

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, December 3, 1962

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF FOREIGN MINISTER
OF GABON

Mr. Speaker: Before commencing the proceedings of this afternoon I would wish to seek the indulgence of the house to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of a distinguished visitor in the person of Hon. Jean-Hilaire Aubame, the Foreign Minister for the Republic of Gabon. Our distinguished visitor is here today in the course of an informal visit to Ottawa. It is his first visit here. We know that Gabon has existed as an independent republic since August of 1960. However, he is in this country on business and has paid us the courtesy of a visit. I am sure that all hon. members will wish to express through me the hope that he will not long tarry before making a return and official visit to this country.

(Translation):

I wish to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence, in the Speaker's gallery, of His Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Republic of Gabon, Mr. Jean Hilaire Aubame.

Mr. Aubame's visit here is quite informal. As a matter of fact, he is on a state visit in New York, but the president of the republic wanted him to come to Canada.

I am sure of speaking for all hon. members when I extend to him the most cordial welcome and most sincere good wishes, not only for himself but also for the people of his country.

I hope that we will see him again in Canada. He told me a few minutes ago that he was hoping to come back on an official visit before too long.

Once again we offer him our best wishes.

(Text):

PRIVILEGE

MR. PEARSON—REFERENCE TO SPEECH BY
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Leader of the Opposition): I rise on a question of privilege arising out of a statement made today in Calgary by the Minister of Agriculture. I regret doing this in the absence of the hon.

gentleman, but I should make my statement at the first available opportunity, which is now, particularly in view of the fact that the minister's office saw fit to issue the text of his statement for release at 12 noon today.

My question of privilege arises out of the following sentence in his speech, and I quote from the text released. The minister said:

I said it in Regina, and I repeat it here today, the members of the Liberal and New Democratic parties are opposed to the China wheat sales. As recently as Friday, November 23, we had the leaders of those two parties putting their official stands on the House of Commons records.

That statement, made by the Minister of Agriculture, is a false statement, and the evidence put forward by the minister to support it does exactly the opposite, because in the debate on November 14—and this was confirmed by me on November 23—I made the following statement about our attitude toward these agreements. I said at that time, as reported on page 1633—and I was repeating a statement I had made over a year ago:

With this cautionary qualification regarding trade with communist countries like China—

Trade in non-strategic goods.

I repeat that we most certainly do need all the expansion of trade we can possibly get, and where we can get it.

I went on to express the approval of this party and myself of the China wheat agreement in those terms, and again on November 23. Therefore, the minister's statement is not only a false statement but it was made after evidence had been brought into this house which gave him information which proved exactly the contrary to his statement. For this reason, it must have also been made with deliberation.

MR. PETERS—REFERENCE TO SPEECH BY MINISTER
OF AGRICULTURE

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): I, too, intended to rise on a question of privilege similar to that raised by the leader of the official opposition. I think our position in this matter is even clearer than that of the other parties in the house. I believe the misrepresentation contained in the minister's statement must be the basis of an apology by the minister to the house and to the country for the inconvenience he has caused and the erroneous opinion he has expressed.

The date November 23 has been mentioned. If Your Honour would check the record you