

*Concurrence in Committee Report*

Because of these difficulties, and because of this growing disenchantment, over the week end I organized a meeting in my own constituency which brought together the representatives of all the neighbouring reservations, some five in number, in a face to face confrontation with officials of the department. As a result of this meeting I can agree with the hon. member for Skeena that our Indian citizens are disappointed, disenchanted and extremely vocal in expressing their opinion of the recent announcements, all of which have tended to support their belief that the white man speaks with a forked tongue. Last Saturday, Mr. Speaker, I listened to complaints which have been re-echoed in this chamber this afternoon. We had Senator Gladstone, the Indian senator, with us. He was able to speak to his people in that part of Canada and try to open channels of communication. I can assure the minister responsible as well as hon. members that more than words are needed in dealing with the problems of our first citizens. We need action. We can no longer proceed on the basis of propaganda which is announced with a great fanfare and publicity and which creates a vacuum of expectations resulting in the sense of disillusionment that now prevails. The sooner we can get this resolution approved and can visit some of these reservations and have face to face contacts with the Indians, the sooner will the problem be resolved. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I heartily endorse the motion.

**Mr. John M. Reid (Kenora-Rainy River):** Mr. Speaker, I did not intend to participate in this brief debate but there is one point I should like to make. There is no doubt that the government is responsible for some of the difficulties in which we find ourselves. With regard to the particular instance with which we are dealing here, the question of the Indian affairs committee visiting the reserves, I should like to submit that there is only one group at fault and that is the members of the committee themselves.

As a member of the committee, Mr. Speaker, I recall when we tried to organize these trips. We were not very successful. The first attempt we made was a meeting with the elected Ontario Indian chiefs in Toronto. The government went so far at that time as to provide an aircraft for our transportation. Six or seven members went, not more. It was only a one day effort.

It is very nice to know that hon. members are now taking renewed interest in the affairs of the department of Indian affairs since it

has run into a certain amount of political hot water, but I would suggest that instead of listening to a lot of the nonsense that has been said here this afternoon hon. members of the committee should take a look at themselves to see what they have done in trying to organize visits by the committee.

As I say, Mr. Speaker, I support this movement. I should like a much more active interest to be taken in Indian affairs, and it seems to me that the people who should take this more active interest are the members of the committee themselves.

**Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming):** Mr. Speaker, I had no intention in becoming involved in this discussion until I heard the last speaker. He is a young member, but I think he should be ashamed of the representations he has made in the last few minutes on behalf of his riding. I say that for the simple reason that he comes from an area where there is a very great problem, as there is in all northern Ontario, in relation to Indian affairs.

● (3:50 p.m.)

I think most members of this house were of the opinion that the new minister was going to do something which had not been done before. We were willing to allow the committee members to make the decision concerning how this problem should be solved. I do not think there is anyone in this house who is not aware of the fact that the agents on the Indian reserves have failed to relate the problems of the Indian to modern society. In some areas the problems of the Indian are handled in such a way that one might think we were still living in the days when the treaties with the Indians were signed.

The young member who just spoke referred to the fact that members of the committee should be criticized because they did not participate in the trips which were outlined. I think it is his responsibility and that of his colleagues on that side of the house to violently protest the operations of the Indian affairs branch and the direction they give. It will be no more apparent to anyone than it is to him that the problems will not be solved for some time, and must be solved by individuals.

**Mr. Reid:** Mr. Speaker, may I ask the hon. member a question? Is the hon. member aware that the committee was not bound by the proposed itinerary which was set out by the Indian affairs branch.

**Mr. Peters:** Yes. I am also aware of the fact that the committee made the decision that