

Transport and Communications

to the committee system, or to the committee itself, is ill-founded. If we are to have a report which really represents the knowledge and feelings of those who went to Newfoundland, we must send this report back to the committee. How can hon. members of the opposition say that this report represents the feelings of the committee when so many who went to Newfoundland and studied the question were not in the committee the day the report was adopted? Opposition members are trying to sneak through a report which really does not represent the feelings of the majority of the committee.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member permit a question? I just want to be sure that I understood him. Is he telling me that a unanimous report of a committee does not represent the views of the majority of the committee?

Mr. Allmand: I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that the report, even if it is unanimous, does not represent the opinion of those who went to study the problem in Newfoundland and the maritimes, because unfortunately a large percentage of the members of the committee were not there the day the report was adopted in the committee.

Mr. Benjamin: That is not the committee's fault.

Mr. Allmand: If it is not the committee's fault, do not try to say that the report represents the opinion of those who were in Newfoundland. It does not represent their opinion.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member permit a question? I know he would not want to mislead the house and leave the wrong impression on the record. However, the hon. member is speaking erroneously as to what took place the night the committee drafted the report. He was not there and consequently he is not in a position to speak authoritatively on what took place. In point of fact, the night the report was prepared nine Liberal members were present and those nine members had accompanied the committee on its tour of the Atlantic provinces.

Mr. Allmand: I understand that is not so, Mr. Speaker. In any case, I do not think that is the question. The point was made that under our new committee system we give great weight to reports of committees. I agree with that. I think we should give great weight

[Mr. Allmand.]

to the reports of committees. But I am concerned with the weight of argument and the facts contained in the report. We expect a good report to come from a committee. When a report comes from a committee, it is for parliament in the final analysis to decide upon those things which the report suggests. Parliament is not obliged to accept any report from a committee. Because there are so many committees we can serve on perhaps only two or three, and there are many important issues with which we cannot deal. As a result we leave it to a committee to study certain things in depth, and when they bring back a report we expect it to be well founded and to contain solid arguments from the committee's point of view.

In this particular case, as one who made the study in Newfoundland I find this report is very poor in its second recommendation because it suggests that we violate the principle of not making recommendations to a board, to a court of record, on matters which it has under its jurisdiction. My observations in Newfoundland lead me to say that from a transportation point of view the majority of the people are better served by the bus service than by the train service. The train service operated only three times a week. The bus service operates not only every day but has two trans-island and several local services every day. This service gives the people of Newfoundland a much wider variety of alternatives and a much better and faster schedule going from one end of Newfoundland to the other.

If this were a country of unlimited resources and could afford to continue the railway service even though very few people were using it, I would be all for it; I would say that we should continue the passenger rail service even though the majority of Newfoundlanders were not using it. But when we went before the people of Newfoundland they told us that their highest priority in transportation was trunk roads. If we are to use our resources in Newfoundland to the best of our ability, we cannot continue to support all modes of transportation when some are not being used by the public and are operating at great loss. We have to concentrate our transportation resources in those areas to which the government of Newfoundland gives highest priority, and it gives highest priority to the road service.

In my opinion, the only people who would be hurt by the discontinuance of the rail passenger service are the men who work on the railway. I suggest that in their case something