

*Defence Production Act*

party in power in this house. The press has always held a very honourable and a very rightful position in this nation. They are the ones who give guidance. They are the ones who, to a great extent, interpret what is being said in this house; what is being felt across this country. Therefore, when we see these editorials appearing, we cannot help but feel that the people of this country are listening to this debate. They are interested in this debate. They realize the grave issues, and they are grave issues. Let us make no mistake about it. They realize that issues are at hand, issues are being discussed and principles are at stake.

These principles have arisen out of our attitude of mind over a period of years. We cannot help but assimilate some of the attitudes of mind that are prevalent in the world today. This very discussion that we are having in this house actually has arisen out of an assimilation by the people of Canada and their representatives of these new feelings and these new philosophies that are abroad, and which have come to us from other parts of the world. Not only do we see these editorials, not only do we know that the press is voicing its opinion and saying what it thinks is right, but many members who go to their constituencies over the week end are hearing expressions of opinion. Some of us who have these smaller constituencies and have the privilege of walking down village streets, town streets and even cities, of visiting on the back concession lines, find the people are asking questions.

They say, what are you doing down there in Ottawa? What is taking place? What is this debate about, and what is this question of extending this Defence Production Act? What is this question about giving these great undefined powers, for actually they are undefined. We do not know how far they may impinge upon the economic life of this nation. They are asking why, what is this all about? They say, we think the minister has gone too far this time. We do not believe these things should be. This thing is not right. We are living in a free country. A government should not have these powers now that we have moved over into something approaching peacetime. I do not say for one moment that we do not live in dangerous times, because we do. As I said before, dangerous times have become normal. Really, we have to consider the whole thing from that standpoint. They say we do not want anything that has the appearance of compulsion. We do not want anything that leads us to ultimately arrive at any form of dictatorship in any phase of our lives.

[Miss Bennett.]

So the people in the cities, in the towns, in the villages and along the concession lines have come to know the problem. There is no need to go into all these points that have been argued. They have been argued with great brilliance. Yesterday they were argued by my leader in a most able, magnificent and monumental manner. The whole principle relating to this act was explicitly set out and dealt with. The people of this country know full well what the issues are. Let us make no mistake about that. I venture to say that those members sitting opposite, who have not risen to say anything about this principle but only interject at various times, are deeply concerned about this thing. I have no doubt they are deeply concerned because they go home to their constituencies. They are cognizant of what is being said, and the thoughts that are being expressed. I am sure that if we could get an expression of opinion such as we should have—because if they think this thing is right they should explain to the people of this country why this thing is right—then we would be able to make our decisions and the people of this country would be able to make their decisions. The very fact that they remain silent about the whole thing is almost certain evidence that they cannot go along and do not approve of the extreme powers that are being asked in this act by the minister.

If we are to honestly decide about this act, if we are to honestly review it from every standpoint, if we are to consider and know whether it is a good act or a bad act, a proper act or one that should be on the statute books of this country, we have to look back to the source from which this act comes. We have to look back to the type of thinking that has been forthcoming during the years, and the type of thinking that would propound and introduce such an act at this particular time. It is easy to understand that when we are in an actual war or an emergency, an act of this kind should be passed. We have no quarrel with that. We still believe in that. We are still willing to give these great powers if they are needed, and if they are necessary.

But what is the background? What is the type of thinking on the part of the government that they would introduce this bill and ask that these powers be extended indefinitely? Over the years a great change has been taking place in this country, and it has been evidenced by the party in power. They have been in power a great many years. Right here in this house we have seen the rise of the power of the ministry; we have seen the rise in the power of the cabinet, and analogous to it we have seen a recession in the