

Concurrence in Committee Report

member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) has been trying to find out either from officials or all the other witnesses, the exact meaning of the word "bank", and what the minister means by "banking". Surely, the repeated inquiries of the hon. members for Edmonton West and Kamloops (Mr. Fulton) and those of others, with respect to the meaning of the words "bank" and "banking", have been brought to the attention of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp); but the hon. minister has yet to attend a sitting of the committee, even though this is probably one of the most important bills to be presented this year, if not the most important since he was appointed Minister of Finance. Are they going to tell me that the minister is interested in the committee?

The committee is trying to study, to analyse and to vote on the legislation proposed by the minister who does not even attend the sittings. If the minister does not come to the committee sittings, how can you ask the hon. members to be interested, when the one mostly concerned, that is the Minister of Finance, does not even attend? The minister has not yet attended one sitting of the finance, trade and economic affairs committee when we are studying his bill to amend the Bank Act, which, in my opinion, is probably the most important that the Minister of Finance will ever present during his career.

Mr. Speaker, obviously one does not have to look very far to realize the stagnation in which the committees are floundering. Why have the committees floundered into stagnation? It is first, because the ministers are not concerned about the committees, are not concerned about the legislation they send to the committees, and also because there is a whole group of members who try and protect the bills in the absence of the minister rather than work out measures acceptable to everyone and accepted by all.

Furthermore, there is another committee problem. At the present time, the government—and I am not afraid to accuse the government, the house leader, the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) and the whip of the Liberal party—practises a discrimination and an intolerable injustice, in a so-called democratic country, against the hon. member for Sherbrooke and myself.

[*English*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. If the hon. member for Cartier speaks now he will close the debate.

[Mr. Grégoire.]

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I think at the outset we must agree that the number of our committees is too large, as a consequence of which it is difficult at times to obtain a quorum. In respect of the situation now under discussion, it was impossible to obtain a quorum to make these trips. As just pointed out by the hon. member for Brandon-Souris, one reason for these trips not being made is that many members of the Indian affairs committee are also members of the northern affairs committee, and at the time these trips were to be made the northern affairs committee was slated to make a trip to the northern part of Canada.

The fact that these trips did not take place is a reflection on the members of all parties in this house. Perhaps the reason they did not take place can be related to the fact that they were not glamour trips. Had they been trips to Paris, France. I am sure we would have had no difficulty in getting a quorum. Members on all sides of the house were not interested in making these trips, and that is the fact of the matter.

I am amazed that the hon. member for Skeena should raise this issue in the forceful manner he did today. He is the hon. member I have found it most difficult to get to attend steering committee meetings. When he attended those meetings he always apologized for being late. It is just as much the duty of a member of a steering committee to see that a committee functions as it is of any other member. The hon. member never raised this matter at a steering committee meeting or at a full committee meeting. He waited until there was a full press gallery before raising this in the manner he did.

Let me inform the hon. member for Skeena that I have bent over backward to please him on every single occasion we met. The fact that these trips did not take place can be directly related to the fact that he could not attend. If some of the trips did not occur, it was because he could not come. We wanted everybody on that committee to come. It is shocking that the hon. member should stand up here and make the kind of spectacle that he made of himself this afternoon.

● (4:10 p.m.)

An hon. Member: He was looking for headlines.

Mr. Klein: But we have come to expect that from that section of the house, which must now be recognized as the angry old men.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.