

Defence Production Act

power of the members and the members of the government party. They have become docile with the urge to follow. They are under the dictation of the ministers, and those who sit in seats of authority. It has not been difficult for supporters of the government party to assume that parliament feels the same way, or for them to reach the assumption that parliament is something that is very unreal, that parliament cannot act quickly, or that in parliament there is too much discussion and too much debate. We have seen this taking place in the House of Commons on those many occasions when the government party has been unwilling to give us the information we want.

They go ahead with the management of the country and, of course, they have been given the authority to do so. But in what they have done there has been a growing tendency to disregard the functions of parliament, to disregard the rights and precepts and the institution of parliament. And with this going on it has required only a step farther to disregard the rights of the people. In bringing in this measure one cannot help feeling that there has been this lack of regard. It has been brought in at a time when, it is agreed, there is no great or immediate emergency or one likely to arise. It is agreed, of course, that we are living in dangerous times, in times when we must take measures to protect ourselves, build our defences to the level they should be, and keep them there.

But this whole idea of bringing in a bill so vast, so sweeping, so undetermined in its terms and meaning, a bill that reaches far down into the economic life of the people, is something to which parliament must give serious thought. It is something we must discuss. And, in addition to all these sweeping powers, it is indicated that the minister wants to make the legislation permanent, so that these things can be done at all times and under all circumstances.

That we are reaching a normal state of life is borne out by the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent). It is clear that we are moving into better times; and the fact that we are in a more conciliatory mood toward other parts of the world, and that they regard us in a similar fashion, is borne out by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Pearson).

But despite all this, despite the economic set-up in the country and in industry, the government insists upon retaining these powers, and that it retain compulsion and dictatorship, if I may use that expression, over industry itself. That is the issue we are debating and that we must consider.

I shall not discuss the bill in detail, because there has been considerable discussion as to its provisions, involving the right of law and the extent to which it goes. But I would like to speak briefly and to take the long view as to the far-reaching effects of the bill on the economic life of the people in this country. I would like to point out how the bill affects industry and its rights, and how it affects its future development.

The more I read the speech of the Minister of Defence Production (Mr. Howe) on June 28, the more I read into the meaning of this bill, and how ominous might be its effects. If one looks into the minister's explanation on June 28, when he discussed the bill in an explanatory fashion, and pointed out what he wanted and what he considered was necessary, that portion of his remarks which impressed me—and I am sure every other hon. member—was his statement that when he listened to the debate, and to what opposition members have to say about the bill, he felt himself in another world.

It is clear from what the minister has said that when we have been debating the freedom of parliament, the rights of parliament, the question of whether or not the representatives of the people should have the right to say what is taking place in the country, and when we have been debating the very principles of our constitution, involving our rights and privileges in parliament, and the rights of members sent here by their constituents to take part in debate, the right hon. minister says that he thinks we are in another world. It sounds to him as though we are debating the problems of another world, problems that, to his mind, are entirely irrelevant. He suggests that we are talking about subjects beyond the provisions in the bill and that do not affect the issue before the house.

If the minister feels that in this debate we have been in another world, then I must say we feel he has been in another world, particularly when he brings in a bill of this kind asking for powers so extensive, so far-reaching and so deeply affecting the economic life of the country. Not only does it affect the economic life but it also affects the social and every other phase of our life, because these cannot be divided.

Mr. Speaker, may I call it one o'clock?

At one o'clock the house took recess.

The house resumed at 2.30 p.m.

Miss Bennett: At the time that we arrived at the noon recess, Mr. Speaker, I had begun to make some remarks regarding the economic