

Transport and Communications

heard evidence it was, in effect, providing for an appeal from the decision of the Canadian Transport Commission with reference to passenger service in the province of Newfoundland carried out by the Canadian National Railways but abrogated as of a certain date, namely, April 5, following an order of the C.T.C. This is what the report of the committee purported to do. As any group of persons might do it was seeking an appeal from this decision. On these two grounds I submit that both the arguments put forward by the President of the Privy Council are completely invalid.

A word, now, on the subject of the work of committees generally and of the Transport Committee in particular. When the new rules were introduced into this house I believe the public in general and, indeed, most hon. members, had high hopes for the committee system under the new arrangements. Some of us had misgivings as to the way in which these committees might operate, first, because all of them except one had a government member as chairman—the notable exception being the Public Accounts Committee—and, second, because all the committees had a majority of government members sitting on them. For these reasons a number of us felt misgivings about the way in which the committees would perform and whether they would work as effectively as was hoped. It was certainly made clear as far as the study of spending estimates was concerned that the work of the opposition parties in the house would be done by these new committees. The fears to which I have referred, namely, that the committees would not be able to carry out their work properly have now been realized, though, as is often the case in parliament and elsewhere, not in the way which had been expected.

I should like to make a few remarks on the subject of the Transport Committee in particular, in connection with which I have had certain responsibilities. I should also like to make some reference to the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence. It is true that the Transport Committee has been faced with certain problems, but I should like to make it clear that as far as I and my hon. friends are concerned we do not put the blame for these difficulties on either of the chairmen who have presided over that committee up to now or, indeed, on any of the government members of the committee. So far as we are concerned the hon. member for LaSalle (Mr. Lessard) and the

[Mr. Nesbitt.]

hon. member for Manicougan (Mr. Blouin) conducted themselves in the most exemplary manner. I think they did very good work indeed. As for the government members of the committee and, indeed, all members of the committee, they worked very hard and very seriously and did their work objectively as far as I was able to observe. With the exception of one or two occasions which were not the fault of anyone within the committee itself, committee members did their work in a sincere, hardworking manner and with a minimum of partisan politics. I believe I can say this without fear of contradiction.

I believe the Transport Committee would never have experienced some of the problems it encountered on one or two occasions had it not been for outside interference by, it would appear, on one occasion—and certainly it is the case on this occasion—the leader of the house.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Oxford has just uttered a falsehood. He said that on a previous occasion there had been interference on my part. The Committee on Privileges and Elections clearly established that I had nothing to do with the proceedings of the Transport Committee, and this was acknowledged by all the members of that committee, including members of his own party. I hope he will withdraw the insinuation that I attempted to control the committee at that time.

Mr. McGrath: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. A question of privilege has been raised by the President of the Privy Council and I take it the hon. member for Oxford was about to respond.

Mr. Nesbitt: I was just about to comment, Mr. Speaker. As I understand it, no report from the Committee on Privileges and Elections has yet been approved by the house. The subject was dealt with by that committee to some extent, of course, but as far as I know—and I was a member of the committee—the report has not been concurred in unanimously at all.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): It was concurred in by the committee.

Mr. Nesbitt: There may have been a committee report but it certainly was not unanimous. I am speaking from memory at the moment. In any event, it seems that the