

*Transport and Communications*

● (2:30 p.m.)

It recommended to the house that this action be taken, until the committee set up to investigate all transportation had an opportunity to hear those witnesses. This was concluded only a short while ago. I would respectfully ask, Mr. Speaker, that the motion now before us be put after which time I am sure many members will take part in the discussion.

**Mr. John Lundrigan (Gander-Twillingate):** Mr. Speaker, basically the point I wanted to make has been made. Perhaps the specific reference has not been drawn to the reason for the report being made, in committee, in the first place. The reason for the standing committee making a report was that a creature of the government had made a decision to abandon the rail service. The only appeal from that decision is through parliament and the Governor in Council.

Section 53 of the Railway Act specifically indicates that the Governor in Council may vary or rescind a decision of that body. I think, Mr. Speaker, there has been a tremendous misrepresentation here today as to exactly how the decision was made. There has been no decision made by parliament: The decision was made by a creature of parliament. We as a committee are asking parliament to exercise its right to rescind this kind of decision, and to act in its supreme capacity as being representative of all peoples of Canada. The only appeal is to parliament, and this is the reason for the almost unanimous recommendation from the railway committee.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière):** Mr. Speaker, we have already experienced a similar situation—and I want to point it out very briefly—with regard to the same committee on transport and communications and an objection raised by same minister, namely the President of the Privy Council and the government house leader (Mr. Macdonald).

The matter had then be referred to the committee on privileges and elections. Here is what it was about. According to some, a recommendation which should have been in the committee report was not there. There followed a storm in a tea-cup and the question was referred to the committee on privileges and elections.

There were long hours of discussion; time was wasted and it was stated afterwards: The chairman of the committee on transport and

[Mr. Skoberg.]

communications is an excellent member of parliament; he did a fine job and he is not at all guilty.

I want at the outset to pay him this tribute, Mr. Speaker.

Today, the opposite is happening. I remember that when we discussed the recommendation missing in the report of the committee on transport and communications, the President of the Privy Council rose and expressed the point of view of the government. He even took a decision, assuming a right that was not his. As a result, the members of the committee on privileges and elections were much embarrassed by the statements made earlier in the house by the President of the Privy Council.

I believe the situation is similar today, and we cannot stand for it, since the President of the Privy Council would like the house to reject a report that is not even before the house.

I think the President of the Privy Council is once more assuming a right he does not have, in order to undermine the independence of committees, to impede their work and, in short, to deprive them of the possibility of studying a matter in depth. He tends to dictate his opinions to them.

Mr. Speaker, I say this is sheer intervention from the government and I think the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) raised this point earlier in a very able manner.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I think we should discuss the matter, and then the report of the committee should be tabled so that we could finally examine it. In my opinion, the President of the Privy Council should not be allowed to dictate to the house his interventionist and autocratic rules.

[*English*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order please. Hon. members in the course of this procedural debate have referred to May and to other authorities, and have quoted sections of a number of statutes, which of course are not before the Chair at the present time.

As I had indicated in the first instance, it would be my intention to study *Hansard*, and the contributions made to the debate. Later on, at the first opportunity, I will express an opinion and make a ruling in connection with the several points raised by hon. members. I would feel in any event it might not be appropriate at this time to put the motion for debate. In view of the fact that today is an