

Labour on July 24, 1975, were carefully considered by the government. The report was tabled in the House and released to the parties on December 5, 1975 and the Minister of Labour met the parties in Vancouver on December 10. The Minister also consulted members of the Canada Labour Relations Council on the report, its findings and recommendations. The government endorses in principle the recommendations aimed at improving the bargaining relationship but rejects those recommendations requiring heavy intervention in the labour-management relationship and a legislative approach. In keeping with the government's position, the Minister of Labour appointed an Industrial Relations Consultant pursuant to Section 197 of the Canada Labour Code on December 23, 1975. The Consultant, Mr. H. Landon Ladd, was appointed to develop in co-operation with labour, management and the government of Canada, an industrial relations program with a view to promoting conditions favourable to the attainment of industrial peace and to assist the parties in the implementation of such a program. The appointment is in the spirit of recommendations #4 and #5 of the commissioner's report but does not use the title "Federal Overseer" as specified in recommendation #4. No action has been taken on the other recommendations contained in the report.

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● (1520)

[English]

PRIVILEGE

MR. BAKER (GRENVILLE-CARLETON)—ANNOUNCEMENT OF WHEAT SALE TO U.S.S.R.

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, while we were dealing with Routine Proceedings I raised a point of order. If it is agreeable, and I think I have the right in any event, I will now raise it as a question of privilege affecting all members of this House. I understand that the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang), who is responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, made an announcement today in this building, outside this Chamber, about a very large, significant, and happy sale of wheat to the U.S.S.R.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): I would be the first to say that we join with members on the government side in expressing satisfaction with regard to that. However, it would have been a matter of common courtesy and in accordance with parliamentary practice if, having regard to the fact that the announcement was made about 1:30 this afternoon, prior to reaching the item on the order paper for ministers' statements, the minister had made that statement in the House.

If the statement was so important that the minister had to rush breathlessly to the television cameras, why did he not rush breathlessly into the House to ask for consent to revert to the order for ministers' statements, which the House would have been delighted to do? That would have been following what has been common parliamentary practice for some time.

Privilege—Mr. W. Baker

I can understand the minister's joy and that of the country. However, I hope the government House leader brings it to the minister's attention that the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization laboured long and hard in order to come up with a new procedure by which ministerial statements, or that which ought to be ministerial statements, could be made in the House of Commons where there would be an opportunity to reply. That would give us an opportunity to find out the terms and conditions of such an important and happy transaction. I hope that this minister, experienced as he is, will consider that. In failing to give the House that kind of information he breaches the privileges of this House. More than that, he displays bad parliamentary manners. He should know better.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the challenge of the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker). Notwithstanding his new duties, one has to conclude that he is far more at home with corn than with wheat.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lang: He has, of course, not had time to examine what he calls the parliamentary practice. If he does examine it he will find that some long time ago I indicated to the House that while sales like this, which by the way was a sale to China and not to Russia—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lang:—while sales like this are extremely important, it would not be my practice, in this case any more than with regard to any departmental or governmental situation, to attempt to make the announcement in the House. I suppose if there were a kind of bulletin board occasion for that, one might like to do it so that the opposition could properly respond and say that is great, wonderful, and nothing more, instead of taking up the time of the House with a lot of extraneous matters.

In this case, it is not only a case of not making an announcement. While important, it follows the pattern of sales and, therefore, involves no new policy. However it is true this sale had been made possible because of a policy of the government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lang: It allows for a guarantee by the government of the credit involved on the part of the buyer, China. However, as I say, that is a standing policy which I am sure was discussed in the House at the time it was first introduced. It is not necessary to indicate its specific use each time it is utilized.

The sale to China represents another kind of government policy, maintaining a good relationship with a country like China. We have maintained that relationship as we have done with Cuba, even though hon. members opposite may argue about specific acts on the part of the government. We have maintained the position of a good trading relationship. An open door is important.