

Emergency Powers Act

40 minutes we heard the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra say that the government had used these extraordinary powers to the detriment of the country, that the country was in danger through their having such powers. The passing of an order in council licensing air pilots would not put the country in a strait-jacket. These powers are to protect the country should an emergency arise.

Mr. Ross (Souris): That is what happened in Boissevain last fall.

Mr. Sinnott: We will take care of Boissevain when the times comes.

An hon. Member: Do not get in the line of fire.

Mr. Sinnott: When a railway strike was threatened a few weeks ago these emergency powers would have come in very handy. We had one part of the economy of the country going down with another part coming up. These labourers were asking for extraordinary things and the government has the power to restrict their actions. We say that, with the Prime Minister that we have in office, the people of the country are not the least bit concerned about these powers the opposition are talking about so much. I say once again that I shall support this legislation.

Mr. Green: Will the minister explain what orders in council would collapse if this legislation were not renewed for a further period of one year. During the debate in 1952 the Prime Minister listed the 19 orders in council which were in effect at that time under the act and pointed out that some were to be replaced by legislation. During the course of the debate this year the Minister of Justice listed 5 orders in council which presumably had been passed since the Prime Minister spoke in 1952. But it is not clear yet what orders remain in existence at the present time and would lapse if this act were not extended for a further period.

Mr. Garson: Speaking generally, I would say that the ones concerning which questions would arise would be the series relating to the great lakes seamen's regulations and those relating to pilots and radio operators. There may have been one or two others.

Mr. Green: In effect the government is asking that this act be extended for a further year in order to retain regulations covering merchant seamen on the great lakes, and the licensing under the Radio Act.

Mr. Garson: It is the licensing of radio operators and pilots from the security standpoint.

Mr. Green: I believe that one type of licence is granted under the Radio Act and the other under the Aeronautics Act.

[Mr. Sinnott.]

Mr. Garson: As I explained when I was dealing with the resolution itself, this is a question of security. It is a question of applying to the great lakes seamen, to pilots and to radio operators the same kind of security procedures as are applicable to civil servants to avoid the disclosure of information, sabotage, espionage and the like.

The renewal of this legislation, as my hon. friend correctly apprehends, will support the continuing validity of those orders in council, but it would be quite wrong to suppose that that is the main purpose or the only purpose of the legislation. The main purpose is to provide the government in an emergency of apprehended war with certain powers which it may use without recourse to parliament. For example, if a war were to occur in Europe overnight, immediate action would be required with regard to—

Mr. Diefenbaker: Could you not do it under the War Measures Act?

Mr. Garson: With regard to the very matter which the hon. member for Lake Centre was discussing, it might become necessary to route troops and you would have to have some overriding power for that purpose because otherwise you might be met with the suggestion that the necessary and contemplated action could not be taken.

The hon. member for Lake Centre has interjected that it might be done under the War Measures Act. It may have been the infirmity of my language, but I thought I had made it clear that the Prime Minister had said when the emergency legislation was brought in in 1951 that for a number of reasons it was considered desirable that we should not in a state of cold war which might be fairly protracted, I think "indeterminate period" were the words used, use legislation which would convey the impression to our people that war was inevitable.

It was for the purpose of avoiding the much wider provisions of the War Measures Act that this government came to parliament with legislation which was approved at that time by the Leader of the Opposition and which asked in express terms for certain specific powers.

The government not only asked for those powers but said when they were asking for them: We do not, in the exercise of these powers, wish to take away from the jurisdiction of parliament over the actions of the government. When parliament is sitting, as my hon. friend knows and as happened here today, every action of every department of the government is open to questioning on the orders of the day and by written questions on the order paper. When we move to