

## Let's Keep the Pound Around: A Retort

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## Let's Keep the Pound Around: A Retort

### Abstract

Let Ham Kenney and his Canadian colleagues be meter greeters. Let the world traders and Olympic weight lifters deal in liters and kilos. As for me, give me inches or give me pounds.

In the six months or so that I have been editing interview tapes here, I have developed my skills to the point where I make few errors. As a matter of fact, when the director reviews these tapes, he sometimes seems to have more fun watching the splices go by and trying to find a bad splice than he has listening to the tape. I recommend that you confine your editing to removing sections, rather than rearranging or inserting parts, at least until you can do deletions skillfully.

Tape editing is a rewarding skill to add to your blue pencil and Liquid Paper—priceless tools of the print editor's trade. It can be rewarded with play over a radio station, and you know that the listener hears the message.

Although I haven't gone into tape duplication, it is obvious that all you need is two recorders and a connecting cable to get instant copies for distribution, or you may want to send this work to a commercial studio for a few dollars a reel.

Good luck with your tape editing, it's a lot of fun, and it leads to a lot of good publicity among a "captive" audience.



## A Retort—

# Let's Keep the Pound Around

Don Nelson

**L**et Ham Kenney and his Canadian colleagues be meter greeters. Let the world traders and Olympic weightlifters deal in liters and kilos. As for me, give me inches or give me pounds.

The metric moguls are trying to sell us their meters and degrees celsius as an unmixed blessing (seems to me somebody tried that with pesticides, too). But has anybody told you about the candela and the steradian? They're part of the "modernized metric system," according to a Department of Commerce flyer pushing the voluntary—and I emphasize voluntary—switch to metric.

Are you ready for this? I quote from the Commerce flyer: "The candela is defined as the luminous intensity of 1/600,000 of a square meter of blackbody at the temperature of freezing platinum (2045 K)." If you don't believe me, go get yourself a blackbody and freeze it in platinum.

How about this one? "The steradian is the solid angle with its vertex at the center of a sphere that is subtended by an area of the spherical surface equal to that of a square with sides equal in length to the radius." It's in the book! I'm offering a pound of raw Texas peanuts (1/8 of a door prize I brought back from the national AAACE meeting) to the first person out there who writes that so I can understand it.

I don't want to accuse those meter greeters of pomposity or anything like that, but consider the following. Like the Russians, they're grabbing every weight and measure in sight and claiming it as their own creation. Even time. I understand that it may be a trifle easier to use the base 10 when it comes to counting money, weighing peanuts or measuring corn rows. But 365 days, 12 months, 24 hours, 60 minutes and 60 seconds — that's metric?

I thought those measurements had something to do with the movements of the sun, the Earth, the moon and hibernating bears and not "the duration of 9,192,631,770 cycles of the radiation associated with a specified transition of the cesium-133 atom."

When that old Greek geezer—may Zeus rest his soul—first hit on the idea of the sundial, do you suppose he had the cesium-133 atom in mind? Probably he was thinking more in terms of 9,192,631,770 cycles of radiation.

The steradian challenge ought to cause communicators to pause a second before they switch all their publications to hectares and candelas. But if that's not enough, why don't you ask the meter greeters what they're going to do with points, ems and picas? I guess start with the way they measure length: "The meter is defined as 1,650,763.73 wavelengths in vacuum of the orange-red line of the spectrum of krypton-86." So, don't be surprised if, when you next visit ye olde printe shoppe, a typesetter is boiling up a batch of krypton-86 amid an eerie orange-red glow.

If you AG writers by now—I hope—sense all of the trouble that's brewing for you in those shiny one-liter pots, pity the poor SONG writers. They're going to have to convert their lyrics to metric. Yep. Remember "I love you a bushel and a peck, you bet your pretty neck I do, doo.lee oo lee doo la, doo lee oo lee oo la, doo lee oo lee oo la doo." That will never doo in the future world of metric. It's going to have to be "I love you .045 cubic meters, you bet your pet mosquitos I do." Catchy, huh?

There may even be some sports fans among us. Can you imagine Wilt Chamberlain stretching all his 2 meters, 13.36 centimeters to stuff a shot? Or all 113.25 kilograms of Dick Butkus crashing the line to make a tackle?

Fellow AAACers: Shall we act like sheep—67.95 kilogram sheep—being led to the metric slaughter of all that is being pounded out of us? Shall we let ourselves be crucified on a cross of krypton-86?

Or shall we fight? I say an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. The old weights and measures are as American as the foot-long hotdog.

Therefore, I am organizing OUTMET—the Organization to Undo the Transition to METric. I thought of a lot of other acronyms, including CLUBMET (Congress to Lead Us not Unto the Blasted Metric system—the symbol would be a 33-inch baseball bat smashing a liter of frozen platinum). I also thought about NOKASOMAS (National Organization to Keep America Safe for the Old Measuring System—that last A is stretch-

ing it a bit—I'd guess about 40 rods). But I like OUTMET best (by about a 10-foot pole).

It's easy to join OUTMET. Just send me an ounce of carob seeds as your solemn pledge to resist metric. Why carob seeds, you may ask? Well, the way we got the unmetric unit for gems—the carat—was from the weight of so many carob seeds. They might look like carob seeds to most folks, but they will shine as 24-carat gold to me.

What can I offer you for the pledge? Certainly not a full-scale wall chart explaining the metric system like the Superintendent of Documents can. Would you believe a half-pint of carob juice?

Perhaps OUTMET will succeed where CALDEPOP failed. All we can do is give our last full measure of devotion—walk that extra mile, as it were. If we fail, there's always Yemen—I understand the meter people haven't been greeted there yet.

And, Ham, old greeter, you closed your AAACE article with "Au revoir, fellow-AAACERs . . . and prospective meter greeters!" (Followed by a limerick.) I'll just say, "So long, fellow-AAACERs . . . and prospective OUTMETs!"

There once was an editor named Smifth,  
 Who was quite satisfied with his fifth;  
 Along came a liter,  
 But he didn't greeter,  
 He just guzzled 'er down with a snifh!

## Thoughts and Re-Thoughts on Metrics

As might be expected, there were other responses stimulated by "Ham" Kenney's treatment of Canada's change over to metrics. Sure enough, one of these came from Al Bond, the sage of Lacey, Washington, and sometime rhymster of limericks equal to any, and better than most. Here's Al's contribution.

"Re C. Hamilton Kenney, esquire's article in the April-June Quarterly, I hereby submit the following, to wit:

"Tho a yard is short of a meter,  
 "Some say the meter is neater;  
 "Still others, like Ham,  
 "Would espouse the wee gram,  
 "As well as the kilo and liter."

AL BOND, —/8-76