

Concurrence in Committee Report

minister has in mind. On a number of occasions in this house the minister has outlined some proposals which I thought were very useful. I was pleased about the support he gave members of the committee when they wished to break up into groups so they could go out and spend two or three days mingling with the Indian people on the reservations in order to find out from the Indians who are not necessarily members of the council what problems they have. The hope was that in this way they would have an opportunity to get to know these people and hear about their problems at first hand. I approve of the support the minister gave to this suggestion.

● (4:00 p.m.)

I now am surprised to find that this has not been brought to fruition, and rather that the committee now is asking for permission to do something which they had permission to do back in June. It is time we faced up to our responsibilities and insisted that the Indian affairs branch must not dictate to the committee, but that the committee should have a free hand to draw up its own agenda and decide what steps should be taken to make conditions more palatable for our Indian population across Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Grégoire (Lapointe): Mr. Speaker, I should like to say a few words on the motion now before us.

Judging the remarks we have just heard, it is quite clear that the whole committee system does not seem to work. In fact, after 12 and even 13 months of this session, we have not yet succeeded in organizing this committee. I have also noted that on all sides, the main complaint is that too many committees are sitting and that members are sitting on too many committees.

I just heard the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Aiken) say a while ago that he is sitting on five or six committees.

Not so long ago the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (Mr. Allmand) also admitted that he was a member of five or six committees, so that he was unable to attend them all which of course keeps them from having a quorum. I admit that the members who were chosen to sit on various committees have the required experience and competence to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I should also like to point out that two members do not sit on any committee. Complaints are made that too many committees sit simultaneously and that it is difficult to have a quorum. Well, I remind the house that the member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Allard) and myself do not sit on any committee, that we are systematically deprived, voluntarily and deliberately, of membership on any committee of the house whatsoever. The house is faced with some problems but let it not complain about it for it has only itself to blame for that because it refuses to accept two members who want to do some committee work, as they have shown and proved in the past.

Mr. Speaker, we attend committee sittings and we question and seek information. For my part, while I am not a member, and while I cannot help make a quorum, which is not even reached at the committee on finance, trade and economic affairs, nevertheless I attend the sittings and ask questions. This is surely evidence of a member's eagerness to do his job and the same is true for the hon. member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Allard). While the other members are all complaining that there are too many committees sitting simultaneously, the hon. member for Sherbrooke and I are denied any participation in committee work; in my opinion, we are victims of systematic discrimination.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the main problem with regard to committees—if their work poses a problem—is that they are badly organized and that no effort is made to appoint those who can serve and are interested in doing so. People are named simply so as to make up the total number of members, and therefore I think the hon. member for Ville-neuve (Mr. Caouette) was right when he said over the week end that almost half the members of this house are no more than rubber stamps.

Mr. Speaker, I should like to call your attention to another point. I feel that committees do not serve their purpose, precisely because the ministers concerned have no interest in them. A while ago members of the New Democratic Party made very appropriate interventions, showing their concern for problems relating to Indians and Eskimos. One would wonder if the minister himself is as much concerned as the other hon. members.

Here is a typical example to illustrate what I am saying. Ever since the committee on finance, trade and economic affairs began consideration of Bill No. C-222, the hon.