

The Address—Mr. Peters

likely to turn out. He did not take the opportunity to play politics, and I think we lost something.

Look around, Mr. Speaker. At this moment there is not a single minister present in the House. Parliament has got to a stage where it does not mean anything. There is one representative of the press in the gallery. He has been there most of the afternoon and if he writes everything he has heard he will not need to come back for a week. I know that the practice of giving speeches to the Press Gallery before they are delivered in the House results in many more press releases. But it does not impress me. It did not impress me in this case, because the Prime Minister was able to use about \$130,000 worth of talent in the writing of that speech. If these men cannot do a good job, the right hon. gentleman can fire them and get another team. It is easy for all those people to write a good speech. As for myself, I am interested in what the Prime Minister thinks. I believe he has something to say. He expresses himself often, and he does it well. I like to see his gestures, because they are expressive of his feelings, as are the distinctive idioms he sometimes uses. In this case, as in others, much that is of value is lost when speeches are read.

I am sorry when an hon. member can see only one side of a question. This afternoon the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie was talking about a serious strike. He told us that 39 radicals were preventing approximately 4,000 people from going to work. Well, the plant in question covers between six and eight blocks; it has at least a dozen gates, probably six of which are in use. The hon. member tried to tell us that for every 100 workers there was one who stopped them, threatening them and their families with violence. He implied they were out smashing everyone's doors. All this was supposed to be the work of 39 men. Mr. Speaker, we do not need an army; we should just have a guerilla force. If the fact is that the Algoma Steel Corporation did write his speech, then he as a lawyer should be prepared to defend it and to see that something is done about a situation that should not be allowed to continue. If this be the fact, of course, then obviously anarchy must reign in that particular town.

• (5:40 p.m.)

I am not here to defend labour, but I am always interested in any charge that is made that a secret ballot at a union meeting should have been conducted. I have probably conducted more strike votes at union meetings

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than any member of this house. As president of a local, any time a member of the union took the floor to demand a secret ballot, I saw that a secret ballot was held. I am sure the same situation exists in every responsible union. If the majority of the membership want a secret ballot, then a secret ballot is held; if the majority do not, then the democratic process comes into operation.

I suggest that to raise the old bogey that the union must have the press in attendance and use disinterested parties to conduct votes is tantamount to my saying to the Rotarians that their membership should hold a secret ballot to decide whether or not they should hold a Christmas parade this year. Democracy just does not work this way. Union decisions must be made by the membership. As I say, if members of a union want a secret ballot, they have only to support the proposition. To give any other impression is to be dishonest.

This raises another problem that concerns the news media. Parliament seems to be becoming less important to the press every day, since the only part of our proceedings to be reported is the question period. The question period creates an odd situation from the point of view of the press. If a particular pressman has any initiative, he can write a speculative story, plant the seed of the story in the mind of a member of parliament and the member can lend it authenticity by putting the question in the house. Then the pressman need only write the story again to produce what almost becomes manufactured news. As soon as the question period is over the house is comparatively deserted.

This brings me to another point that bothers me. It is the change that has taken place in our news media during the last few months or so. I do not have much time to watch television except during a recess, but I do find television to be a tremendous waster of time. For example, both the CTV news and the CBC news seem to consist of a series of little dramatizations which deal with events from coast to coast and across the world. There does not seem to be too much follow-up. These dramatizations do not convey a concise message; rather they are a series of disconnected pictures. Although these pictures are very good and these little vignettes are interesting, what bothers me is that they really fail to deal with the subject under discussion.

Not long ago I watched two programs of topical interest, one dealing with Speed, the other totally divorced from that subject—a program about the heavy water plant in Nova