

Transport and Communications

have given to this matter previously. What is important is not the political scuffling in this particular case, but rather that whatever is done must be done in order, and be a sound precedent. Your ruling in this case will be of considerable importance in regulating committee procedures hereafter.

Mr. Speaker: I would not like to limit discussion on the point, but I have listened to the arguments raised by the President of the Privy Council and the point raised by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) and the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). It may help hon. members in their decision as to whether they should pursue the matter further if I say I am rather impressed by the arguments of the hon. member for Peace River and the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. At the same time I know this is a matter of interest to hon. members who are members of the committee.

I wonder whether any useful purpose would be served by pursuing the matter on procedural grounds. I already heard the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Lundrigan) when he expressed his views last week.

I am not sure there is any point in pursuing the matter further.

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): I wish to make a few remarks in relation to this matter. I am more constrained now to do so, having heard the remarks of the President of the Privy Council. I will be brief.

I beg your indulgence to bear with me for a moment in order that I may refer to the fact that it is appropriate that we are discussing this matter today. The point of order raised by the President of the Privy Council is an objection to the contents of the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications. It objects to that part of the report which deals with the committee's recommendation asking that the decision of the C.T.C. with regard to rail passenger service in Newfoundland be held in abeyance until after April 15. This would enable the committee to make its final recommendation to the house. It is appropriate, Mr. Speaker, because today is the twentieth anniversary of Newfoundland entering Confederation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. McGrath: I thank hon. members for their very kind response to that remark. Once again I extend to the Minister of Transport

(Mr. Hellyer) and his colleagues a general invitation to come to Newfoundland and enjoy the benefits and comforts of a ride across that province, on the *Newfie Bullet*. When reminding the President of the Privy Council that today is the twentieth anniversary of Newfoundland entering Confederation, I also remind him that tomorrow is April Fool's Day. It is probably true he needs no reminder of that fact.

Since last fall the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications has been very involved in discussions with regard to this matter. The second report of the committee, which has already been referred to, was the subject matter of some dispute in this house. On December 10 last I raised a question of privilege in relation thereto and Your Honour ruled that there was a prima facie case, and this was referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections. The third report of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections is still on the order paper and the subject matter of debate in this house.

If the President of the Privy Council in his capacity as house leader had acceded to our request to bring this matter forward for debate, we would not be in this position today.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I must interrupt the hon. member and ask him to follow the fine example of other hon. members who have taken part in the debate up until now, and have limited their contributions to the procedural aspect of the question, in order that the Chair may give a decision.

The hon. member must realize the report is not before the house at the present time. The motion has not been moved. The only point at issue is whether the Chair will allow the motion to be put. There is no reason why we should go into the historical background of this report. I would think the hon. member should refer to the three points which I asked hon. members to consider, and advise the Chair. If he will do this I will be in a better position to give a judgment later this afternoon.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, I was just about to deal with the first part of your ruling. At no time was there a suggestion during the course of the committee hearings that this matter was sub judice. It was not suggested during the discussion leading up to the second report of the transport committee when the subject matter of the C.T.C.'s decision regarding Newfoundland rail transportation was discussed. There was no suggestion