

*Defence Production Act*

**Mr. Drew:** What has happened to the hon. member? Has he been thinking too much in the meantime? Why, as a matter of fact the hon. member for Dauphin could have gone further and given the minister words that I am sure he repeats over and over again, even if he does not know they come from Shakespeare. I am certain the hon. member repeats these words of Shakespeare: "How long must I endure all this?"

Yes, Mr. Speaker, a strange change has come over the socialists at this stage; but my hope would be that even they might return to an inquiring mood, and that even they might recall that they did question the omniscience of the Minister of Defence Production, and that even they compared him to a Colossus bestride the world. Of course that would fit in with his own description. Nevertheless I would hope they would resume their inquiry, because there are powers in this act which, quite apart from the opportunity of establishing a set plan for our economy, would also make it possible to go very far in dealing with the freedom of the individual. I know the minister has said that this does not affect the individual, but that is merely one of the careless statements made by the minister throughout the various remarks that he has placed before us.

Now, it does obviously appear to be necessary to recall what is before this house for consideration. I think it was very simply stated in words that are succinct and appropriate. I quote:

The argument is simply whether he—

That is, the minister.

—should be required to take the trouble normally expected of a minister in a free country and have these powers reasonably defined by parliament. What Mr. Howe's bill gives are not the powers that might be needed to produce new aircraft or do any other specific, foreseeable job; they are powers so sweeping as to be almost undefined, and they are asked for indefinitely.

Mr. Speaker, is that quotation an exaggeration? If it is not, then it contains the very nub of our argument. It is from an editorial in the *Winnipeg Free Press* of June 30. The quotation states exactly the proposition we put forward in March. It states the proposition we have put forward in our amendment. And since so much time has elapsed since that amendment was moved, I should think it appropriate that I read what it says. This is the resolution we are now debating by way of amendment:

That Bill No. 256, an act to amend the Defence Production Act, be not now read a second time, but that the subject matter thereof be referred to the standing committee on banking and commerce with instructions that they have power to examine and report upon the advisability of

[Mr. Fleming.]

(a) placing the Department of Defence Production on a permanent basis and conferring on the department such powers as ought to be of a continuing nature; and

(b) conferring for a period of one year, or until extended by parliament, such additional powers as may be strictly necessary in the light of the existing world conditions.

There, Mr. Speaker, is our resolution; that is the resolution we are now debating. Let nobody make a statement outside this house that any new proposal is being made, when there is a suggestion before us that the act be continued as part of our legislation and that the powers, appropriately redefined and circumscribed in accordance with the assurance of the government, also be continued subject to review.

That is our proposition. If that proposition is acceptable, then let the government say so, in this House of Commons and not behind closed doors. If there is anything in these rumours going around the corridors about negotiations leading to a termination of this debate, based upon these proposals, then let them be stated here. After all, this is parliament. This is the place where the people's representatives have the right to know what is being considered. If the government is in fact following the course it should follow in wisdom, then let us know it and this debate will end.

Do not let it be suggested by the government that this amendment cannot be supported because it constitutes a want of confidence motion. That statement is so silly that I hope it will not be repeated. Over and over again this and other governments have stated that they would accept a motion by the opposition. The very acceptance of the motion ends the possibility of a want of confidence motion. The moment the Prime Minister rose in his seat and said "After due consideration we believe it advisable that we do exactly what we said we would do in 1951, set up a Department of Defence Production but limit the powers within proper confines"—the moment he said that, and indicated the willingness of the government to support a motion which sets out that very proposition, then obviously members of his party would be voting confidence in the government and not a lack of confidence, if they supported the motion.

So I hope there will be no suggestion that there is any artificial barrier in the way of the government doing the very thing that rumour tells us has been under discussion, though in no way put before me as Leader of the Opposition.

There is another thing to which I would like to refer. In the long-awaited speech of