

*Defence of Canada Regulations*

Mr. J. G. DIEFENBAKER (Lake Centre): As a new member, rising to speak here for the first time in debate, I cannot but admit how impressed I was by the concluding words of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lapointe). He pointed out that in this house, as throughout the country, forbearance should be shown, that we should recognize the fact that each of us is individually trying to contribute something irrespective of any divisions that there may be among us. I think that was a proper stand to take and with it I entirely agree, as do all other members of this house. Each of us is trying to contribute something; and from this side of the house, in what we have to say or in the criticisms we have to make, I ask the government to recognize the fact that we too are trying to do what we can to further and not, as was suggested this afternoon, to sabotage the war effort. Our attitude in this time of national danger is the attitude that was exemplified this afternoon when all the members of this house stood up in one of the most inspiring scenes that I have ever witnessed, showing the solidarity of this country.

I would not have risen on this occasion were it not for the fact that I have been placed upon the committee of the house which is charged with the consideration of the defence of Canada regulations. Since the outbreak of war various orders in council have been passed dealing with such matters as the treatment of aliens, the safeguarding of information and the prevention of sabotage. As I understand it, the committee will be charged with two duties. It will consider whether or not the regulations require to be amended, and what alterations must be made by reason of changing conditions; and with that will be coupled a consideration of the question whether or not those regulations which are to-day in effect have been properly enforced.

I realize that, as the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) said the other day, there has been a considerable change in public opinion since the outbreak of war, particularly in relation to the defence of Canada regulations. At the beginning there were some, and there are some to-day, who challenge these regulations on the ground that they abrogate the rights of free men. In particular there is the criticism that they take away the almost inalienable rights of British subjects, the rights of habeas corpus and certiorari, and are thus the negation of democracy. My answer to that is that national safety is of paramount importance over private rights. These rights have not been lost; they are held in abeyance until victory is attained.

[Mr. E. Lapointe.]

Their abrogation is required in the interest of the safety of the state. These rights will return to the people of this dominion when victory is won. To those who criticize the defence of Canada regulations as taking away the liberty of the subject, I say, better have the rights remain in abeyance than lose them altogether if Hitler should win.

To-day public opinion is aroused, and as the Minister of Justice has said, reasons are urged why certain people should be proceeded against. We can understand why public opinion is aroused. In recent days Canada has been invaded, as directly as though the enemy were on our own shores, by the capture of that portion of France upon which rests the Vimy memorial, soil which was deeded to the Dominion of Canada. We know what defeat would mean. In the ledger of nazism there is no credit side; there is nothing but debits, pagan brutality, the destruction of those things that are nearest and dearest to us, our liberties entirely taken from us. For that reason people are aroused.

The experience of other countries has shown the result of the subversive activities of nazi sympathizers; in Austria, Norway, in Holland and Belgium, the same course is pursued—conquest following a ghastly programme of the honeycombing of the national fabric by treasonable propaganda from within. To-day the general feeling is that subversive activities in this dominion, whether they be nazi or communist or fascist, must be curbed if not altogether extirpated. The people of Canada feel that the trade of treachery and of traitors, the undermining of the country from within, must be made dangerous for those who engage in it. Yesterday afternoon the hon. member for Parry Sound (Mr. Slaughter) made the suggestion that in certain cases the death penalty should be enforced, in particular in the matter of subversive activities leading to sabotage. In Great Britain they have had to adopt such a penalty. For certain classes of people it becomes necessary in order to deter them from acts of sabotage. To-day we realize that eternal vigilance is the price of public safety. The administration of such an act as the defence of Canada regulations, as was so eloquently pointed out by the Minister of Justice, must be characterized by sound judgment and understanding. There must be prosecution; there shall not be persecution, the minister said. To-day in the shadow of the passing of a great Canadian, the late Hon. Norman Rogers, the message that his sealed lips never delivered is one which in my opinion epitomizes in true measure the principle for the enforcement of war-time measures. These words are from the report of the speech he was to have delivered: