

*Transport and Communications*

**Mr. Benjamin:** I have not, yet; but I would not be surprised if there will be such occasions during the time I serve as a member of parliament. If the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce will listen carefully, I will repeat what I just said. I said that government members on the back benches have this last chance, and if they do not at least try to prevent what is now happening in this house they can go back to being supine ciphers. I did not say they are that now. I think a large number of them, particularly the new members in the government back benches, are conscientious and have been doing an excellent job in this chamber and in our committees. There are many who want to continue doing so and are capable of doing so. They can try to prevent this happening, or go back to what they used to be. I think this is common knowledge. For too many years back bench members—I will use the phrase again—were supine ciphers whose role was to be and do as they were told. There was the rare exception, and those exceptions are not here any more.

If this amendment is carried, if the new members of parliament in particular in all corners of this house do not raise hell about it in whatever hours remain in this debate, we will all suffer; this parliament will suffer. The tragedy is that our fellow Canadians outside this parliament will say: Those fellows talked a good fight when they were running for office, but were not there very long before they went back to their old ways.

I hope that my colleagues from all parties in the house will rise in their places and state views that, if not in complete agreement with mine will at least be along similar lines. I hope they will cast the same warnings that I have tried to cast in these remarks.

**Mr. John Lundrigan (Gander-Twillingate):** Mr. Speaker, I still think I was not hearing correctly a little earlier this afternoon when the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (Mr. Allmand) stood in his place and made the remarks he did. I still think he was trying to be funny, because I am sure if he were serious he would not have made the statements he did. It is the first time since I have been in parliament, as a neophyte—I admit I am a rookie member of parliament—that I have heard a member in the Liberal ranks stand up and criticize his own members, his own chairman and the mechanism which has been set up by the Liberal government for the conducting of business in this house. I can hardly believe it, and I still think that before

the debate is over he will stand up and say he was just trying to be funny and was not serious at all.

Perhaps he was being coached by the house leader. In that sense, of course, he has an excellent coach. Perhaps in that sense he reflected the feelings of the house leader. He voted complete lack of confidence in his committee chairman. I have not known the committee chairman for the 20 years in which he has been an outstanding member of this house, but in the short time I have been here I have grown to respect and like him.

As I say, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce stood in his place and voted complete lack of confidence in his own member, in his own committee and in the other members who were in attendance that evening. At that time almost a full slate of members of the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications arrived at a unanimous decision.

● (5:50 p.m.)

The committee, of course, had a very successful trip down east. I should like to say that I have heard many comments from members of the house and, from people in the area as a result of this visit, expressing the hope that the trip would be successful and that good work would result from this visit. However, I am beginning to wonder just how valuable the work was if this is the kind of attitude with which we will have to contend. I wonder now if it would not have been better to have used the money to build a monument to the C.N.R. rather than to continue in the way we are proceeding.

When I came to Ottawa to take my seat here I was under the impression, and I am beginning to wonder now if I was correct, that parliament occupied a supreme position in the hierarchy of Canadian power when it came to decision making. I was under the impression that parliament was omnipotent. I was also under the impression that the Canadian Transport Commission was a creature of parliament; that it had been set up by parliament to do a particular job, and that it was supposed to answer to parliament for the work it did. I was further under the impression that the railway committee of the Canadian Transport Commission had certain powers to make recommendations about railway work, and finally that the C.N.R. was a Crown corporation. But having listened to the debate in the last couple of weeks, and particularly in the last couple of days, I am beginning to wonder if there has not been a