

Emergency Powers Act

The next thing I wish to read from Mr. Smith is this, at page 87:

Just what has happened? We read in the newspapers that when Mrs. Woikjn, the lady who came from Blaine Lake in Saskatchewan, appeared before the magistrate she was quite distracted and greatly disturbed, and endeavoured to plead guilty. I do not know Magistrate Strike but he must be an awfully good chap, because he refused to accept that plea. That was the physical and mental condition of this woman after having gone through experiences which I can perhaps better imagine than speak about. I am not going to use my imagination, but I have some idea of the things that run through the minds of people who are incarcerated in lonely silence.

And here is the last thing I wish to read:

May I close by saying just this. It is true that we have had this commission. It is true that persons have been suspected of crime because, as the Prime Minister indicated, the documents pointed to them. It is true that they have been brought before the commission without warning, without protection, without an opportunity to see their families or to get legal advice. In six months, Mr. Speaker, this spy scare will be forgotten. Unfortunately our people are a bit too apathetic about matters of this kind. But I say to you, sir, that during your lifetime and mine the people of this country will always regret and will never live down the fact that we threw aside and abrogated the rights and liberties of our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I have thought it right to read those excerpts because I feel earnestly that—although happily there are some signs of public awakening—the public have grown apathetic to these things. I think they should be reminded of exactly what has happened and, as I say, what has been done by men who were prepared to say, just as is the Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson): “Look at us, see the kind of men we are, and don’t be afraid to hand us power.”

Mr. Speaker, I conclude by saying that I think the government has all the power it needs. It has the Defence Production Act, with the wide powers that I have attempted briefly to indicate. It has in reserve—if the terrible emergency really comes—the War Measures Act, and in the meantime it has parliament. I do not think there is any need for anything else. In my opinion no valid reason has been given.

I feel disappointed that we are asked to pass this measure again. Perhaps the best one can say is that if this legislation is forced down our throats again, we at least have the satisfaction of believing that we have made some impression on public opinion. I hope it will go on spreading with a kind of chain reaction until the public wakes up to the realities of this thing.

Mr. M. J. Coldwell (Rosetown-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, may I say to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson) that I think this debate would have been considerably shorter had he not

[Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood).]

risen this afternoon and made a rather provocative speech. He said he had to make a speech because otherwise he could not reply; but I believe the very fact that he moved the second reading of the bill would have been sufficient to give him a right to reply. I think the speech he made when he initiated this afternoon’s debate could have been made perhaps at its conclusion, if he wished to make it.

Mr. MacInnis: Or not at all.

Mr. Coldwell: Yes, or not at all; but if he wished to make it, I think it could have been made at the conclusion of the debate. In that way I think the business of the house would have been facilitated. I am not one given to lecturing other people, because I know my own failings at times. But I do say this. The ministers who have been most successful in the past in getting their estimates and their bills through were the ministers who were least provocative in introducing their measures. I mentioned Mr. Motherwell the other afternoon. He comes back to my mind in that connection. When Mr. Motherwell was dealing with his estimates, hon. members used to come down in the house looking forward to a rather pleasant afternoon, because in the pleasantest possible way he would talk about everything under the sun except the matters in his estimates, and he would get them through more rapidly than would any other minister in the cabinet. I remember this distinctly. I think it is not a bad bit of advice for one to give a minister at the present time.

We are opposing this measure at this time, as the minister stated this afternoon. We are not doing it because we feel that, as a minority, we should have, in 1951 or 1952, imposed our will upon the majority or upon the government. I think we have a right to give our support to a measure because we believe that measure is going to be used in a manner in which we expect it to be used. Equally we have a right to withdraw our support when we see, after the experience of several years, that the measure has not been used as we anticipated it would be used.

We anticipated—and indeed we believed in 1951 that this was largely implied in the remarks in support of the bill from the government side of the house—that it would be used to protect the people of this country from the rising prices of foodstuffs and other commodities and particularly in relation to sky-rocketing rents which were then beginning to afflict the people of Canada and which have risen much more since that time. For those reasons we gave our support initially to this measure. Because our hopes