

Emergency Powers Act

keep the people satisfied and help them to get through this period. Especially let us be careful not to get men who have personal axes to grind. I am afraid that the experience of world war II was such as to make some of us a little bit afraid that there are still some men with axes to grind in Canada who would love to secure positions as directors on these boards. I should think that the Prime Minister and the government would feel much encouraged by the unanimity in the house on the principle of the resolution now before us. It ought to be an encouragement for them to go forward and do a good job, and we expect that they will.

Mr. Donald M. Fleming (Eglinton): Mr. Speaker, so much of the discussion in this debate concerning the anti-inflation fight has centred on one particular method of meeting the problem that I feel impelled to enter the debate in the hope of setting the problem in perspective as I see it. We have not yet seen the bill foreshadowed in the resolution. For my part I think there is very grave likelihood that a debate of this kind in anticipation of the bill may not be too profitable. It is very likely to become a rather doctrinaire debate. It may be too that the bill will contain some surprises. For my part I am interested in seeing it, examining it, and particularly in studying the safeguards that it may contain.

Let me say at once that, having regard to the existence of a very grave state of emergency, an international emergency as it has been called in the remarks of the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) and others, the necessity of some such measure as the one foreshadowed in the resolution is, I think, acknowledged. Nevertheless the powers proposed to be vested in the governor in council by the bill must be examined with care in relation to their proposed use, the intended manner of exercise of them, and the extent and nature of the emergency. It seems to me this is a time when parliament must exercise and observe its duty of vigilance, recognizing, of course, that if we are in the twilight of war we must be prepared to take measures commensurate with the emergency.

Today the Prime Minister has very properly put aside the War Measures Act as a vehicle for meeting the present situation. I am sure that all hon. members will approve the course he has proposed and also his reasons for it. There are, of course, other reasons that the Prime Minister might have assigned because it is perfectly obvious that no one holding the views which the Prime Minister has expressed on several occasions could possibly invoke the War Measures Act. As you will recall, that act permits the issue of a proclamation by His Majesty under

authority of the governor in council in the event of war or apprehension of war, invasion or insurrection. It is quite obvious that if the Prime Minister still does not expect to see war in his lifetime—and we hope he is right; we all share that hope most earnestly—or if he is still quoting odds of fifty to one against war in his lifetime, then there is no apprehension of war that would justify the present government in invoking the War Measures Act.

Mr. St. Laurent: On a point of order, does the hon. member think that is a fair way of putting it—still quoting odds of fifty to one against war in his lifetime? I do not think that is worthy of the hon. member.

Mr. Fleming: I will readily say to the Prime Minister, as the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew) said to him in the debate on the address, that I am quite certain more has been made of the Prime Minister's remarks than he ever intended.

Mr. St. Laurent: The hon. member knows I never made any such remark as fifty to one against war in my lifetime.

Mr. Fleming: What the Prime Minister did was to accept odds that were being mentioned to him at the time, and which were apparently understood by those who were questioning him in that way, and certainly by those who reported the observation of the Prime Minister. I have said that we share the hope the Prime Minister has expressed. We all share the hope that he will not see war in his lifetime. That is the earnest prayer of us all. I think I have made that perfectly clear. If there is apprehension of war the War Measures Act could be invoked. The house will welcome the assertion by the Prime Minister of the intention of the government not to use the War Measures Act to meet the present situation.

On the subject of the existence of an emergency the house has heard some statements from the government that have been somewhat belated but are received now as some recognition of reality. I have not forgotten the occasion in the special session of last September when I found it impossible to get from two senior members of the cabinet any expression of opinion on the question whether or not a state of emergency existed. I tried to get an expression of opinion from the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe) but he was too coy to answer such a question. He turned it over to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson) who declined to answer, and there we had the situation as it existed last September.

What is the subject matter of the bill? The discussion today, including the statement of the Prime Minister, has treated it as relating