

DAVID CAMERON MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mr Neil Herron
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Friday, December 20, 2002

Thank you for writing to me regarding the issue of weights and measures.

To answer your question directly, I do not think the metric martyrs should be prosecuted. I, together with Conservative colleagues, believe that local authorities should use their resources more efficiently than persecuting traders who are providing their customers with a service they want in the units of measurement they prefer. Since the goods sold are for domestic sale only, there should be no difficulty in allowing the use of pounds and ounces for loose goods to continue. Whether traders choose to sell in imperial or metric units should be a matter between them and their consumers.

It is still permitted under EU rules to show the equivalent imperial measures as a 'supplement' under the metric. This is referred to as 'supplementary indications' or 'dual marking'. The Weights and Measures (Metrication Amendments) Regulations 2001, which Labour introduced, will end this practice after 31 December 2009.

Thus, the dual marking with imperial measures and metric is not banned, so at present the weight in pounds can still be shown on a label but the metric measure has to come first or be more prominent. The decision to use supplementary indications in the UK is entirely voluntary, depending on the users' perception of the advantages of using them in the UK.

Significantly, research by a leading market research agency found that 70% of UK consumers would prefer a system of dual labeling, which would allow the consumer to choose the system which suited him or her the best.

The Conservative Party is on the side of consumer choice and small business, pursuing costly court cases is of help to no one. Thank you again for writing to me about this issue.

David Cameron

From the Member of Parliament for the Witney constituency in the district of West Oxfordshire, including Bampton, Burford, Carterton, Charlbury, Chipping Norton, Eynsham, Witney, Woodstock and Yarnton.