

*Concurrence in Committee Report*

sufficient number of members of that committee who expressed a desire to go on the trip, so it had to be cancelled.

Now, near the end of January, many months after the matter was raised in the committee and a desire was expressed to have meetings of this sort, the committee once again is making a report and a recommendation which in substance repeats the report that was made in June of last year and was pushed to one side by the government. It was superseded by another motion which the government said would better serve the interests of the committee. The report before us now reads in part as follows:

In order to facilitate the implementation of this order—

That is the government order of last July.

—your committee recommends that it be empowered to appoint subcommittees of not less than five members, which will report to the main committee but will enjoy all the other powers which have been granted to the committee.

● (3:20 p.m.)

I submit that there has been an inordinately long delay in the operations of the committee, a committee which has within its grasp the full range of social and economic problems confronting the Indian people. This committee is concerned intimately with the welfare of human beings in this nation, not with something apart from the rights of people.

I think it is a sad commentary on the interest of members of the house, of the committee members and of parliament in general that the legitimate desires of those who wanted to do something worth while, constructive and instructive in the field of Indian affairs could not be met. The Prime Minister made a pronouncement the other day about the business between now and the end of the session. I think his deadline was March 10. If the session is to conclude by March 10 I submit it serves no great purpose to pass this motion because there has been procrastination and the government has been permitted to interfere in the operations of the committee ever since last June, whereas the committee might have been doing something worth while and constructive in looking into these matters during that time.

It is up to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to bring to us something which will put into effect the suggestion he made on May 19. The minister suggested a form of continuing committee, as he put it. I submit this is what we must now do by legislation or otherwise. We must give

authority to the Indian affairs committee to establish itself in such a way that it will be in continuous existence and operation. It should be a committee whose roving commission extends beyond the end of a session because we know that, under the present rules, once the session prorogues that is the end of committees for the time being and we have to start again.

I want to say also that last June the committee members, having passed the motion recommending the necessity of establishing subcommittees, desirous of and anticipating the opportunity to travel to Indian communities for the first time in the history of Canada, acting in good faith and thinking that this would be one way to make an incisive inquiry into Indian affairs, to become acquainted with the Indian people and their problems in different parts of the nation, gave only a passing scrutiny to the estimates of the Indian affairs branch with the understanding that they would have the opportunity to visit Indian communities and meet the Indians there. The committee gave a scanty examination to the estimates. In common with other committee members I also scantily examined the estimates. We felt that the motion that committee had passed in mid-June asking for authority to set up subcommittees would be agreed to. In fact, information was given to us that the government had supported that concept.

Then on July 13 we found that was not so but that there was another motion involving the full committee. The consequence was that the desires the committee had expressed last June were stifled. Now, many months later, an attempt is finally being made to try to undo the damage the government did to that committee and get back to the situation in which we were last June.

I submit that mere passage of the motion, with the time available to us between now and the end of the session, will give the committee members and those interested in the matter not much time to make any sort of examination in depth or to search out some of the crucial difficulties existing in Indian affairs. Believe me, Mr. Speaker, they are many. I do not want to go into the concern of Indian people with respect to the activities of the Indian affairs branch, but there is a growing insistence by the native people that they run their own affairs. The hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Barnett) has just shown me a newspaper clipping indicating that the Indian band at Alert Bay, not having had an