Metrication in the United States and Canada

EUGENE WAGNER

Metrication in the United States goes slower than in Canada. The big event in Canada in September 1977 was the change of all highway speed and distance signs to the use of metric units. While the actual change was done on the local and provincial levels within one month, it was coordinated with the Metric Commission in Ottawa.

Canadian weather reporting has been metric for many months, so motorists were not entirely unfamiliar with the metric terms when they appeared on highway signs.

The top speed limit on any Canadian highway is 100 km/h.

The province of Ontario has issued what is probably the first major all-metric highway map to be published in North America north of the Rio Grande. All distances shown on the map are only in kilometers. Included on the map is a graphical "Speed Conversion Chart" giving the miles per hour equivalents of kilometers per hour which are shown in increments of 10 km/h. The new map in conjunction with the new signs will do much to get Canadians accustomed to thinking metric.

Here in the States, according to the Metric Conversion Act of 1975, Public Law 94-168, a board of 17 members ought to be nominated by the President, to be confirmed by the Senate. The White House so far released 15 of those nominated. The two others are still under investigation. Following is the list of nominees with the category they represent as well as their backgrounds and metric experience if any:

Dr. Louis F. Polk, Dayton, Ohio, is a metrology expert and a retired vice president of the Bendix Corporation. He presently serves on the executive committee of the Fidelity Federal Savings of Dayton. He was chairman of the U.S. Department of Commerce's Metric Study from 1968 to 1971. Dr. Polk has been active in activities of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and is a former ANMC director.

Business
A.G. Weaver, Armonk, New York, is director of product safety for the IBM Corporation, and is an expert in engineering standards.

Standards
Sydney D. Andrews, Tallahassee, Florida, is director of the division of standards of the Florida Department of Agriculture. He is a past chairman of the National Conference on Weights and Measures and is chairman of the Florida Metric Council. Mr. Andrews is chairman of the ANMC Weights and Measures Sector Committee and also a member of the U.S. Metric Association. He has been actively promoting metricalation for many years.

Members At Large
Dr. Paul Block, Jr., is publisher of the Toledo Blade. He has been a professor of chemistry at the University of Toledo since 1950.
Sandra R. Kenney, Owings Mills, Maryland, is continuity director for the Maryland Center for Public Broadcasting. She has taught art in Ohio and Baltimore and has been associated with instructional television since 1970.

Joyce D. Miller, New York City, is a vice president and director of social services for the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union. Ms. Miller is a national president of the Coalition of Labor Union Women and serves on the AFL-CIO standing committee on civil rights.

Glenn Nishimura, Little Rock, Arkansas, is executive director of Arkansas Consumer Research, and he is vice president of the Consumer Federation of America.

The list of nominees has been sent to the Senate Commerce Committee who must confirm them individually for membership to the U.S. Metric Board.

Construction

Francis R. Dugan, Cincinnati, Ohio, is president of the Dugan & Meyers Construction Company. He has held official positions at local and national levels with the Associated General Contractors of America including membership on its metric committee.

Labor

Thomas A. Hannigan, Washington, DC, is assistant to the International Secretary of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW). He served on the U.S. Metric Study 1968 to 1971. Mr. Hannigan is a member of the ANMC board of directors and its executive committee. He has a long record of opposition to national metrification dating back to 1970.

Dr. Henry Kroeze, Brookfield, Wisconsin, is chairman of the Department of Engineering and Computer Science at the University of Wisconsin-Waukesha. He is a member of the Engineers Joint Council Metric Commission, the ANMC, and the USMA. Dr. Kroeze is a native of the Netherlands and a long time promoter of metrification on the local and national levels.

Retailing

Dr. Satenig St. Marie, New York City, is a divisional vice president and director of consumer affairs for the J.C. Penney Company. She is a past president of the American Home Economics Association and a member of the ANMC consumer liaison committee.

Science

Dr. Edward Ginzton, Palo Alto, California, is chairman of the Board of Varian Associates, a company engaged in research and development in the micro-wave electronics field. He had been a professor of electrical engineering at Stanford University.

Small Business

Carl Beck, King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, is president of the Charles Beck Marine Corporation, who are manufacturers of machinery for the packaging and converting industries. He is active in the affairs of the National Small Business Association. Mr. Beck is a member of the
ANMC board of directors and its executive committee.

Roger Travis, Holbrook, Massachusetts, is president of Medi Inc., a manufacturer of disposable medical products. He is also president of the Smaller Business Association of New England.

State and Local Government

Dr. Frank Hartman, Lansing, Michigan, is a federal liaison representative for the Michigan State Department of Education in Washington. He has been a high school teacher, principal, and superintendent of two school districts.

The Governors Conference also took some measure. A representative for each State has been appointed to represent the Governors Conference in what they call the “Interstate Metric Committee”. Here is a list of its members:

**Alabama**
Aubrey Dismukes  
Division of Weights and Measures  
Dept. of Agriculture & Industries  
1445 Federal Drive  
Montgomery 36130  
(205) 832-6693

**Alaska**
Tony Motley, Commissioner  
Dept. of Commerce & Economic Development  
Pouch D, Juneau 99811

**Arizona**
Richard Harris, Asst. Director  
Weights and Measures Division  
Commerce Department  
State Capitol, Phoenix 85007

**Arkansas**
Sam Hindsman, Director  
Weights and Measures Division  
Commerce Department  
State Capitol, Little Rock 72201

**California**
Valerie Antoine, Vice President  
U.S. Metric Association, Inc.  
10245 Andasol Avenue  
Northridge 91323  
(213) 363-5606

**Colorado**
Jack Kinstlinger, Executive Director  
Department of Highways  
4201 East Arkansas Ave.  
Denver 80222  
(303) 757-9201

**Connecticut**
Graham Waldron, Director  
Technical Services Division  
Department of Commerce  
State Capitol, Hartford 06115

**Delaware**
Dr. William J. Geppert  
State Supervisor of Mathematics  
Department of Public Instruction  
Townsend Building  
Dover 19901

**Florida**
Wayne C. Voigt, Asst. Director  
Division of State Planning  
State Capitol, Tallahassee 32304

**Georgia**
Rick Cobb, Deputy Commissioner  
Division of Planning & Budget  
State Capitol, Atlanta 30334
Hawaii
George Mattimoe, Deputy Director
Division of Weights & Measures
1428 S. King Street
Honolulu 96814

Idaho
NGA Interstate Metric Committee
Attn: Patricia Hawley
Office of the Governor
State Capitol, Boise 83720

Illinois
NGA Interstate Metric Committee
Attn: Sylvia Dennen
Office of the Governor
State Capitol, Springfield 62706

Indiana
Richard Wiley
Mathematics Consultant
State House, Indianapolis 46204

Iowa
Thatcher Johnson
Deputy Secretary of Agriculture
Des Moines 50319

Kansas
John L. O'Neil
National Conference on Weights & Measures
Department of Agriculture
P.O. Box 678, Topeka 66601

Kentucky
NGA Interstate Metric Committee
Attn: Frank Harscher
Office of the Governor
State Capitol, Frankfort 40601

Louisiana
Charles S. Johnson, Technical Administrator
Weights and Measures Division
Department of Agriculture
Room 315, 1237 Murphy Street
Shreveport, Louisiana 71101
(318) 424-6461

Maine
Arnold Johnson
Curriculum Consultant
Maine Education Department
State House, Augusta 04333

Maryland
Mrs. Audrey Buffington
Consultant in Mathematics
Division of Instruction
Maryland State Dept. of Education
P.O. Box 8717, BWI Airport
Baltimore 21240

Massachusetts
Terri Bergman
State of Massachusetts
Hall of the States, Suite 307
444 North Capitol Street
Washington, D.C. 20001

Michigan
Frank Hartman
State of Michigan,
Suite 314
Hall of the States
444 North Capitol Street
Washington, D.C. 20001

Minnesota
Nathaniel Scott
Assistant Commissioner of Administration
208 Administration Building
St. Paul 55155

Mississippi
Dr. Charles E. Holladay
Superintendent of Public Education
Sillers State Office Building
Jackson 39201
(601) 354-6933
Missouri
J.W. Abbott, Deputy Director
Department of Agriculture
P.O. Box 650
Jefferson City 65101

Montana
Gary L. Delano
Administrator of Weights and Measures
Division of Business Regulations
805 North Last Chance Gulch
Helena 59601

Nebraska
Steve Malone
Chief of Weights and Measures
Department of Agriculture
P.O. Box 4844, State Capitol Building
Lincoln 68509

Nevada
Mike Melner, Director
Department of Commerce
201 South Fall Street
Carson City 89701

New Hampshire
None

New Jersey
NGA Interstate Metric Committee
Attn: John I. Degnan
Office of the Governor
State House, Trenton 08625

New Mexico
Jose R. Baca
State Purchasing Officer
Lamy Building
Santa Fe 78503
(505) 827-2626

New York
NGA Interstate Metric Committee
Attn: James E. Introne
Assist. Secretary of the Governor for
Human Resources
Executive Chambers, Room 229
State Capitol, Albany 12224
(518) 474-2831

North Carolina
Dr. Lynn Muchmore
Director of State Planning
Administration Building
Raleigh 27611
(919) 829-4131

North Dakota
NGA Interstate Metric Committee
Attn: George "Woody" Gagnon
State Capitol, Bismarck 58505
(701) 224-2200

Ohio
Colonel Thomas Grant, Director
Ohio State Office
1150 Connecticut Avenue, N.W. #709
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 223-1725

Oklahoma
Keith English
Oklahoma Department of Highways
200 N.E. 21st Street
Oklahoma City 73105

Oregon
Leonard Kunzman, Director
Department of Agriculture
635 Capitol Street, N.E.
Salem 97310

Pennsylvania
Ronald G. Lench, Secretary
Department of General Services
515 North Office Building
Harrisburg 17120
(717) 787-5996

Rhode Island
NGA Interstate Metric Committee
Attn: William G. Dugan, Jr.
Office of the Governor
State House, Providence 02903
South Carolina
Matthew B. Burkley, Sr.
Citizens Representative
P.O. Box 1031
Charleston 29402

South Dakota
Barbara J. McCandless
Asst. to Secretary for Policy Development
Dept. of Commerce and Consumer Affairs
State Capitol, Pierre 57501
(605) 224-3177

Tennessee
Eugene Holman
Deputy Director for Weights & Measures
Department of Agriculture
Box 40627 Melrose Station
Nashville 37204

Texas
NGA Interstate Metric Committee
Attn: Charles D. Travis
Executive Asst. to the Governor
State Capitol, Austin 78711

Utah
Eugene Wagner
375 West 400 South
Salt Lake City 84101

Vermont
Leonard U. Wilson
Director of State Planning
State Capitol, Montpelier 05602

Virginia
James F. Lyles
Supervisor, Weights & Measures
Department of Agriculture & Commerce
Commonwealth of Virginia
Richmond 23219

Washington
NGA Interstate Metric Committee
Attn: Jason King
Office of the Governor
State Capitol 98501

West Virginia
NGA Interstate Metric Committee
Attn: Ed Rebrook III
Office of the Governor
State Capitol, Charleston 25305

Wisconsin
Professor John Leaman
University of Wisconsin Engineering Department
929 N. 6th Street
Milwaukee 53702

Wyoming
None

American Samoa
Mrs. Mere Betham
Director of Education
Office of the Governor
Paga Pago 96799

Puerto Rico
Max Trujillo
Assistant Secretary
Department of Consumer Affairs
Box 41059, Minillas Station
Santurce 00940

Virgin Islands
NGA Interstate Metric Committee
Attn: Peter de Zela
Office of the Governor
Government House
Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas 00801
Some states have taken actions in metrication on their own.

California passed a metric law. Formation of the California Metric Conversion Council was authorized with the passage of SB 1018 by the State Legislature. The bill, which was introduced by State Senator Alfred Alquist, was passed by a 33 to 2 vote in the State Senate and by a 70 to 7 vote in the Assembly. It automatically became law without the Governor's signature when he did not act upon it during the prescribed time limit.

The Council will consist of 10 members to be appointed by the Governor. The council will devise and carry out a broad program of planning, coordination, and public education in the use of the SI in California activities. Many California USMA (United States Metric Association)—members worked for the passage of the legislation.

"Meanwhile, it is going very smoothly and essentially at little or no cost."

In accordance with General Motors metrication policy, the 1978 "A" type cars are predominately metric and thus join the "B" and "C" cars which became metric last year and the "T" Chevette, introduced two years ago.

The General Motors practice is to "go metric" on those new parts and assemblies which require new tooling. The above cars have been extensively redesigned to reduce mass and to improve fuel economy. Thus, the cars contain a predominance of new metric parts. The General Motors automotive products are now more metric than customary.

Postal Service Is Going Metric

Like other Federal units and private industry, the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) is gearing up to convert to the metric system of measurement. The "rule of reason" will apply to adoption of the SI in the Postal Service according to Deputy Postmaster General William F. Bolger. That is, the conversion will take place in an orderly manner, compatible with the voluntary conversion actions of postal customers.

In keeping with this policy, the USPS has committed itself to participate fully in the metric implementation efforts of the Federal government. The assistant Postmaster General for Research and Development, John F. Wise, is USPS's metric coordinator and chairman of the Postal Service's Metrication Board. That Board includes representatives from a number of Washington, DC, Headquarters organizations as well as a liaison person from each postal region.

GM Passes Halfway Mark

At late July and early August 1977 meetings of the General Motors Board of Directors and corporate executives, Mr. Richard L. Terrell, vice chairman of GM, observed, "General Motors is in the midst of an ongoing conversion to the metric system—a conversion which has been paced, and accelerated, by our unprecedented redesign program. Chevette was our first U.S. metric car, the 1977 B/C redesign was metric, and so is the 1978 midsize program—all in keeping with our plan of going metric as new parts and new designs are released. In fact, with the introduction of our new midsize cars, we will be past the halfway mark—we'll be more metric than inches and pounds. And by 1982 or so, the conversion will be virtually complete.