

Department of Trade and Industry
Consumer and Competition Policy Directorate
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**REPORT (1895) FROM THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON
WEIGHTS AND MEASURES**

THE SELECT COMMITTEE appointed to inquire whether any and what changes in the present system of Weights and Measures should be adopted; - Have considered the matters to them referred, and have agreed to the following REPORT:-

They have in the first place received evidence from witnesses representing many different interests, (1) official; (2) commercial; (3) manufacturing; (4) trade; (5) educational; (6) professional.

They have also received from numerous corporations, school boards, and other public bodies, resolutions without exception in favour of the adoption of the metrical system.

Your Committee find that, almost all the witnesses express a strong opinion as to the complicated and unsatisfactory condition of our present weights and measures, and of the distinct and serious drawback to our commerce, especially our foreign trade, which this system entails, differing as it does from the system (metrical) now adopted by every European nation except ourselves and Russia, as well as by far the majority of non-European countries with which this kingdom trades. The evidence, however, goes further to show that not only is our foreign trade, in every branch, seriously handicapped, but that the home trade would be benefited if more simple and uniform standards of weights and measures than those now existing were adopted.

Moreover strong evidence was brought forward as to the serious loss of time incurred by English school children in having to learn the complicated system of tables of existing weights and measures, and the urgent need of the adoption of a simpler system. It was stated that no less than one year's school time would be saved if the metrical system were taught in place of that now in use.

Evidence from competent witnesses proved to the satisfaction of your Committee that a compulsory change from an old and complicated system to the metrical had taken place in Germany, Norway, and Sweden, Switzerland, Italy, and many other European countries without serious opposition or inconvenience. That this change was carried out in a comparatively short period, and that as soon as the simple character of the new system was understood, it was appreciated by all classes of the population, and no attempt to use the old units or to return to the old system was made.

In the United States, where a system founded on the English units exists, a Commission is at present engaged in an investigation of the same character as that with which your Committee is charged, and the Federal Government has this year passed an Act rendering the metrical system compulsory for pharmaceutical purposes.

Your Committee believes that the adoption of the metrical system by England would greatly tend to render that system universal.

Your Committee recommended:-

- a) That the metrical system of weights and measures be at once legalised for all purposes.
- b) That after a lapse of two years the metrical system be rendered compulsory by Act of Parliament.
- c) That the metrical system of weights and measures be taught in all public elementary schools as a necessary and integral part of arithmetic, and that decimals be introduced at an earlier period of the school curriculum than is the case at present.

1 July 1895

End