

Transport and Communications

amendment to the motion before the house. What the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce is doing, in effect, is moving an amendment to an amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The position taken by the Chair earlier was that in light of the objections taken by members of the opposition the original amendment was held defective and therefore was disallowed. The hon. member has moved an amendment and I understand that if I put the amendment now I take the floor from him. Since he wishes to continue his remarks I will put the amendment when he has concluded.

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Speaker, in addition to putting forward the amendment to amend the report I also want to make some remarks on the matter itself.

With all due respect to the hon. members for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), Oxford (Mr. Nesbitt) and Moose Jaw (Mr. Skoberg), I completely disagree with some of the points they make. When the President of the Privy Council rose to speak this afternoon, he pointed out that we had set up the Canadian Transport Commission in the last parliament to do certain jobs. One of these jobs was to take under advisement applications for the abandonment of rail and rail passenger service.

At that time I was a member of the transport committee and I recall we discussed the bill at great length. When it was voted on it was supported by the Conservative party, the New Democratic party and the Creditiste party. All parties in the house in the last parliament supported the idea of setting up a commission, which was a continuation of the board of transport commissioners, to deal with matters such as this so that we could take them out of the political arena. If we accepted what is being put forward today in this report, we would be accepting the general principle that even although parliament had set up boards to do certain jobs in a non-political way parliament still has the right to give directions and make recommendations to such boards when questions are under consideration.

Let me apply this principle to other boards that parliament has set up to do particular jobs. I refer to the Canada Labour Relations Board, the Tax Appeal Board and many others. They were set up to do certain tasks that parliament did not want to do itself and because parliament thought that the interests

[Mr. McGrath.]

of the Canadian people would be better served by them being done in this way.

If members of parliament either in committee or in the house were to make recommendations to a board while a matter was under consideration by that board, indicating which way parliament thought the board should rule on the question, it would be a travesty of parliament's own decision to set up the board in the first place. As the President of the Privy Council said this afternoon, we would be attempting to do by resolution something different from what we had already done by statute. In the last parliament we set up a commission by statute to do this job, and I think we should let it do it.

It has been said that there is an appeal provision in the Railway Act that was amended in the last parliament whereby decisions of the Canadian Transport Commission can be reviewed. It is very significant that no appeal was made by persons or groups in Newfoundland against the decision of the Canadian Transport Commission to discontinue the Newfoundland rail passenger service. Yesterday I believe the hon. member for St. John's East said that he and five other Conservative members of the house did make an appeal. If that is so, then theirs was the only appeal.

I should now like to turn to the arguments that were put forward by the hon. member for Oxford and the hon. member for Moose Jaw. First of all, the hon. member for Oxford suggested that in making this report the committee was, in effect, making an appeal. I submit that is nonsense. Nowhere in the report is it suggested that we are making an appeal to the Governor in Council. Nowhere in the debate leading up to the adoption of the report was it suggested we were making an appeal. What the hon. member is trying to do is to rationalize a bad report.

In addition, the hon. member for Moose Jaw said that when people came before the committee in Newfoundland and recommended that the passenger service be continued they thought they were making an appeal. That is incorrect. I was on that committee during the tour and I pointed out to them that there was an appeal in law, that if they wished to make an appeal they had to do so to the Governor in Council.

Mr. Skoberg: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Moose Jaw on a point of order.