

Transport and Communications

Ottawa to save time and money. There was nothing wrong with the purpose and intent of the trip, but where we failed was in inadequate notification to the people concerned that we genuinely wanted to hear what their problems were.

● (9:50 p.m.)

Frankly, I do not think we have done a good enough job even on the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications, which is a pretty good committee. That committee did an insufficient job in giving advance notice of its sittings. It may well be that the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (Mr. Allmand) is perfectly right; perhaps the committee should not have bothered sitting at one or two sites because there were, so few people to appear before it. But that is not the fault of the people there; a good deal of that is our fault. That is no reason for opposing the trip in the first place.

I say we should do a better job in getting ready for the trip, because only then will we have a better response from the people concerned. If we tell the taxpayers where we are going, they will be glad to see us and will not object to how much money the trip costs. Only then will parliamentary committees make heard their voice and play the proper role this chamber has given them.

Mr. Grant Deachman (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, I must say that I do not find myself in agreement with the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (Mr. Allmand). I find much good sense in what the hon. member for Regina Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin) has just said about travelling committees. Perhaps one of the best things we have done in the House in recent years is evolve a new role for committees in which they carry the dialogue between the people and Parliament outside this chamber to the people, to where they can see us in action and talk to us while we are doing our work. I think the more we do of that, the better. I believe we have made mistakes and will make mistakes as we evolve this new role, as the hon. member for Regina Lake Centre said. He pointed out some of the mistakes we have made. But that should not deter us from carrying out this role and from learning to do it better.

One of the things we must learn to master is how not to proliferate those endless records which are ground to pulp, sent back to Hull, made into newsprint and utilized again in the printing of enormous records. We must learn

[Mr. Benjamin.]

not to proliferate them; we must keep track of the enormous records produced when our committees travel. But, it is not right to say that in travelling our committees are not performing a significant function. I think it is one of the most vital things we have done and is one of the most lively things that the House, which is often considered dead in modern terms, is learning to do.

Mr. Thomas M. Bell (Saint John-Lancaster): Mr. Speaker, I am tempted to hold up this measure because I feel that the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (Mr. Allmand) is neither so Simon pure nor as sanctimonious as he tries to pretend. If we look at the record—and I have not had a chance to get in touch with our members on the appropriate committees—I think it will be found that the hon. member has taken a few trips himself. I know he was at the United Nations during the past session. I therefore do not think he is so pure as Simon that he can criticize hon. members on either side of the House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Bell: However, the House Leader has done a good job and for the first time in a long while there is a spirit of comradeship and well-being among the members of different parties. I should hate to spoil the government's program by holding up this legislation, even though tempted to do so.

The hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) has made clear our position. In that light perhaps in future we shall have to examine some proposed committee trips. I recall at one time the Committee on Privileges and Elections went off on a wild goose chase. Some members of our party objected to that. I understand the committee came back to Ottawa and did not complete the trip because it was felt the whole thing was useless and without purpose. With that reservation about the sanctimoniousness of the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, we give this motion our approval.

Mr. Allmand: I rise on a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker. I want to make clear that I was not opposing in principle the idea that committees should travel. I merely felt that in some cases they are travelling a bit too much and I thought we should examine the matter more closely.