

*Concurrence in Committee Report***INDIAN AFFAIRS, HUMAN RIGHTS AND
CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION****CONCURRENCE IN FOURTH REPORT OF
STANDING COMMITTEE**

Mr. Milton L. Klein (Cartier) moved:

That the fourth report of the standing committee on Indian affairs, human rights and citizenship and immigration, presented to the house on Thursday, January 26, 1967, be concurred in.

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): This motion, Mr. Speaker, gives us an opportunity to draw to the attention of the house something which I think is not good both in so far as this particular committee and committees in general are concerned. In order to give effect to a decision of the house made in July of last year, this report asks that certain actions be taken with respect to the operations of the committee. I want to point out some of the proceedings that have taken place with respect to this committee in relation to its desire to visit Indian communities. I am not the least bit happy about most of the things that have taken place.

It may well be that the house will want to make a different kind of decision with regard to the motion before us, and accordingly, I think we should look at the record of the committee. On May 19 last the committee met and heard an opening presentation by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. At that meeting I suggested, and I quote from the committee proceedings, page 11:

—by establishing a subcommittee and requesting permission of the house to visit these native people in their homes and villages to find out, at first hand their various problems.

The minister was quite amenable to that suggestion, except in a larger context, and he made reference to it on page 13 of the committee report as follows:

—I want to comment on Mr. Howard's suggestion. I do not think that I would be wrong in telling you that a suggestion has already been made to us along a parallel line of something in the nature of a continuing committee to do just this thing.

Farther down the page he is reported as saying:

But a continuing committee to make a check here and a check there, Mr. Chairman, I think has tremendous merit.

The committee proceeded along until June 16 of last year when it made a report to the house. I think this report is worth quoting

[Mr. Churchill.]

because it indicates the desire and intention of the committee last summer:

Your committee recommends:

(1) That it be granted leave to resolve itself into three subcommittees composed of seven members each, to be named by the chairman in consultation with the subcommittee on agenda and procedure, for the purpose of obtaining further information relating to matters affecting Indians and living conditions of Indian communities, and so report from time to time to the house through the main committee.

(2) That these subcommittee be granted leave to sit while the house is sitting when meeting outside the precincts of parliament and to sit notwithstanding any adjournment of the house—

I do not know what happened to that report, but the first thing we knew the government came along with a substitute motion. Somehow or other this substitute motion was imposed upon the legitimate desire of the committee to break into subcommittees and another order of reference was passed on July 13. This order of reference, conceived somewhere in the back room, I submit, made no mention whatever of subcommittees. Instead it authorized the committee itself to adjourn from place to place for the purpose of obtaining information.

We went from July 13 until November 18 before there was a possibility of the committee even meeting to decide to what extent it was going to visit the Indian communities. This meeting did not come about even then until a question was asked in the house as to when the committee was going to meet to consider these matters. The committee met on November 18 but there was not even a quorum, not even enough interest amongst members of the committee to try to work out something practical.

Subsequently there was a meeting on November 22. At that meeting, as members who were present will recall, an itinerary was presented. This itinerary was either developed by someone who did not know the first thing about Indian affairs or did not want the committee to make an in depth examination of the problems of the Indians. The itinerary, to which I objected as did other members of the committee, was a brush-fire operation. It involved the spending of an hour here and an hour there in Indian communities except for one visit to the Indian community of Caughnawaga. In any event, the committee went ahead and endorsed the idea of that particular visit, even though most of the time would be spent in travelling and little time in meeting the people. However, there was not a