat was customarily measured in bushels. In other words, it was measured, like hay and straw, by its volume, rather than its weight. A bushel is eight gallons, which is 32 quarts or 64 pints. All such measures are now illegal in this country – the result of a decree from Brussels that was not even discussed by our parliament, but which no doubt appealed to our rulers, since it constituted one more blow against the history and culture of the English... The imperial system, like the weights and measures of pre-revolutionary Europe, reflects the nature of the goods that are being counted. By measuring wheat in bushels, farmers can exploit the fluidity of grain, and deal it out with a scoop. Moreover, a bushel is the most that a man can easily carry, and the right quantity to fill a sack. For similar reasons it is right to measure beer in pints, petrol in gallons, meat in pounds, fields in acres, and distances in miles. These measures derive from human nature, and from our continual encounters with the objects themselves. They are not arbitrary or irrational, since they derive from long acquaintance with the earth and the things produced by it.

The imperial system reflects a feature of English commercial life that has been of prime importance in our history: namely, that we measure things not by adding but by multiplying and dividing. The important numbers in the imperial system are those like 16 (divisible by 2, 4 and 8) and 12 (divisible by 2, 3, 4 and 6).

Notwithstanding those obvious facts, there is a strange superstition that the metric system is more “rational”, more logical... It is odd that this superstition should persist in the age of computers, which rely on binary arithmetic, or that it should appeal to people who know that there are 12 months to the year, 12 semi-tones to the octave, and no easy way of dividing space and time without giving pre-eminence to the number 6 – even in France there are 60 seconds to the minute and 360 degrees to the compass...

The destructive spirit that came to power in France in 1789 is now at large in Brussels... We are now seeing the result: a sudden and catastrophic loss of practical knowledge, as people struggle to rediscover by thinking what they knew by second nature...”

Actually the metric system has a right angle of 100 *grades* (metric degrees), though this unit appears to be little used outside France and former French colonies, and not always even there. An ordinary plastic protractor bought in France shows both degrees and *grades*. An equilateral triangle has angles of exactly 60 degrees but of about 66... *grades*.

Small businesses

Thanks to Donald Martin, the recently installed Chairman of the UK Policy Unit of the Federation of

Small Businesses, and his colleague Dr Bernard Juby, an impressive leaflet was inserted in the July number of the FSB's journal, *First Voice*. Headed *KEEP TRADING IN IMPERIAL MEASURES*, this was produced jointly by the FSB and BWMA. It informed FSB members (well over 100,000) that the metric regulations are unenforceable and in any event unlawful. Both FSB's address (2 Catherine Place, Westminster, London SW1E 6HF) and BWMA's address and phone number are given. On the back is a cartoon of the "Metric Monster" confronted by a knight in shining armour with "FSB" emblazoned on his shield.

We are extremely grateful to our friends at FSB for this splendid initiative. It is a great honour, of immense value to the campaign, to have such a powerful ally, and very generous of them to make common cause with us. We are determined to succeed, not only because of the merits of our case but also for the benefit of the most important sector of the economy that they represent.

Surveyors at work

In answer to his letter complaining about use of metric units by Healey & Baker, the leading firm of commercial property surveyors, Steve Fenn received a reply from their Managing Partner, Peter Easby, saying: "I passed a copy of your letter to the Partner running our City office ... who has confirmed to me that it is a specific requirement of our Professional Body – The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors – that measurements should be quoted in metric with square feet in parenthesis. Whilst I may well have some sympathy with the point that you are making, we are as you will appreciate very much obliged to comply with our Professional Body's rules."

Steve passed this correspondence to Vivian Linacre, who wrote directly back to Mr Easby, enquiring how he could account for the following facts.

- 1 The RICS paper 'Metrication' ... confirmed that "In February 1994 the DTI advised that there would not be a general legal requirement for the profession to use metric units."
- 2 The RICS Director of Professional Services... advised me by letter dated 11 April 1997: "I believe that the DTI logic which led it to advise that it was not a legal requirement to use metric measurements was based upon the fact that in the case of land and buildings, size is used to describe property... The 'product' is not for sale by reference to its measurement, unlike, for example, carpets."
- 3 Dozens of firms of chartered surveyors throughout the country continue to use imperial units for all marketing purposes, either exclusively or primarily, without any apparent threat of disciplinary action.
- 4 As is commonly pointed out, for practically every valuation exercise, a calculation to the nearest whole square foot is accurate enough, whereas the nearest whole square metre is seldom accurate enough. So we have the absurdity of calculations to one or two decimal places, with no consistency and frequent risk of error arising from misplaced decimal points.
- 5 The vast majority of shop rental valuations are still calculated and quoted by measuring the depth of

'zone A' in feet, again with no question of penal sanctions.

I look forward very much to receiving your responses."

Needless to add, there has been no response whatever. One would have a little respect for champions of metrication if only they would either, when their errors have been exposed, admit that they were wrong, or else counter by seeking to justify their position; but they won't do the former and can't do the latter.

Cry freedom

That was the headline over a leader in *The Daily Telegraph* on 8 July, from which we quote here.

"To support civil freedom is not, as the Government implies, to be 'soft on crime'. It is to believe that the future is not a blank slate, but that it continues the story of the past – the traditions, customs and habits that helped make us what we are. It is to prefer a few laws that possess authority to a lot of laws that don't. Yesterday, we reported the confiscation by policemen and trading officers of three sets of scales from Steven Thoburn, a greengrocer. His 'crime' was to sell vegetables and fruit in imperial measures. He faces a £1,000 fine, and has had to spend £1,304 on new sets of scales.

Northumbria Police said: 'We were there in case there was any trouble.' But what caused the trouble? Was it one man selling his goods in a way familiar to generations? Or was it European empire-building by bureaucrats and regulators?"

Culture and ignorance

That was the title of an editorial article in *The Spectator* on 15 July, which reminds us of the nature of the war in which our anti-metrication battle is a vital part. Reproduced here are the final two paragraphs:

"Civilisation depends upon a delicate balance between conservation and innovation. The achievements of the past are not to be repeated mindlessly, nor are innovations to be rejected just because they are new; but, as Cicero said, to be ignorant of what occurred before you were born is to remain forever a child. We are fast turning into a nation of cultural children, and the government's cultural policies and predilections are aiding the process. Children, after all, need to be controlled; and the government has shown itself far from averse to the task of meeting this need.

The present government is the apotheosis of a long period of cultural treason by the British intelligentsia. It has for many years judged all previous cultural achievements by a crude, vulgar, Marxist political criterion: is this work of literature, art or music a product of an unjust, oppressive and unequal society, and, if it is, should it not be rejected as part of the apparatus of power that maintained that unjust, oppressive and unequal society? If the England of Jane Austen was elitist and unjust, then to read her with pleasure is to benefit from elitism and injustice. Needless to say, such a stance will turn us swiftly into deracinated savages. We are coming to resemble barbarians, swilling champagne in the ruins of the civilisation we inherited and destroyed."

Tesco starts getting the message

Tesco's announced plans to restore (limited) use of pricing in traditional measures, creating the public – and media – perception that they were “going back to pounds and ounces”. This earned Tesco a huge amount of free advertising but actually their policy decision was little more than a marketing ploy, to steal a march on their rivals.

For they want to have it both ways, by giving the impression that this was a radical move for their customers' benefit, in defiance of the metric regulations, whilst insisting at the same time that they were still keeping within the law! In fact they are doing very little, but what little they are doing is clearly in breach of the regulations.

Their check-out tills are unaffected, so customers' receipts continue to show every purchase (of goods sold by weight) priced in metric units. All Tesco intend to do is (a) to use traditional units for in-store promotions – for posters and banners, etc.; (b) to restore traditional measures alongside or in place of metric for display of delicatessen and some fresh foods; and (c) to show traditional units as prominently as metric on edge-of-shelf pricing. Very welcome as far as it goes, but that's not very far, and certainly not far enough to justify all the fuss!

Nevertheless, even the in-store promotional material – advertising the current special bargains – obviously contravenes the regulations.

As a tail-piece, to quote the food-writer Deborah Ross, from *The Spectator* of 29 July: “I am right off Tesco at the moment, although, that said, I did go back on them a little bit when I heard that they had decided to bring back imperial measurements. I still can't do metric. Weather forecasters say, 'It's going to be 28 degrees today', and I'm out there in balaclava, mittens and snowboots, wondering why everyone else is in a bikini.”

John Gardner has written to Asda, Sainsbury, Safeway and Marks & Spencer, as well as Budgen and Somerfield, pressing each of them to declare their policy in the light of Tesco's move. So far, the only reply received has been from Sainsbury – the most pro-metric of all the major groups.

The great metric “rip-off”

John Gardner will shortly produce a research paper on the scandal of “downsizing” of retail commodities – otherwise known as “product shrinkage” – as a direct consequence of conversion to packaging in metric units.

One of dozens of examples results from some supermarkets switching from selling milk in traditional 4-pint (half-gallon) to new 2-litre flasks. The latter, priced at a few pence less, look cheaper than the former but may actually cost up to 10% more in real terms, because the equivalent of 4 pints is 2.273 litres.

Any fluid that was previously sold by the pint – milk, fruit juice or whatever – on conversion to metric became 568.245 millilitres and may then have promptly shrunk to 550ml and then dwindled to 525 or even to 500 ml (half a litre), but generally still selling at the same price or with only very little off. So three or four rival brands of some soft drink, in bottles of different design but more or less the same size and selling at much the same price, may totally

confuse the customer by varying in contents between say 500 ml and the full pint.

Similarly, cans of Heinz baked beans always contained 11lb nett, on conversion becoming 453.6 grams, that was quickly rounded down to 450g and thereafter stealthily reduced by stages to the present 415g, a loss of over 8½%, but in most shops maintaining the same price or else giving the impression that what is no more than a corresponding reduction in price was a real cut for the customer's benefit.

Another typical case is the packet of potato crisps, which previously contained a standard 2 oz, that became 56.7 grams, that soon shrank to 50g and lower still. Now you can buy half-a-dozen different brands, which at a glance all look much the same, yet whose contents vary from as little as 20g to 55g. Because of the nature of the commodity, which is very light in weight, they all feel much the same as well; so unless the packets are closely examined it is hard to tell the difference between one and another. Besides, packets of crisps are mostly an “impulse purchase”, so few shoppers would scrutinise several rivals brands in order to compare value for money.

Exactly the same applies to confectionery bars, of which there are many varieties competing for sale across thousands of shop counters. You may find five or six or even more that are all labelled “King Size” and all at about the same price, yet each of a different weight. Likewise, cartons of bulkier items are increasingly described as “Family Size,” “Jumbo” or “Economy Size” – the customer no longer has any idea of the weight of the contents.

One of the results of compulsory metrication, therefore, is to deprive the shopping public of the safeguards hitherto afforded by the fixed standards represented by traditional units – the pound and ounce, pint and gallon, yard, foot and inch. The point is that it is impossible to judge *value* except by comparing *price* and *quality*.

This is something which apparently the Department of Trade and Industry and the so-called “consumer groups” cannot or will not understand. They talk endlessly about consumer protection while promoting metrication which is the cause of such consumer exploitation. We have frequently touched on this racket in the past and make no apology for doing so again, partly because newer Members may not be aware of it, but mainly because its effects are increasingly present. John's report will, accordingly, be given maximum publicity.

Tool Shop Auctions

Tony Murland's firm, Tool Shop Auctions, of Needham Market in Suffolk, is Britain's leading dealer in antique tools and instruments. Each year in July it holds an International Auction, attended by collectors and dealers from all over the world, with hundreds more absentees who submit bids in advance by completing and returning the form enclosed with the sumptuously produced catalogue that is published in June. This catalogue is a collector's item in itself, detailing the many hundreds of lots, every one of which is beautifully photographed, and embellished with historic illustrations relating to the relevant crafts (carpenters and joiners, cabinet makers, coachmakers, shipwrights, wheelwrights, violinmakers, patternmakers, carvers, surveyors and measurers, etc.) as well as short essays heading each section. This year the Director of BWMA was commissioned to write the article heading the section entitled *Rules, Measuring & Drawing Instruments*. It reads as follows.

“The usual reasons to support the BWMA's campaign for repeal of the 1994 Regulations which introduced

compulsory metrication – by making use of imperial units for trade a criminal offence – are that (a) they are intensely unpopular, as every opinion poll shows; (b) they were imposed in compliance with EEC Directives, with no electoral mandate; (c) the metric system merely consists of abstract numbers that cannot factorise and relate to nothing but themselves, whereas imperial measures are of human proportions and are beautiful, practical and convenient, forming a vital part of our language and culture; (d) between 1897 and 1995 the UK enjoyed freedom of choice between the two systems, which should be restored; (e) the “inch-pound-quart” system, closely akin to imperial, predominates in the USA, the world’s superpower, where it happily coexists with metric as it has done since 1866; (f) the regulations are unenforceable, because the penalties are draconian and Councils have no incentive to prosecute local traders; and (g) any prosecution would fail because the Regulations themselves are unlawful, on several distinct grounds of constitutional and contract law.”

The vital reason why traditional measures must prevail is barely mentioned or understood: that their origins derive from mankind’s earliest knowledge of astronomy and geometry, of music and the measurement of time. In pre-literate history, it is impossible to trace the rudiments of these sciences back beyond the late Neolithic era around 4,000BC, which was distinguished throughout what are now the British Isles and NW France by the great Megalithic Stone Rings, the first man-made structures. Analysis of precise surveys of some 200 of the most prominent of those still standing reveals the widespread use of the Megalithic Yard of 2.72 feet and the Megalithic Rod of 6.8 feet. Thus, 5 MY = 2 MR.

“Further, it was shown that in order to plan and erect these vast, intricate temples, our ancestors had to understand Pythagorean mathematics 2,000 years before the birth of Pythagoras – including square roots and the Golden Mean – as well as the Fibonacci series almost 5,000 years before the birth of Leonardo of Pisa: and it was proved that 3 MR x the Golden Mean (1.618034) = 33 feet = 11 yards (i.e. 2 imperial rods or a ½ chain). This equation represents one of the many links across these 6,000 years.

To quote from Boyer & Merzbach’s *A History of Mathematics*, “That the beginnings of mathematics are older than the oldest civilisation is clear”; and from B L Van der Waerden’s classic *Geometry and algebra in ancient civilisation*, “We have seen so many similarities between the mathematical and religious ideas current in Neolithic England, in Greece, India and China, that we are bound to postulate the existence of a common metrological doctrine from which all these ideas derived.” It is this doctrine, the very heartbeat of human culture, that those intent on imposing a metric monopoly would extinguish. That is why BWMA is determined that these Regulations, already a dead letter, are formally annulled.”

Snippets

Jack Scullard sent an instruction leaflet that accompanied his newly acquired lawn-mower, made in Sweden. The cutting height adjustment scales are printed in inches, not only in English but also in the German, Dutch, Estonian and Polish translations. (The others vary as usual between “cm” and “mm”.)

Warwick Cairns sent us the April issue of the skateboarding magazine *Sidewalk*, with a photograph on the front cover of a boy performing a spectacular ‘ollie’ – which is a trick that involves making the skateboard jump up in the air just by flicking the back foot and leaping upwards – which he has succeeded in doing to a height, as splashed in

huge type – of “44½ INCHES (THAT’S MASSIVE)”. That’s what today’s youth understands – certainly not “113cm”.

Miss E N Rouse writes: “Compulsory metrication is a Cheats’ Charter. We all understood the standard weights of 4oz, 8oz, 12oz, 1lb, etc, and knew when attempts were made to cheat us. I remember the 7½oz packets of biscuits and the row they caused.

No attempt is now made to pre-pack groceries in standard metric weights. I checked a few items in my cupboard – see enclosed list. [This shows odd quantities ranging from 85g through 340 to 670g – none of them offering imperial equivalents, some of which, of course, would have had to be in strange fractions!] How can the ordinary shopper – even if conversant with metric units – be expected to cope with this bewildering medley of arbitrary weights and compare prices?”

Mrs Rosemary Wickenden has scored another modest victory, having written to the Editor of *The Countryman* complaining of an article on bell-ringing which referred to this “quintessentially English art” yet stated that the bells weighed “over 400 kilos”! She received a reply saying: “You are absolutely right and we should have amended kilos to hundredweight measures. I promise we will do this in future wherever possible.” Well done! She gave us the valuable advice, too, that her letter had been written on a postcard, thereby (a) ensuring that her letter was short and to the point, (b) giving it maximum publicity – so that everybody handling it could read it – and (c) greatly facilitating a reply.

Jilly Cooper has very kindly written to us again, on 5 May, saying; “I just want to say thank you so much for my lovely Yardstick magazine. It is great fun and a very important stand against uniformity. Thank you all for working so hard and being so brave. Lots of love” Thank you, Jilly Cooper.

Conservatives’ response

The Conservative Party HQ issued a press release following our Parliamentary Lobby, confirming that the next Conservative government “will be seeking ways to change the law so that loose goods can still be sold in imperial measures.” Since then, Mrs Browning has made stronger statements in face of the latest actions by trading standards officers.

We also received a letter from Tim Collins CBE MP, a Vice-Chairman of the party, saying: “I did attend the lobby on 22 June and greatly enjoyed a very positive and determined meeting. Geoffrey Cox ... accompanied me to the meeting and I strongly endorse both his efforts and the important statement of policy made that day by Angela Browning, the Shadow Trade and Industry Secretary.”

However, while BWMA is delighted with this belated support from the main opposition party, the undertakings given don’t go nearly far enough. So our Director sent her the following letter (abridged here) on 26 June, with copies to MPs Page and Lidington, and to barristers Shrimpton and Cox :

“I must write to thank you most warmly for attending and speaking at our Parliamentary Lobby... May I, furthermore, compliment you on the massive coverage of the event in Friday’s press, generated largely by your presence... I do understand, as you said, that you cannot ‘make up policy on the hoof,’ but I would much appreciate a definitive statement of your policy on this issue... You will surely bear in mind, too, that we have been pressing for such a policy review throughout the three years since the General Election!

Your predecessor, John Redwood, wrote to me on 14 June 99 saying, 'I and my colleagues will use any opportunity in the House to highlight this issue. We need to be vigilant to defend our freedoms,' and again on 3 November 99 confirming that, 'The Conservative Opposition has rethought the Conservative position on metrication — I thought you might welcome the change of position'; but that *position* has still not been clarified!

As I said in my own speech, at this moment there are thousands of honest retailers who have been officially informed that they are liable to a criminal prosecution yet none of whom has any way to discover from their local Council or MP whether or not a prosecution is to proceed. That is outrageous and against natural justice. It is a situation that cannot exist outside a totalitarian state. The question therefore arises: is Britain now a totalitarian state or will every local authority be required forthwith to proceed with wholesale prosecutions of all traders they have notified to that effect or else withdraw every such notification?

BWMA is not interested in any more feeble talk about 'seeking to negotiate a fresh derogation from the EC': why should we supplicate for *permission* to continue using for another limited period? Freedom of choice between the two systems, such as Britain enjoyed for 98 years (from 1897 to 1995) and as the USA still enjoys, is the only political solution.

William Hague told the Party Conference in 1997 that he was a champion of 'an open conservatism — one that is tolerant; that believes freedom is about much more than economics; and that believes freedom does not stop at the shop counter.' Well, that is precisely where it *has* stopped... I look forward to hearing from you and to meeting you again...

PS. Members of BWMA and of the Party are forever sending me copies of the magazine, *Conservative heartland* which — as you will see from the enclosed specimen — includes a large mail-order section, in which all descriptions of size and weight of the goods advertised are given almost exclusively in metric! '*Conservative?* Sometimes one does despair!'

A reply is still awaited.

The Times

The Times printed a powerful leading article (headlined "A POUND OF FLESH — Drams, acres and ounces keep old values alive") on 19 July:

"A woman of about nine stone wears size five shoes, size 12 dress, size six gloves and size 32 hat. Her car does 30 miles to the gallon and she drinks a daily pint of milk. Her recipe book calls for butter measured in ounces, she lives 500 yards from the shops and used to buy sweets by the quarter and potatoes by the pound. But in the brave new millennium she has been forbidden to measure her life in these familiar dimensions. Since January she can no longer ask for a pound of cheese or six gallons of petrol; and anyone measuring in oldspeak risks prosecution and confiscation of the offending scales.

It is almost two dozen years ago that the Metrication Board promised a world free of dozens, gills, inches, furlongs, stone, acres or bushels... no more would drinkers become fuddled by fingers, tots or drams; no forecast would promise temperatures soaring into the 80s. It never happened. Some measurements faded away... Coal is no longer delivered in hundredweight and even Mr Therm has flickered out. But who would go to the races if a horse won by 50 centimetres rather than a length, a head or a short head? Life is richer for quires, carats, magnums and cords.

Even Brussels cannot prescribe a ten-hour day. So let us drink 3.7 millilitres of whisky and give ten cheers to Tesco for keeping our choice and our ancestral values alive."

"Ten Minute Rule" Bill

The Bill promoted by David Lidington MP (Conservative, Aylesbury), to remove criminal penalties from trading in imperial units, was listed for a Second Reading on 21 July. With very few exceptions, "Ten Minute Rule" Bills never make further progress — either the proposed Bill doesn't reach the head of the queue and so fails to get a hearing, or else, when it is called, the Government Chief Whip or Leader of the House shouts "Object" and it is killed stone dead. David Lidington had warned us of this when speaking at our Parliamentary Lobby. So it proved.

Nevertheless, it served, as intended, to highlight the issue in the House of Commons, adding fuel to the fires started by both the Thoburn case in Sunderland and the Tesco case in the East Riding. To generate maximum support for this initiative, John Gardner wrote on 17 July to all MPs who are known to support our cause, drawing attention to the scandalous Sunderland case and emphasising that: (a) "The campaign to retain lb/oz has captured popular imagination and received overwhelming support from the press; several daily newspapers are running their own campaigns" and (b) "Metric law is ultimately unenforceable; although Trading Standards Officers serve infringement notices, seize equipment and threaten prosecution, there have yet to be any *actual* prosecutions, despite the fact that there are 38,000 traders using lb/oz weighing machines and metric has been ostensibly the law since 1 January." Many MPs replied, pledging or renewing their support.

What of the "LibDems"?

We need clarification of the "LibDem" party's stance, too. The Liberal wing — including such leaders as Alan Beith and the Chief Whip, Paul Tyler — is generally supportive, but the Social Democrat half tends towards Europhilia and is accordingly unhelpful. An approach will have to be made to their leader, Charles Kennedy, to ascertain whether or not he favours (a) criminal prosecution of imperial traders and (b) pressure from the EU to compel the UK to enforce the regulations? Will all Members whose own constituency MP is a "LibDem" please write, asking him/her where he/she and the party stands?

May we meanwhile place on record precisely what Paddy Ashdown actually said in his final speech as party leader to their annual conference in September 1998. You may wish to quote this (from the BBC transcript) in any letter to a "LibDem" MP: "There is something ludicrously wrong with a European Union which can bring the full weight of the law down on a greengrocer who tries to help his customers, yet sits helplessly by while its continent erupts in bloodshed." [This was during the Serbia-Kosovo conflict.]

A reminder

You may find it useful to have the actual wording from Part I, Section 1, Para. (1) — headed "Units of measurement" — of the WEIGHTS AND MEASURES ACT 1985 (1985 c.72), as follows:

"The yard or the metre shall be the unit of measurement of length and the pound or the kilogram shall be the unit of measurement of mass by reference to which any measurement of length or mass shall be made in the United Kingdom"

Overseas news

Canada

Following the article entitled *So Canada is now metric?* on pages 12-13 in No. 10 of *The Yardstick*, here is a piece by Steven Pearlstein from the *International Herald Tribune* of 23 May, headlined "Give 'Em an Inch, They'll Take a Meter" and sub-headlined "For Good Measure, Often-Indecisive Canadians Like It Both Ways":

One of the charming, if sometimes frustrating, aspects of the Canadian character is the country's stubborn reluctance to decide anything. Canada is, after all, a nation that proudly maintains two official languages – English and French – even though the vast majority of citizens can speak only one. Politics consists primarily of a never-ending debate over whether the federal government or the provinces should be responsible for just about every government function. There has been no agreement on a national flower or bird and even the money situation is confused: banks offer accounts denominated in either US or Canadian dollars. But perhaps nothing reflects the penchant for indecision better than the country's half-hearted adoption of the metric system. Consider:

Canadians talk about the weather in degrees centigrade, but set their ovens in Fahrenheit. Snow is measured in centimeters, but wind speed in miles per hour. Architects design buildings in meters and centimeters when working for government, but in feet and inches for everyone else. Doctors record a patient's weights in kilograms, but tell him or her what it is in pounds. At Loblaw's, the country's largest supermarket chain, the produce clerks speak in pounds, the fish counter measures by grams, and the meat department maintains a studied bilingualism – frozen turkeys in metric, fresh turkeys in imperial. Loose mushrooms are priced in pounds, but the scale available to weigh them measures only in grams.

On Air Canada, passengers are told in both French and English that they will be making a 450 kilometer (280 mile) flight to Montreal at 30,000 feet (9,100 meters). At Canadian Tire Co, a client can buy a nine kilogram (20 pound) bag of birdseed to go into a 1½ gallon (6 liter) bird feeder, while the 1¼ inch (3.1 cm) nails come in 400 gram (14.1 oz) boxes. Pretty confusing, eh? "That's just the way we do it in Canada", explained a young sales assistant on Yonge Street in Toronto, "It's kind of an ongoing mystery".

Officially, Canada joined the league of metric nations in 1971, not only to embrace the latest totem of modernism but also to lob a shot across the bow of imperialistic Americans. As government bureaucrats at the Metric Commission churned out reams of new regulations, yards and pounds were expunged from textbooks. Retailers rushed to buy new scales. Highway signs were replaced, fifths of Scotch disappeared from government-run liquor stores and manufacturers were forced to add metric measures to labels and advertisements. The Commission even tried, without success, to persuade the Canadian Football League to go metric with 100 meter (328 foot) fields.

Not surprisingly, the changes led to some confusion. An Air Canada flight from Edmonton to

Montreal was once forced to make an emergency landing in Manitoba when the pilot discovered he was out of fuel; apparently the ground crew had multiplied when they should have divided in making the metric conversion. Or was it the other way round?

Normally, Canadians are a pretty obedient and deferential lot, but as more and more of the regulations began to kick in, a backlash developed. Self-styled metric mavericks would drive 20 miles to fill up at the lone gas station selling fuel by the gallon. An Ontario court ruled that several key portions of the metric law dealing with signs and advertising violated the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

When the new Conservative government of Prime Minister Brian Maloney came to power in 1984, it moved quickly to disband the Metric Commission and eliminated its squad of metric cops, effectively making metrification voluntary. Ever since, Canada has found itself in a measurement no-man's land.

Browbeaten by the government and enticed by the prospect of global trade, Canada's industrial sector long ago completed a largely uncontroversial metric conversion. But other sectors of the economy, such as construction and real estate, have declared themselves hopelessly attached to two-by-fours and half-acre lots. Certainly the stubborn refusal of the United States to adopt the metric system exercises an increasingly strong gravitational pull on its northern neighbor.

Australia

Dr R M Cornell of Floreat Park, Western Australia wrote on 21 May to tell us the following:

"Here in Australia, where the metric system has been compulsory for many years, a lot of people still use the imperial system unofficially. Tradesmen are often most willing to provide a quote in either system, asking: 'Which would you prefer?' Incidentally, imperial measurements (with conversion tables) are listed in current diaries – e.g. Collins – and on the backs of Australian-made exercise books.

The key point [is] the loss of freedom of choice associated with increasing bureaucracy. In Australia, there is a determined push to force everyone into an electronic straitjacket for banking – earnings and payments – mortgages and insurance, travel, etc, that will lead to an extreme and dangerous form of bureaucracy. Bureaucrats and governments like to concentrate on the increase in 'efficiency' that will result from the 'one system fits all' policy. But as Sir Basil Liddell Hart pointed out in his book, *Why Don't we Learn from History*, efficiency actually decreases under such conditions owing to reduced initiative and personal responsibility.

He also pointed out that it is much easier to adopt the compulsory principle than to shake it off... the ultimate effect of loss of freedom of choice through the disappearance of true alternatives will be a sterile society lacking in initiative and creativity. Such a society will be at a disadvantage compared to others which have retained their diversity."

“Supplementary indications”

Vivian Linacre wrote the following letter on 22 May to Mr Patrick Nicholls MP (representing the Teignbridge constituency and a friend of Bruce Robertson’s), with copies to Dr Howells (Junior DTI Minister), Mr Geoffrey Martin (EU’s *chef de bureau* in London) and our Honorary Member Mr Simon Heffer (*Daily Mail*). Strangely, neither Dr Howells nor Mr Martin responded!

“My Chairman, Bruce Robertson, has passed me copies of your recent correspondence with him on the issue of compulsory metrication, and of your relevant correspondence with Giles Chichester MEP and with Kim Howells, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Consumers and Corporate Affairs.

I must dispute the statement by Dr Howells that: ‘One of the amendments to the earlier Directive is to authorize – but not require – the use of non-metric units as “supplementary indications” alongside and no more prominent than metric units until 31 December 2009, whereas the earlier Directive authorized supplementary indications only until 31 December 1999. The practical effect of this amendment – which the Government supported – is to permit traders in packaged and loose goods to display imperial weights and measures next to metric weights and measures until 31 December 2009.’

This much-vaunted ‘concession’ is bogus. Because any such subordinate use of imperial units is merely optional – entirely at the discretion of the supplier – and of no concern to the authorities, therefore no permission for it is required in the first place. Only the metric marking is obligatory, consequently it is irrelevant whether that is supplemented by the imperial equivalent or not. Any such ‘supplementary indication’ constitutes no more than *provision of additional information* for which neither the EC nor Parliament can grant or withhold authorization.

The myth of this ‘derogation’ was exploded in the BWMA booklet, *The Great Gram Scam* (see para. 14 of the enclosed copy) published last October, yet it is still disseminated by the authorities. Last month’s issue of the EC’s own publication, *Press Watch*, for example, states: ‘... there is nothing to stop imperial measures being used alongside metric for a further 10 years.’ Indeed, there is nothing to stop their being used until the crack of doom! Presumably, the authorities intended that this sweetener would help persuade suppliers and consumers to swallow the pill of compulsory metrication, despite the fact that it is not a genuine sweetener at all – not even saccharine – but merely a placebo. With what contempt do Brussels and Westminster regard British shopkeepers and shoppers, tossing them this imaginary sop and expecting them to be grateful for it!

Not content with relegating our 6,000-year-old, universal system of customary measures to this inferior capacity, the authorities mislead public opinion by representing this minor role as an act of magnanimity – as a final indulgence for a limited period. Evidently, the expectation was that before 2010 resistance would have collapsed, whereupon the cosmetic of ‘supplementary indications’ could be wiped off.

If perpetrating this confidence trick on the public and claiming credit for doing so is unspeakable, then worst of all is the spectacle of politicians and officials arguing between themselves as to who deserves the credit for this monstrous hoax. Thus, *The Daily Mail* reported on 14 April that according to Geoffrey Martin (head of the EC’s London office): ‘Simon Heffer is wrong to claim... that Conservative MEPs had secured a ten-year stay of execution for imperial measures in Britain, when in fact it was a Commission proposal’. In fact, the Conservative MEPs did not secure any stay of execution nor did the EC propose one, since the position very simply is that everything that requires to be weighed or measured for the purpose of sale must now be priced and sold in metric units.

Yet, having approved the imposition of this metric monopoly, both parties then have the gall to pretend that an extension of the natural right merely to continue using imperial units by way of providing customers with additional information – a right which is beyond the powers of any bureaucrats or politicians to confer or deny – is a ‘stay of execution’! Can there be any grosser betrayal of consumers’ interests or more flagrant, cynical deception of the nation? They have all tried to make a feast out of a crumb of comfort.

All they succeeded in doing, of course, was to add to the general confusion. For traders understandably inferred that a ‘ten-year stay of execution’ actually meant what it said; i.e. that they could continue pricing and selling in imperial. So this deception has proved counter-productive, which is poetic justice.

In any event, however, the issue of the sham ten-year extension for ‘supplementary indications’, while politically unforgivable, has become insignificant, following the recognition that the whole process of compulsory metrication is itself unlawful, on several distinct grounds – each one quite compelling and conclusive – of constitutional or contract law. Nevertheless, before the regulations have been repealed or drastically relaxed, as they must be within a matter of months, it is important for the record as well as for the public good that this shabby episode of the phony derogation concerning ‘supplementary insinuations’ be fully exposed.”

More metric muddle

Trading Standards bureaucracy

Reports have been received of Trading Standards Officers instructing café proprietors they must no longer sell “1 pint milk shakes,” but when asked if the drink is to be sold instead as a “568.245ml milk shake” or if the quantity should be rounded down to 550 or 500 ml or perhaps some level between, the officials mumble something about consulting superiors and coming back later.

Likewise, restaurateurs have been warned against advertising “6oz” or “8oz” steaks on their menus, but again cannot confirm whether the substitution of “170.1g” or “262.8g” would be permissible or whether they should be respectively shrunk to 150/160/170g or 260/250g or what? Actually, of course, both uses are purely descriptive and therefore exempt from the regulations, but evidently many TSOs don’t know the law or just enjoy throwing their weight about!

The wrong signs

Following a piece by Christopher Booker in *The Sunday Telegraph* on 13 August, a letter was published in *The Daily Telegraph* on 17 August from Nigel Farage MEP and Jeffrey Titford MEP, stating that, although the metric system has generally been made compulsory in Britain under EC Directives, this does not apply to traffic signs. The traffic signs branch of the Environment Department has recently confirmed in writing that, under the Traffic Signs Regulations 1994, "it is not lawful to use direction signs which show distances in metres or kilometres rather than miles or yards." Iain Forbes of Westminster Council has indicated that these regulations apply to "all traffic signs, including pedestrian direction signs."

Then on 19 August this letter appeared in *The Daily Telegraph* from Dr Robert Kinghorn:

"The planning and work to metricate Britain's road signs is more invidious than most people realise. The majority of new road signs are now being placed at, what at first seems, odd distances such as 110 yards, one third and two-thirds of a mile. In fact the supports have been placed at those distances so the signs on them can be easily replaced with their metric equivalents of 100 metres, half a kilometre and one kilometre, and thus keep within the letter, if not the spirit, of the law.

This could only have been done with ministers' approval, if not on their direct instruction. Why don't they come clean and tell us the truth about their European plans?"

One third of a mile is 536.4 metres or a little over 1/2km, and two-thirds of a mile is 1,072.9 metres or a little over 1 km.

Many Members will have noticed this sudden epidemic of signs on motorways and other main roads showing mileages using one-thirds and two-thirds. The likely explanation for this new practice of using a third of a mile (approximately) is, as Dr Kinghorn explains, with a view to replacing our system by the metric. So, wherever you see these weird distances on new signs in your area, please write to your local transport authority (city or county) to ask for an explanation.

Don't complain – don't suggest what you guess is the real purpose – but simply express puzzlement, pointing out that a third of a mile is an unusual division, and asking why the spacing of the offending signs wasn't adjusted to show quarters, halves or three-quarters instead? *Please let us see the answers you get.*

The balance is tilting

A member of the UK Weighing Federation, Deben Systems Ltd of Ipswich, wrote the following heart-rending letter on 17 March to one of the MEPs for their region, Jeffrey Titford:

"We are suppliers of weighing equipment and services to retailers throughout the country. We employ over 300 people and we are now finding that the failure to effectively implement and enforce legislation is having a significant impact on our business. As you are aware legislation introduced in 1994 is in place requiring all retailers to use Metric Weighing Equipment from 31/12/99 (The Weights and Measures Act 1985 (Metrication) (Amendment) Order 1994; SI 1994 No.2866). As a supplier we used the information given to us by the Government to advise our

customers on the best course of action they could take to comply with that legislation. The result of this is that all of the major Multiple Retailers and about 60% of the Independent Retailers have now converted to weighing in metric.

However we are now getting stubborn resistance from our remaining customers largely due to the adverse publicity and campaigns run by pressure groups. We are also getting complaints from some of those customers we have converted that our advice was wrong and we have put them to unnecessary expense! Our trade association, The UK Weighing Federation, has been in touch with the DTI to obtain clarification and to suggest some Government PR to counter these campaigns. Unfortunately we can get no satisfactory reply; it appears that the major concern is about negative headlines and the creation of 'metric martyrs'.

We are caught in the middle! Metrication is a 'one-off' event but our business is long-term and relies significantly on the goodwill of our customers. This situation is becoming farcical and as people try to implement the Government's legislation our reputation is being damaged. A financial consequence is that having stocked up on metric scales and conversion kits to meet the expected demand, solely initiated by metric harmonisation with Europe, this stock remains very much unsold with capital unnecessarily tied up.

The purpose of this letter is to draw the situation to your attention and ask for your help in lobbying the Government. We need them to issue clear and unequivocal statements on what the legal position is and what action will be taken against retailers who do not comply with the law." A sympathetic reply was not felt appropriate.

Consumers in Europe Group

David Delaney obtained from the Internet a fabrication masquerading as a history of metrication by the EU propaganda bureau that calls itself "Consumers in Europe Group". It states, for example: "Some papers have claimed that the changes are the result of a 'diktat from Brussels'. In reality, the UK's commitment to metrication pre-dated UK membership of the EU by some years." And again: "As the timetable above shows, the UK had decided to go metric before the UK entered the EC." [Like all metric propagandists, CEG obviously believes that if you tell a lie often enough it will eventually be believed.] Our Director wrote directly to them, correcting this and other flagrant misrepresentations of fact, and enclosing the last *Yardstick* as well as *The Great Gram Scam*.

Mr Stephen Crampton, CEG's Secretary, replied, making no attempt to apologize for, nor alternatively to justify, all this misinformation – since he was incapable of doing either – but contented himself with the classic 'polite insult': "Thank you for your letter of 4 April and enclosures, and for taking the trouble to write to us about our website. We are glad you found it of interest. You may be sure that the views expressed in your letter will receive the consideration that they merit."

The awkward kilogram

The Sunday Telegraph published an enlightening article on 23 July by science correspondent, Robert Matthews, entitled "Metric in a mess over how to calculate a kilo". The introduction referred to Tesco's move to restore traditional units, and continued:

"Veritable trolley-loads of letters, leaders and comment columns greeted this victory for tradition over

Brussels diktat. The move also provoked some tut-tutting from defenders of the 'rational' metric system, with its use of factors of 10 rather than random numbers such as 14, 16 and 112. Surely, in this computer age, the argument goes, we should be using units based on concepts a bit more sophisticated than, for example, the length of some dead monarch's arm?

There is, however, a dirty little secret lurking within the metric system, and one that sits uneasily with its precise, scientific image... Before long, the grand French plan for an elegant set of units was going *poire*-shaped. The tiny size of the gram led to calls for the standard to be switched to the beefier kilogram – thus wrecking the original set of prefix-free names for the basic units. Next to go was the use of water to define the kilogram.

Looking for something more convenient to use, the scientists finally settled on using a cylinder of platinum kept in a laboratory in Sèvres, near Paris, whose mass was duly defined as one kilogram. Thus, far from putting all measurement on a truly scientific basis, the metric system ended up with a unit of mass defined in terms of a chunk of shiny metal in a Parisian suburb.

In the years that followed, international standards were devised for other fundamental quantities, such as time, electric current, and temperature. In all but one case, scientists have devised impressively universal definitions for them. For example, since 1983 the metre has been defined as the length of the path travelled by light in a vacuum in $1/299,792,458$ ths of a second – a definition which relieves Martians of the trouble of travelling to France to find out exactly what Earthlings mean by a metre.

What is the single, embarrassing exception in this imposing array of universal definitions? The kilogram – which is still defined in terms of the mass of a chunk of metal in the Parisian suburbs. The world's metrologists are keenly aware of this one-kilo conundrum at the heart of this otherwise elegant field, and are trying to rid themselves of it. Scientists at our own National Physical Laboratory are experimenting with an incredibly complex electromagnetic balance that they hope may do the trick, producing a definition of the kilogram dependent on a single sub-atomic constant.

As someone whose experimental physics skills never extended beyond wiring up a battery, I have nothing but admiration for such precision work. Until metrologists succeed in finding a truly fundamental definition of mass, I see few reasons to ditch the imperial pound over the Continental invention that is the kilogram."

Miscellany

Vivian Linacre wrote to our Honorary Member, Mr R W F Poole, on 26 June, conveying our dismay on seeing that: "every reference to the length of cigars in your otherwise most enjoyable article (*Havana Heaven*) in *The Times* last Saturday was exclusively in centimetres. Was this, perhaps, a perverse... editorial decision – like the nonsense of grams for recipes in *The Times'* cookery features? Why use units of measurement that the majority of readers, surely, do not understand?

The absurdity, in your case, is that '**12.7cm**' (your first reference) exactly equals **5 inches!** ... What proportion of readers, when examining a 'Romeo and Julieta cedros de luxe no. 3' will say, 'Ah, yes, this is 12.7 cm long' as compared with those saying 'it's 5 inches'? ... Might you consider passing a copy of this letter to your editor?"

Mr Poole very kindly replied on 7 July: "I stand corrected, Sarn't Major! I quite agree with your rocket ... Alas! I cannot accept responsibility for the undoubted

shortcomings at *The Times* – I write for *The Daily Telegraph*. Imperially yours..."

Another Honorary Member, Fritz Spiegl, drew our attention to reports on 10 July of the judge's statement in the Manchester "drive-by shooting" case that "one person missed death by inches, the other by millimetres". As Mr Spiegl commented: "I know which I would prefer to miss death by!"

Sam Malin frequently sends useful material from Paris or the USA. He reported on 3 July that the international regulatory body for table tennis is to increase the size of "ping pong" balls by 2mm to 40mm, officially in order to make the game more TV-friendly (easier to see and slower play), but he couldn't help noticing the implicit process of metrication, since the existing size of 38mm is just $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches. It has since been reported that slightly larger tennis balls are also being considered, but the size was not stated.

The following letter from Vivian Linacre was published in *The Sunday Telegraph* on 28 May: "You report (May 21) that Tony Blair, the head of the Government that has made the use of imperial weights and measures a criminal offence, is delighted with his new son 'weighing 6lb 12oz'. He might have worried had it been announced instead that the baby weighed 3.062kg. That would certainly have perplexed most of your readers. So may Leo's happy deliverance be followed by Britain's – from this metric tyranny."

The municipal metric muddle is well illustrated by a circular dated 13 June distributed by Sefton Council, Lancashire, which stated: "In order to gauge the extent of compliance with the legislation, I have enclosed a questionnaire. I would be grateful if you would complete it and return it in the Freepost envelope provided."

The enclosed questionnaire merely asks the following two questions, to be answered simply by ticking the appropriate boxes: "1. Are you using metric units in transactions involving loose goods? 2. If not, what is the reason:

- (a) I am waiting for my scale(s) to be converted to Metric
- (b) I am waiting for a new Metric scale(s)
- (c) I am not aware of the Metric requirements
- (d) I intend to continue to use Imperial units
- (e) Another reason (please specify)"

So traders are invited officially to confirm that they intend to continue using Imperial measures! We wonder how many gave as 'Another reason' the fact that their customers don't want them to go metric?

Another instance of metric madness concerns the 80-year-old scales in the butcher's shop belonging to Keane Fletcher in Rotherham. They had been handed down by his father and are kept, solely for display, in front of his father's portrait. But the local Trading Standards Officer insisted: "If you have something that would not normally be used in the course of trade, keeping it on trade premises is an offence."

Equally daft is a letter, similar to dozens that we have seen, from Trading Standards Officers to an Edinburgh greengrocer, saying: "The officer also noted that certain packs of goods sold in your premises show the abbreviation 'GMS' for grams. The correct abbreviation of the gram is lower case 'g' and the kilogram 'Kg' ... On this occasion, the officer took no further action in your premises. However, if in future similar breaches of legislation occur, a report may be prepared ... with a view to a prosecution."

What is the sense of a system that is so dependent on correct typographical representation? Does it matter in our system whether you say Pounds or pounds or LB or lb?

The Sunday Telegraph of 6 August carried a superbly illustrated story on the restoration of "one of the finest mediaeval stained-glass windows in Britain," dating from 1385, in New College, Oxford, in which it was reported that, "More than £500,000 have been spent over the past six years on restoring eight 25ft high windows to their former glory; each square metre has taken 250 man-hours to scrub clean." Would you "Adam and Eve it"?

Errata

In producing our own publications, we are not exempt from metric muddle. In the final paragraph on page 14 of the April *Yardstick* we wrote: "...simply divide by 30 (or multiply by 0.33)" which should have read "0.033". Vivian Linacre's height was given on page 16 as "1,702cm" instead of "1,702mm". Oops!

John Strange, as always, corrects several other points. With reference to Justin Brooke's splendid piece on page 7 about Swedish measures, which mentioned "loads, (100

cubic feet, the so-called St Petersburg standard, which I believe is still in use in the Baltic and elsewhere)" John emphasizes that this unit of volume is indeed alive and well in shipping – known as the "registered ton," it is internationally recognised. Then on page 10 we quoted an article in the *Spectator* which had referred to a "three-eighths screw" being labelled as a "9.615384mm" which should have been "9.525mm."

To clarify his corrections to the factual errors in the conversion schedule attached to the disgraceful DTI Report (see *The Yardstick*, August 1999) John provides the following:

Unit	– SI. Equivalent	Per Schedule	– True Equivalent
Nautical Mile	– 1,853 metres	– 1,853.184 metres	
Inch of Water	– 249.08891 pascals	– 248.532 pascals at 62F	
B.T.U.	– 1.05505585257348 kilojoules	– 1.05505585262 kilojoules	

He adds that the *therm* represents 100,000 British Thermal Units, equivalent to 105.505585262 megajoules.

More good news

The Teletext opinion poll on 7 July asked the question: "Do you agree that the greengrocer in Sunderland should be prosecuted for selling in pounds and ounces?" 4,349 votes were cast: 2% voted "Yes" and 98% voted "No".

A GMTV Viewers' Poll on 21 July simply asked: "Do you prefer buying foods in pounds and ounces?" The result was: "Yes" 85.88%; "No" 12.99%; "Don't care" 1.13%.

On 31 July, BBC West, reporting on the Glastonbury Festival, referred to the famous Tor's dimensions in metres; whereupon one or two listeners complained, so the station held a "phone in" on the question: "Do you prefer use of metric measurements?". Result: "Yes" 1,645; "No" 12,052.

Turning the question round the other way, *The Yorkshire Evening Press* on 21 July, prompted by the Tesco story, conducted a telephone poll on the issue: "Should stores be allowed to sell in pounds and ounces?" The result was over 22 to 1 in favour!

Michael Parker from Rugby informed us of another success which, yet again, demonstrates what any member's individual initiative can achieve. The Spring catalogue of the National Canine Defence League had shown all measurements in metric, whereupon he remonstrated with their trading manager, who at first trotted out all the usual arguments (legal requirements, cost savings, etc.) but gradually became more amenable, with the result that the Autumn catalogue not only shows both metric and imperial but actually shows imperial first and metric second! Michael e-mailed his thanks, a courtesy that must always be remembered.

José O'Ware sent in a report from the *Daily Mail* of 16 May that, "a French diplomat recently asked a US Secretary of State about American plans to accept the metric system. The Secretary of State replied: 'We're making progress, but only inch by inch'."

The London *Evening Standard* of 12 June carried the story that David Dimbleby "made the mistake of confiding to comedian Eddie Izzard in the United States that for all these years he's been telling people he's 6ft tall when in

reality he doesn't quite reach those heights. Izzard said: "He told me that he was 5ft 11½in. 'I tell everyone I'm 6ft, but I'm telling you I'm 5ft 11½in.' And I said, 'Well, it probably seems a bit stupid lying about half an inch of your height'."

An excellent letter, from Dr J P N Edwards, appeared in *The Times* of 16 May, in which he said: "'Modern' failings in school mathematics go back further and earlier than the teaching of eight-year-olds. The starting point should be no later than infant school. In former times, by the end of the top class in infant school, pupils were expected to know the majority of their multiplication tables (to 12 x 12), with the first year of junior school devoted to polishing speed and accuracy of elementary numerical thinking and writing. The second year of junior school extended mathematical skills with topics such as long division, fractions and arithmetic, which demanded thinking in terms of a base other than ten; for example, addition of lengths and weights in Imperial units.

The sad truth is that, 40 years on, most middle-ranking 13 to 14-year-olds are not confident about their multiplication tables. The concept of fractions is beyond many ... It would be an interesting experiment to give today's 16- and 18-year-olds GCE O-level and A-level papers of, say, 40 years ago. I suspect that the results would be unacceptable both politically and mathematically."

Compulsory metrication is part of the "dumbing down" of education. The teaching unions in the USA openly urge that one advantage of the metric system is that it saves having to teach fractions or mental arithmetic.

We have only just seen a strip cartoon that appeared in the *Enfield Gazette* on 13 January. It shows a policeman accompanying his superior officer on a tour of "today's lot" – the four new prisoners in their cells. He introduces the first: "Sid the swindler, cheating old folk out of their savings, false pretences and burglary – fined £500", to which the inspector responds "A victim of society, I fear". Next, the PC points to "Wayne Lamebrayne, taking and driving away, 4 previous convictions, dangerous driving, driving under the influence – 5 months' probation and six points on his licence", whereupon the inspector comments "You're not doing yourself a favour son – you could easily get hurt". Next is "Barry the blagger, mugging, theft, GBH

– 3 months” – eliciting the inspector’s rebuke, “Not you again, Barry, you really can’t go on like this”. Finally: “Graeme the greengrocer, sold 4lb of King Edwards and ½ lb spring onions to a little old lady, first offence – fined £2,000 and a criminal record”, and the PC has to add “Control yourself, sir, he’s not worth it” as the inspector rages: “Evil scum – hanging’s too good for you!”

The voice of youth

The following letter, from Miss C E Clancy (aged 15) appeared in *The Daily Mail* on 12 July: “Steven Thoburn, the Sunderland greengrocer, raided by weights and measures inspectors with police back-up should stick to his guns. I’m only a teenager, but I think the EU has a cheek making us convert to its metric measurements.

I’ve just done my GCSEs, including cookery, for which I made cakes. My teacher saw I had written my ingredients in pounds and ounces and said I would be marked down unless I changed them to grammes. I didn’t – and if I lose a few marks for being patriotic, then so be it ...”

Gold stars

J D Wetherspoon, the rapidly expanding pub and licensed restaurant chain, deserve an award for their effective marketing of drinks and dishes in customary measures – 16oz glasses, 10oz rump steaks, etc.

The New Covent Garden Soup Co not only sell soup to the supermarkets in pint cartons, but also sell it in their own shops in 7oz, 12oz and 16oz sizes.

Barrel Foods of Greasborough, Rotherham, are bulkfood wholesalers and retailers, selling pulses, sauce mixes, soup and beverage powders, cereals, etc, all in pounds and ounces.

A R J Cyster & Sons, dairy farmers and hop-growers of Northiam in East Sussex, wrote to Mike Plumbe on 24 May to say: “We are of sufficiently anti-euro resolve to have very reluctantly printed ‘ml’ alongside the pints on our labels. Fortified, however, by the views expressed in the BWMA letter which you sent me and the article in *This England’s*

current issue, we are now prepared when we reprint labels for our 1 pint and 2 pint bottles to remove the metric decimals (which are meaningless anyway) in future.”

Financial Times

David Delaney had the following letter published in the *Financial Times* on 15 May:

“In the table entitled *New Labour: new red tape* (May 8), you omitted to include one ‘measure’ of concern to thousands of small traders, namely compulsory metrication of goods sold loose by weight. This came into effect on January 1 2000. The government declined to ask Brussels for a further 10-year derogation as it did for pre-packaged goods. Consequently, most traders have had to incur the cost of replacing or modifying their imperial weighing machines, as well as using new pricing display materials.

The cost has yet to be calculated, but will include that of the 122,000 scales that have been replaced in the independent sector alone. In addition is the cost to the consumer of metric downsizing, which for many commodities involves selling goods in metric round numbers but for a slightly higher unit price; for example, 1 lb becomes 450g instead of 453.6g. This is common practice with pre-packaged goods.

There is, however, an unexpected twist to this particular red tape saga. Eminent counsel has determined that the metrication regulations are *ultra vires*, unenforceable. Word has got out that local authorities will not prosecute traders for continuing to sell in imperial measures. Weighing machine suppliers are therefore left with stocks of 25,000 metric machines unsold. This should also be added to the total burden from this unwanted piece of red tape. Finally, once a test case has proved that the regulations are unlawful, all those retailers who have bought unnecessary metric machines could mount a group action for compensation.”

David Delaney also had a similar letter published in the June issue of *Builders’ Merchants News*.

Annual General Meeting and Conference

Our 5th AGM was held in the New Cavendish Club, London, on Saturday 3 June from 10.30 a.m. to 12 noon, followed by the Conference from 2.00 to 4.30 p.m.

Our best AGM attendance to date ensured lively inter-action between the platform and the floor, especially under item 5 of the agenda: “Review of past year’s activities, by the Chairman, Director, and Research Officer/ Retail Liaison Officer, and preliminary announcement of arrangements for the Parliamentary Lobby and Public Meeting on Thursday 22 June” – to which was added a note advising that “full reports will be presented to the Conference, starting at 2.00 p.m., when ample time will be available for questions and discussion.”

But first to the AGM formalities. After a welcome from the Chairman, Bruce Robertson, and notification of apologies for absence, the Minutes of the previous AGM (held on 20 March 1999) were taken as read, in view of the full report that appeared in the June 1999 issue of *The Yardstick* (No. 8). A healthy set of Accounts was then presented on behalf of the absent Hon Treasurer, Fabian Olins, and duly adopted, with a warm vote of thanks for

his excellent work. It was emphasised, however, that while our financial position is perfectly sound, much greater financial resources are required if we are to undertake all the desirable projects and initiatives of which we are now capable and which are being urged upon us from ever-widening spheres of influence – educational, social, political, international and commercial. Any suggestions from Members as to possible major sponsors or benefactors in any of these areas would be most welcome.

Then to item 5, when Bruce Robertson, Vivian Linacre and John Gardner respectively presented summaries of the year’s tremendous progress, all fully covered in no fewer than four issues of *The Yardstick* (Nos. 8-11) plus one of *The Footrule* (No. 5).

Office-Bearers and Executive Committee. The following were all re-elected by acclamation – Chairman: Bruce Robertson; Director: Vivian Linacre; Research Officer and Retail Liaison Officer: John Gardner; Editor and Membership Secretary: Robert Carnaghan; Treasurer: Fabian Olins; Press Officer: David Delaney; Events Secretary: Michael Plumbe;

Subscriptions Secretary: Pamela Shaw-Hesketh; They were each thanked for their individual services as well as their contribution to the collective effort. Considering the extreme range and diversity of personalities and talents, the strength of the team that has been built up in recent years is quite remarkable. This, naturally, is by virtue of the common dedication to a single cause.

The other Members of Committee were re-elected *en bloc*: Professor Antony Flew, Graham Bostock, William Peters, Philip Pitt, Robert Stevens. Three new Committee Members were then nominated and duly elected: Sheila Eustace, Derek Norman and Simon Hooton. A general discussion on BWMA's organisation, performance and prospects then ensued, continuing until the close.

After lunch, the Conference opened with an address from the Chairman, Bruce Robertson, followed by a review of the campaign with retail traders by John Gardner, and then the announcement by the Director of the programme for the "Business Against Metrication" (BAM) Day on 22 June, comprising a Parliamentary Lobby from 12 noon to 1 p.m. and a Public Meeting in Westminster Central Halls from 2.30 to 4.30 p.m. — as reported elsewhere in this issue.

Bill Peters then presented a report on our galaxy of Honorary Members — a note on which appears elsewhere in this issue — and proceeded to introduce BWMA's Annual Awards. The *Inch Perfect Award* was presented by Lord Monson, one of our Patrons, to Peter Ellis of Network Seafoods Ltd, Newhaven, Sussex, whose spectacularly successful defiance of compulsory metrication had been earlier reported at length in *The Sunday Telegraph* by Christopher Booker. Bill Peters presented a special *Golden Rule* to the original "metric martyr," David Stephens, the celebrated butcher from Leigh-on-Sea, Essex. Peter Ellis and David Stephens are not only worthy champions of traditional measures; they have also become great friends of BWMA.

The *Metrickery Award* was presented *in absentia* to Argos Stores for having converted all their catalogues to metric exclusively. Bill Peters had created a unique trophy for the purpose, featuring a broken House of Commons ruler — marked, of course, only in centimetres. Incidentally, a warm vote of thanks to Bill Peters was carried for all his superlative handiwork, designing and producing the "Golden Rules" and trophies, as well as the magnificent BWMA conference backdrops. [Mike Plumbe has written to Mr Guddy, Chief Executive of Argos Distributors Ltd at Milton Keynes, to congratulate him on "your outstanding

success in eliminating all mention of traditional weights and measures from your latest catalogues (except, so far as I can see, from your bathroom scales!)" Mike is still trying to arrange for a presentation ceremony.] Thanks are also due to Derek Bennett for taking several marvellous photographs.

We were then treated to no fewer than four good speeches — almost an "embarrassment of riches"! Peter Ellis, the fish merchant, gave an enthralling account of his dealings with the local trading standards officers. David Stephens of the famous Mandy's Chop Shop treated us to a "John Bull" denunciation of EC rules and regulations in general. Peter Shirley of Midland Chilled Foods Ltd delivered an inspiring address on the evil forces of which compulsory metrication is one manifestation.

Finally we were privileged to hear a masterly analysis from Geoffrey Cox (Barrister-at-Law and Conservative PPC for West Devon & Torridge) of the constitutional implication of the regulations and the possible alternative procedures available with a view to their annulment or relaxation. His speech was tape-recorded and he also kindly supplied a copy of his notes, so we hope to publish an edited transcript shortly.

Incidentally, at the Conference was a stall offering our literature and merchandise for sale. Just to remind others, back numbers of some issues of *The Yardstick* are still available: for a copy of Nos. 3, 4 or 8, simply send one 27p stamp or a 41p stamp for 2 copies; for a copy of Nos. 10 or 11, please send 2 x 27p stamps for 1 copy or 4 x 27p stamps for 2 copies.

A few copies of the booklet, *The Great Gram Scam* still remain @ 4 x 27p stamps for 1 copy or 6 x 27p stamps for 2 copies. Also, our superb 12-inch rulers can be sent on receipt of 4 x 27p stamps for 1, 6 x 27p stamps for 2, or a cheque for £4.20 for 6 or £7.20 for 12. Finally, for envelope labels, send 4 x 27p stamps for 20 strips of 5, or a cheque for £5.00 for 120 strips of 5. (Larger quantities of anything by arrangement.)

Our "English spoken here" notice is nearly 5" square, with white lettering on blue. It must be ordered separately. For one, send 50p in loose stamps and a SAE over 5" square. Send a cheque for £1 for 2, £2 for 4, etc (postage inc.) to BWMA, Dept. ESH, Maxgate, Burgh Hill, Etchingham, Sussex TN19 7PE. *Be sure to say* whether you want them adhesive on the front for use on transparent surfaces, or adhesive on the back for use on opaque surfaces.

British Weights & Measures Association

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Membership costs £10 for a year. Send a cheque/postal order (payable to BWMA) to the Subscriptions Secretary or the Hon. Treasurer. The list of members is kept on computer but not disclosed to commercial organisations.

Views expressed in *The Yardstick* are not necessarily those of the Association.