

Emergencies Act

the national Parliament and by the provinces and territories so that the ability to act quickly and call upon all sectors of the community to assist is there in place at all times.

It does not matter whether the Government leaves the part of the Bill in place regarding natural disasters or strengthens the emergency measures legislation, the fact is that we as a country are still not equipped to deal with an emergency, anyway. I hope the debate on this legislation and the discussion in committee will help to persuade the national Government and the provincial Governments to further enhance and strengthen the resources they have to deal with in emergencies of this kind. That includes, I submit, additional training for our Armed Forces so that they not only know how to handle guns, tanks, planes and ships, but will know how to put a city back together, be it to fix the sewer and water systems or establish a hospital. They should be prepared to deal with the electrical power distribution system, the direction of traffic and looking after refugees, the homeless. We, would always have that kind of training, resources and equipment to help in case of some disaster in our own country, and what makes it so worthwhile is that should we be called upon to assist in the event of another earthquake in Nicaragua, or Mexico, Yugoslavia or anywhere else in the world, we could send people there who had the equipment and know how to be of even better help than they are at the moment.

It is not enough just to have a law that allows a national Government to declare an emergency of a public welfare nature. Unless we have facilities and resources in which to carry out the requirements of the law and the regulations that will come thereafter, all we are doing is making symbolic gestures. This will cost a lot of money, but it seems to me it would be money well spent. That part of the Bill which the Government can invoke in the event of a national strike of something that is considered an essential public service should be deleted.

There is also the heading of "Public Order Emergency"; I think not only of the Winnipeg general strike of 1919 but of the Estevan strike and the Regina riot. People who were peacefully dissenting were victimized by a government which I can only say over-reacted in a paranoid fashion. If there is one thing we must guard against in this legislation it is that kind of paranoia; looking under the bed all the time for a Commie, a Bolshevik or whatever is uppermost in the minds of those who happen to be governing at the moment.

● (1620)

There are some measures in the Bill which I like. I have spent my time on the items in it that I do not like. I hope that the committee and the Government will address them and correct them as I have outlined.

[Translation]

Mr. Prud'homme: Madam Speaker, I am not sure I will take an active part in the debate this afternoon, but I would like to make a few comments. As a Member who experienced those

tragic events that affected our lives as Canadians, Quebecers and residents of Montreal, I read and especially listened very carefully to yesterday afternoon's proceedings. Yesterday and the day before, I had the privilege of attending festivities in honour of a visit to Canada by the Armenian *Katholikos* from Soviet Armenia, who received an enthusiastic welcome in Montreal. He was suppose to visit Parliament, but unfortunately, he was not well enough to come to Ottawa. So I was in Montreal, and this is just by way of explaining to my constituents why I was not in Ottawa. I attended the festivities, Monday night and last night until three o'clock this morning, but in my office I could not help watching what was going on in the House of Commons, and I heard a few speeches which quite frankly astonished me.

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): Glued to your television set!

Mr. Prud'homme: Yes indeed, but you may have something else to say when I finish.

I was particularly interested in some speeches by Hon. Members of the New Democratic Party, and especially some of their statements in French.

Madam Speaker, it is always easy to judge history with today's hindsight. After the fact we can do no wrong, we are perfect, we can make sweeping moral judgments and we are always right. This is more or less what our NDP friends wanted to do with a message that was obviously directed to the people of Quebec—that is why I will make my statement in French. What they said was more or less that the New Democratic Party knew what it was all about in 1970. And this despite the fact that 88 percent of Canadians—it's true—were asking the Government to do something, and despite the impact these events had on me personally—anyone who is interested can read my speech—and the impact on our Quebec caucus. It also had an impact on our national caucus. We were divided on what should be done, and in the light of the information we had—that is the important point: Did we have all the information? That is another chapter I hope we will be able to write someday. However, in the light of the information we had at the time, we thought it was our duty, unfortunately, to vote in favour of a measure we found abhorrent. I found it abhorrent to have to vote in favour of the War Measures Act. I more or less said so in my speech at the time. And I think that trying to woo Quebecers by saying that a certain political party had virtue on its side from the word go is stretching the truth somewhat. It is a tarted-up version of the facts, because I have a clear memory of those important events. In fact, they say I still have an excellent memory for the important things in life. I remember that the party that today is trying to woo Quebecers was divided as well and that four Members of the New Democratic Party, and that is what Hon. Members forgot to tell us yesterday, four Members, including one as illustrious as the Members in the House today, and I am referring to Dr. Saltzman. Everybody always liked Dr. Saltzman. He was a distinguished, and a great parliamentarian.