

Emergencies Act

This Bill will enable the police in this country to play their proper role. I remember the testimony of various representatives of police corps in Canada who appeared before the Committee and told us: This Bill will really let us do the work we are paid to do. All the groups we met, including civil rights groups, believe this is a good Bill and that it provides the kind of legislation we expect as citizens of a free country like Canada.

However, I was somewhat disappointed in the lack of participation by my Liberal colleagues. I would have liked to see them take a more active part, as did my colleagues of the New Democratic Party and the Conservative Party, in drafting this Bill. This is a non-partisan Bill. This is a Bill that really meets Canadians' expectations. I was quite disappointed with the Liberals' participation in this Bill.

My party still proposed 35 amendments to this Bill, which were adopted. The NDP proposed 61, and 48 were associated with our amendments, and we agreed to make a Bill that really satisfied the expectations of all the interested parties we met.

We heard 22 witnesses and 15 Hon. Members took part on the legislative committee. It is a great credit to all those people who gave a great deal of time to analyse and study a difficult piece of legislation. It is not easy to pass a Bill that is meant to protect people but that limits some freedoms in times of crisis.

But for the first time, we have an Emergency Measures Bill for periods of crisis where the citizen who feels his rights have been violated can appeal, seek compensation and submit the decisions rendered to a review committee. Canadians will even be able to take the Government to court if that they think their rights have been violated or that the Government has abused its powers. I do not know so many countries on earth that have such a broad piece of legislation that protects so many citizens as the one tabled in the House for third reading today. I hope that it will be passed quickly, because Quebecers and Japanese Canadians whose rights were violated expect it, as do all those Canadians, men and women, who were wronged by the former War Measures Act.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for letting me speak today and tell Canadians that I am proud that this Bill was tabled today for third reading. This Bill in fact reflects Canada and the fairness that this Parliament, this government, really want to show to all Canadian citizens in this country.

• (1250)

[*English*]

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate, in particular, the Hon. Member for Brant (Mr. Blackburn) who certainly performed heroics in getting some 41 amendments to Bill C-77, the Emergencies Act. I wish to say to the Hon. Member, through you, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Canada owe a debt to his insight and persistence in participating in this, and to those members on the committee from the government side who participated in rolling up their sleeves and tackling an issue

that has been a most controversial one in modern Canadian history.

I was not an elected Member of the House at the time, but I certainly was a candidate in the wings. I remember when the New Democratic Party stood up and voted against the imposition of the War Measures Act. You could not give New Democrats away around this country, Mr. Speaker. There was this great upswell that the then Prime Minister, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, represented everything that was right in the Canadian psyche, that he was acting with the best interests of Canada at heart, that he was acting with a considerable amount of insight and depth about the FLQ problem in Quebec. There was this upswing and support within the communities, and within my community, that somehow or another the New Democrats were less than patriotic in their opposition to something that was so obviously correct, the imposition of the War Measures Act. We opposed the imposition of the War Measures Act.

Mr. Caccia: You approved it on first reading.

Mr. Rodriguez: There were 16 members of this caucus who stood up and voted against the imposition of the War Measures Act. I remember receiving many phone calls from people who felt that the New Democrats were not patriotic in doing that. I recall at that time our Leader, Tommy Douglas, put forward the argument that I regurgitated to our supporters in the area, that he had met with the Prime Minister and there was no information the Prime Minister gave him that would lead him to be convinced that other Acts could not have been used, for example, the Criminal Code. Mr. Douglas was not persuaded that there was a situation of apprehended insurrection. As history has unfolded, history has absolved the New Democrats and the position that they took at that time.

Mr. Caccia: With the benefit of hindsight. How about Pierre Laporte?

Mr. Rodriguez: In fact, even after the imposition of the War Measures Act, and now we come to 1988 and we finally have a Bill that goes a long way to correcting what was essentially a very Lucy-goosey kind of law at that time. For example, it does not state that there are not certain emergencies where the Government needs the power to do certain things. This Bill clearly defines what that national emergency is. In defining that, it clearly points out in Clause 3 that the Government must go through all the laws of the land, and the various codes to ensure that what it has to do cannot be done under those particular codes. It is only after the Government has gone through that process that it can then declare an emergency. It is only then that the Government can take steps under this Emergencies Act.

It seems to me that we all remember Pierre Trudeau as some great proponent of human rights.

Mr. Caccia: He was.