

The Address—Mr. Kindt

a long time, and members opposite have perhaps inherited it. If these committees are to work properly, those who sit on them must be given something constructive to do. It is not enough merely to try to keep them busy.

There is a feeling among frontbenchers, none of whom is present to hear me—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Kindt: I am talking about frontbenchers, there is not one of them here. They are very good at handing down rules for backbenchers to follow. But they never sit on these committees.

Mr. Winkler: They never show up.

Mr. Kindt: When they do attend committee meetings they come to instruct backbenchers, not to receive advice. This is what has been happening ever since I became a member of this house, regardless of the party in power. This is the problem which must be faced if the weaknesses of the committee set-up are to be corrected. They will not be solved simply by putting television cameras into committees in an effort to ensure attendance, relying on the effect of letters from constituents, and so on.

As far as I am concerned I would be delighted to have television in committees.

Mr. Orange: Colour?

Mr. Kindt: Anything. As far as I am concerned it would be a good thing. But the principle of putting television in committees in order to attract attendance is a false one. It was inherent in the statement of the Prime Minister.

An hon. Member: When?

Mr. Kindt: Those members opposite who laugh are just types who will never do anything to contribute in any way toward improving the procedures of the house.

I served on the committee dealing with Indian affairs and northern development. We held meetings. Let me say, first of all, that every one of these committees has a preponderance of Liberals on it. All they do is pop up to support the minister and his policy. As far as the work of the committee is concerned, this is absolutely useless. If anyone cares to contradict what I have said I should like to hear him do so.

Mr. Choquette: Right now?

[Mr. Kindt.]

Mr. Kindt: I say that the committees simply do not operate effectively as they are at present set up. They do not work in a way which allows people who are elected members of parliament to be men among men. Members on the back seats over on the other side can snigger and try to poke fun, it does not disturb me one bit, because I just consider where it comes from. I take it as I would a kick from a mule, and say the poor brute does not know any better.

Mr. O'Keefe: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Kindt: I shall be glad to answer questions when I am finished.

The front benchers of the Liberal party make decisions as to what backbenchers shall do. They expect backbenchers to sit on these committees. After all, that is why the committees were set up—to give hon. members something to do and make them happy. This purpose has certainly not been accomplished. The members on these committees are not happy, otherwise they would attend meetings and it would not be necessary for the Liberal whip to telephone government supporters in an effort to get them there, and then wait half an hour for the meeting to begin—and then, often, without a quorum. There is something fundamentally wrong.

Committees of this house lack basic, fundamental authority and this weakens the work of parliament. To correct this weakness a way must be found of giving to the people's representatives a role of importance to play; regardless of whether they sit on the front or on the back benches of this house an opportunity must be given for their thoughts to find their way into legislation. As things are now, the committees are not functioning effectively. Hon. gentlemen opposite intend to resort to television in an effort to make them function. Isn't that stupid? Is that not typical of a decision made by someone on the front bench who does not even sit on committees?

Mr. Schreyer: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Kindt: After I have finished I should be glad to answer all questions.

I have said before that if and when television is introduced into committees it will be necessary to appoint a schedule man to set up these various meetings at different times.

An hon. Member: That's it.