

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 6, 1969

The house met at 2 p.m.

PRIVILEGE

MR. BURTON—FAILURE TO GIVE REASONS FOR WITHHOLDING INFORMATION IN RETURN RESPECTING DAMP GRAIN

Mr. John Burton (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege affecting all members of the House of Commons. In doing so I wish to make specific reference to a motion for papers moved by myself on March 4 and approved on that date, and tabled in the House of Commons on Friday, May 2. I did not raise this matter yesterday, as transportation difficulties prevented me from returning at the appropriate time.

On March 4 this motion, placed on the order paper by myself and asking for a copy of correspondence between the government of Saskatchewan and the government of Canada with respect to the processing of damp and tough grain in Saskatchewan and the transportation of grain during the period of October 1, 1968 and January 31, 1969 inclusive, was called for consideration. The Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Forest) told the house that this notice of motion was acceptable to the government, subject to the usual reservations concerning privileged papers and authorization of the government authorities concerned. Subject to these reservations or conditions the motion was adopted.

I think all members in this house will recognize that there are privileged papers from time to time which the government may wish to reserve, although there may be disagreement on specific cases from time to time. There is also no question, with respect to correspondence between the government of Canada and other government authorities, that authorization must be obtained for the tabling of such correspondence. However, Mr. Speaker, when these papers were tabled in the House of Commons on May 2 there was no indication whether any documents had been reserved either because they were considered privileged or because authorization had been refused by the other government authority. I have noted this practice on other

motions for papers which I have submitted in this session, and I am certain that the same thing has happened to other members.

The point that I wish to draw to your attention, Mr. Speaker, is that, in my view, members have a right to know whether documents have been reserved for either one of the reasons already noted. I submit that consideration be given to making provision for reporting of this particular matter when papers are tabled in the House of Commons. I hope that the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald) will give this matter his attention in order that the appropriate steps might be initiated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND NATIONAL DEFENCE

Sixth report of standing committee on external affairs and national defence—Mr. Wahn.

IMMIGRATION

ALLEGED SECRET GUIDELINES NEGATING EFFECTIVENESS OF REGULATIONS CONCERNING U.S. DESERTERS—TABLING OF PRESS RELEASE

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I promised the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) that I would table copies of a press release which I issued, and with the leave of the house I should like to do that.

Mr. Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

TRADE

WHEAT—SALE BY FRANCE AT CANTON FAIR—PRESENCE OF CANADIAN REPRESENTATIVE

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Acting Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. May I ask him whether the minister intends today to