

2002-10-09

Mr. James McCracken
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Dear Jim:

I am writing as an American consumer. First of all, the idea of allowing industries to use metric only on their products' labels is not a bad idea. Most Americans now buy many, many products that come in metric sizes and are not, as a result of the metric size, dazed or confused. We consumers do not walk into a grocery store to buy a 67.6 fluid ounce sized bottle of soft drink—we get the two-litre bottle. likewise, we don't actually pay much attention to labels; generally, we will buy the "big" box or the "small" bottle of something.

The same thing could go for the sale of gasoline by the litre. Who counts up how many gallons he or she buys? Speaking for myself, I usually fill it up or get so-many-dollars' worth of gas. The number of gallons is never noticed, except if I want to get a car wash cheaper-then I pay attention to the number of gallons I buy. But I could do the exact same thing with the number of litres if that what was on the pump.

Comparing metric quantities is much easier than with the units presently used. Unit pricing would be obsolete if items were sold by the kilogram and 100 grams, or litres and millilitres.
No multiplying or dividing by 4, 6, or 12.

Recently, President Bush mentioned in his speech about Iraq and terrorism the fact that Iraq has produced "30 million litres of anthrax." A very chilling thought, but I noticed that he didn't say gallons or quarts. Another interesting fact is that his father, when he was President, signed the executive order giving metric a higher priority in government agencies.

Allowing businesses to decide for themselves whether or not they wish to use metric-only information would also be beneficial to them. Industries could modernize on their own time schedules and also to prepare for the European Union requirements. Exporters would like being able to use metric-only because they know that their trading partners want metric units. It is also cheaper for our companies to use only one measurement system--this makes American companies more competitive and it is good for U.S. consumers because that translates to cheaper products.

Metric is the world's measurement language. Fewer and fewer cultures are familiar with U.S. measurement units, and many are increasingly unwilling to overcome this hurdle in order to purchase and use American goods. It is difficult for the U.S. firms to produce their goods at prices which are attractive to other nations. They do not need the additional handicaps of non-standard sizes and a measurement system which is the exception rather than the rule.

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I am an American who happens to like the metric system. I am a consumer as well, who buys camera film, soft drinks, bottled water, eyeglasses, perfume for my wife, CD-ROMs, cars, medicines, skis, flower seeds, wine and liquor. I watch my children run in track and field events at their high school and college; I read about the Olympics and their events; I see local road races go by near my house. I read the Nutrition Facts on food products. I pay my electric bill. I have traveled outside of the United States, and I hear and read international news. All of these mentioned use the metric system, and I have not gone crazy or lost my American-ness as a result.

Yours most sincerely,

John H. Woelflein