

Transport and Communications

What is most appalling about the whole thing is that they have now connived—I am referring especially to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald)—to cover up the murder trail. They have in essence killed the “Bullet” and are now trying to cover up the murder trail.

Mr. Alexander: They are trying to kill the opposition.

Mr. Carter: Having been beaten during sittings of a committee, they have created a series of events which I believe have seriously undermined the basis of all the reforms of rules and procedures of this house. The government's argument in bringing in the sweeping reforms was that public business would be more effectively and more efficiently dealt with if more of the work of the house were placed on the shoulders of committees. But this could only hold true so long as every member of this house believed the committees would function fairly and openly, without pressure from the government. Bullying of committee chairmen, hiding the real intent of committee proceedings and regimentation of government members on committees has made a mockery of the committee system.

If this sort of thing continues and if the government can simply tailor the business of every house committee to suit its own whims, what is the use of our committee system? Not only has this government conspired with the Canadian Transport Commission and the Canadian National Railways to kill the “Bullet”, what is much worse is that it appears to have killed house reform and the committee system as well. It seems obvious to me that this government has become so arrogant that it cannot tolerate even a slight reverse in one meeting of a committee which has been set up according to our committee system. If this is to continue we might just as well pack up, go home and let the government, the government house leader and the Prime Minister rule by decree. This naked exposure of dictatorial power is shocking. It is so completely out of proportion to anything warranted by the circumstances that it makes one wonder how this government would act on major issues. This government's action of twisting facts and doctoring records in this case is like using a sledge hammer to kill a fly.

• (8:40 p.m.)

The story of Newfoundland's rail passenger service and the determination of the people of Newfoundland to retain that service is well known to this house, and indeed to all

[Mr. Carter.]

Canadians. I do not think government members can overlook the fact that, as my colleague for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) has pointed out, the Newfoundland legislature, speaking as it does for the people of Newfoundland, has adopted a resolution to the effect that the decision to abandon the rail passenger service be deferred for at least two years. That is the wish of the Newfoundland people, the wish of the rail unions in Newfoundland and of pretty well all people in all walks of life. But the government, the Canadian Transport Commission and Canadian National have decided that the wishes of the Newfoundland people in this regard must be ignored.

I might remind hon. members that 20 years ago today 300,000 Newfoundlanders became Canadians.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Carter: I hope, as do all the people of Newfoundland, that the rest of Canada and my hon. friends opposite will never regret having joined us in 1949, because we were glad to have them. But it is strange that on this the 20th anniversary of our joining Canada, or of Canada joining us, the six members from Newfoundland should be required to stand in their place in this parliament and fight for that which we feel is our right, namely the continuation of the rail passenger service in our province. This is a shame.

I am wondering what we have to do in this regard. The Newfoundland people are unanimous in their opposition to the plan of Canadian National, and of this government, to abandon our rail passenger service. The Newfoundland legislature is opposed to it. The unions are opposed to it. As I have already said, people in every walk of life have opposed it.

Despite this, the house leader appears to be obsessed with destroying that which we feel is rightfully ours. It is not hard to understand why this obsession exists. I charge the government house leader with being vindictive because his party did not fare too well in Newfoundland on June 25. I suggest that this is his, and his government's way of getting even.

Motions were made in the transport committee that were adopted and approved by the committee. The committee visited Newfoundland to hear evidence from people from all walks of life. The committee came back to Ottawa and pretty well unanimously agreed that the decision to abandon the railway be