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Great Britain changes to metric system with great opposition

LONDON (AP) — So your boss, like Shakespeare's merchant Shylock, zealously demands his 0.45 kilograms of flesh? Beware: give him 2.54 centimeters and he'll take 1.6 kilometers.

Alas, such phrases could be in Britain's future. After more than nine centuries of pounds, inches and gallons, the sceptred isle is obeying a European Union decree and going metric.

It's the biggest cultural change in Britain since it abandoned shillings and pennies for a decimal currency 25 years ago. Traditionalists are aghast.

"Has anyone given a thought to the English language after today?" wailed *The Sunday Telegraph*. "Many of our sayings and rhymes are as ancient as the measurements we are to lose. Is it a case of adapt or die?"

Will the tongue-twisting Peter Piper, it wondered, now pick 1.126 liters of pickled peppers? And in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, could we bear to hear the following exchange:

Gloucester: "Is't not the King?"

Lear: "Aye, every 2.54 centimeters the King."

"This is a day of shame for all past governments who have pawned our heritage, knowing they can never buy it back," lamented conservative lawmaker Sir George Gardiner.

Nevertheless, the government is bringing Britain into line with the rest of Europe — and almost everywhere else. The metric system has been phased in over the past few decades, with the final step to be completed in 2000.

The deadline for most goods was Sunday. From now on, stores must label packaged foods in kilograms and grams, although unpackaged goods can be sold in pounds and ounces until 2000.

There are consolations. Weights and measures will be



compatible with those of major trading partners, shoppers will use one system for domestic and imported goods, and most tourists won't have to do conversions in their heads.

Road signs will provide distances in miles, and fast food joints will continue to dish out "quarterpounders" and 12-inch pizzas.

Still, the British Weights and Measures Association, a new protest group, has called for "massive passive resistance" and says it will challenge the change in the European courts.

Small businesses lament having to buy new scales and labeling machines. Trading standards officers predict wholesale confusion.

There have also been worries that shop owners could raise prices without confused buyers being aware of it. That practice was widespread when the "decimalization" of money was introduced Feb. 15, 1971.

Hugh Grant's affair is new question on Trivial Pursuit cards

LONDON (AP) — Now you too can score with Hugh Grant.

His escapade with a Hollywood tart will be a question in the 1996 British edition of Trivial Pursuit: "Which film publicity launch was in its gestation stage when Hugh hooked a hooker?"

Grant was promoting *Nine Months* in July when Los Angeles police arrested him with a prostitute on Sunset Boulevard. He pleaded no contest and was sentenced to a fine and an AIDS education course.

"It is only in the adult version, not the family version of the game," Brian Highley, who compiles queries for the game, told

The People newspaper.

He's invited Grant and his girlfriend, model Elizabeth Hurley, to the new edition's launch: "I hope he has sufficient sense of humor to come along."

Michael Richards says Seinfeld will be on air for many more years

RADNOR, Pa. (AP) — Kramer says Seinfeld and the gang aren't going anywhere.

Michael Richards, who plays Jerry Seinfeld's ungainly neighbor Cosmo Kramer on the hit NBC show, dispels rumors that this is the show's last season.

It's "a bunch of pooh-pooh," he tells *TV Guide* in its Oct. 7 issue. "I'm going to be Kramer a long time — at least two more years."

Richards co-stars in the current release "Unstrung Heroes," directed by Diane Keaton.

Pregnant dairy cows may be flown express to Vietnam next year

OLYMPIA (AP) — A thousand pregnant Holstein dairy cows from Olympia will be bound for Vietnam next year, depending on whether a \$1.5 million deal goes through.

"All we need is the letter of credit" guaranteeing payment from the Vietnamese government," said Larry Schorno, head of Schorno Agribusiness of Yelm.

The deal was announced earlier this week as Gov. Mike Lowry was flying home from a trade visit to Hanoi.

supply the rest of the cows.

The cows — each implanted with a female embryo — will be loaded aboard a cattle ship at the Port of Olympia in February. A Holstein cow produces about 20,000 pounds of milk a year.

Schoro Agribusiness exports cattle and horses to Asia. In early January, the company will ship 177 pregnant heifers to Japan by Federal Express jet freighter.

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