

**Mr. Horner:** Fifteen.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** Maybe it is 15. Therefore, I plead with the minister to give this matter consideration.

**Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has made a specific suggestion which would do very little good, perhaps, for some farmers; namely a moratorium on or postponement of repayment of cash advances made to farmers. However, at the same time it would act in ways which perhaps would not be particularly desirable from the point of view of the whole program. It would help some farmers who in fact might not need that particular form of assistance. With the very high quotas on barley and the free movement of rapeseed, there are different situations arising all across the Prairies. None the less, I would point out to the hon. member that such a proposal would require a change in the legislation. It may be that before long this legislation will be before the House, and then we can look at all aspects of the matter with some figures in our hands.

The hon. member referred to the apprehension and frustration of farmers in the prairie region, and there is a good deal of it there. A good deal of it was put there by opposition members who spent all their time, in very partisan fashion, attempting to gain every possible political advantage instead of trying to advance the knowledge of the farmer in regard to the programs that are afoot. The farmers in the prairie region who in fact are in the most difficult situation are those who listened to hon. members opposite, the Tory and NDP members, who instead of explaining to the farmers what the LIFT program was about last year, told them to ignore it—to their financial disadvantage.

This is the sort of misfortune that has befallen the farmers on the Prairies as a result of the partisan attitude of hon. members opposite. I have implored them before, and I implore them again, instead of this partisan campaigning to acquaint farmers with the very many programs the government has implemented, more than have ever been attempted in years gone by. Let them be understood and made effective throughout the prairie region for the good of all farmers, particularly for the small, family farmers for whom we feel so deeply.

PUBLIC SERVICE—REVIEW OF STAFF RELATIONS ACT—  
CONSULTATION WITH EMPLOYEE ASSOCIATIONS—  
REFERENCE TO COMMITTEE

**Mr. Mark Rose (Fraser Valley West):** Mr. Speaker, this is the second time in recent weeks that I have been prompted to speak about the smouldering resentment within the public service at the government's lethargy in coming to grips with the serious problems stemming in large part, I think, from the blatant inadequacies within the Public Service Staff Relations Act. I speak again tonight because there seem to be some contradictions in the replies I have received. The President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) said in the House on November 27:

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The government is now reviewing the Public Service Staff Relations Act.

That seemed a definite enough statement. But on December 9, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), in a written reply to a similar query from the professional institute, said in part:

When a decision is taken to initiate a review of this legislation, your organization... will be given every opportunity to present its views on the matter.

• (10:10 p.m.)

At least we might be excused for being somewhat confused when a senior minister of the Crown states boldly that a review is being currently undertaken, when in contrast the first minister indicates that a decision might be reached to initiate such a review. While we cannot accuse these ministers of outright misrepresentation, at the very least I think this indicates another situation where the right hand does not know what the left hand is doing, to coin a phrase.

As a result of this non-premeditated confusion I asked for clarification on January 29, of the President of the Treasury Board, and lo and behold I find another minister is now in on the act, none other than the wheat farmer's friend, the affable Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Lang). It seems now he replies to the Commons for the Public Service Staff Relations Act. I was advised to consort with this minister for clarification—a consortation, I might add, that I did not find at first impulse particularly appealing. But while waiting my turn during the daily athletic, free enterprise session known in the House as the oral question period, a press release from his ministry appeared miraculously on my desk.

This press release, after a suitable and comfortable preamble, indeed confirmed that the Public Service Staff Relations Act is being reviewed. Will there be a public review? The answer is no. Will there be an opportunity for consultation with the affected sections within the service? Again the answer is no.

A three-man group, including some very reputable people, has been named, according to the minister's February 12 press release. This group is to examine written representations and to—get this—report directly and privately to the minister. It is interesting how this government works. If there is some political mileage to be made out of an issue, we have all kinds of very active and interesting operations of the government including a travelling circus, committees, white papers, task forces and so forth. On the other hand, if there is a possibility of real controversy or a possibility that the examination of some government furtive activity might prove embarrassing, the government comes up with a group or a committee to report directly or secretly to the minister.

What the people in the public service really want to know is as follows: What will flow from the group's report to the minister, and will the minister respond to it? At present there is no government commitment to do anything at all about the group's report. MPs want to know, and so does the public service, whether there will be amendments to the Public Service Staff Relations Act.