

Defence Production Act

It just does not relate to the practical situation as we have it before us at the present time.

If the situation worsens, and if greater powers are required by the Minister of Defence Production and by the government generally, they can be readily secured. Some of us regret the fact that parliament is in session for over half the year, but at times we have sat here for nearly the full 12 months, with just short breaks in between. Parliament would be available the greater portion of the time; and in case the situation worsened, or in case there was apprehension that it would worsen, parliament could readily give these powers. If parliament happened to be out of session it could be called together within a very short time to grant these powers. There is nothing in the argument that these things are necessary for the security of the country.

As I pointed out, the minister has all these powers anyway until July, 1956. If the worst happens, if what the minister was referring to a moment ago happens and a hydrogen bomb is dropped on this country by any unfortunate chance—

Mr. Dickey: It would not be by any chance.

Mr. Harkness:—the fact that the minister had or had not these powers would not have anything to do with it. If that sort of thing happened it would happen rapidly; and if it did happen the War Measures Act would come immediately into force. Therefore from that point of view there is no argument as to the necessity for these powers at the present time, in a period of comparative peace.

I think it really comes down to this, that there is no real need for the extraordinary powers in the Defence Production Act from any practical point of view. However, the minister likes these powers and he is determined to have them, and without any time limit. I think that is what it really comes down to. The minister's speech on Tuesday was quite illuminating and significant from this point of view. I should like to examine one or two of his statements, and he will be glad to know that these have not been quoted before. Perhaps he will be happy to hear again what he said on Tuesday. I would refer first to page 4501 of *Hansard* of June 7; and so that I may not be accused of wrenching something out of its context—there are only four lines I really wanted to refer to—I shall read the whole paragraph, which is as follows:

The department has been permanent in effect since it was formed in 1939. After the department of munitions and supply was liquidated in

1948 its work was carried on as a branch of the Department of Trade and Commerce without a departmental act. It was found most difficult to carry on in that way—

This is what I want to emphasize:

—and we were glad indeed to have reason for forming the Department of Defence Production and asking parliament to enact a proper Defence Production Act.

Just think of the implications of that statement, that “we were glad indeed to have reason for forming the Department of Defence Production and asking parliament to enact a proper Defence Production Act”. By a proper Defence Production Act the minister means one which gives him all these extraordinary powers. What the minister is really saying there is that he was glad the Korean war gave him a reason for resuming the powers which he had during and subsequent to the last war under the various emergency measures of that time, and in the immediate post-war period.

Mr. McIlraith: That is not the meaning of what you have read.

Mr. Dickey: Nonsense.

Mr. Harkness: I know the hon. member is a connoisseur of nonsense because he produces so much of it; nevertheless I give him sufficient credit for being able to read English, and I recommend this reading to him. I shall read it again:

—and we were glad indeed to have reason for forming the Department of Defence Production—

Mr. McIlraith: For forming the Department of Defence Production.

Mr. Harkness: What that means is that the minister was glad the Korean war gave him an opportunity to resume his extraordinary powers.

Mr. McIlraith: To form the department, is what he said.

Mr. Fleming: With those powers.

Mr. Harkness: With those powers.

Mr. Dickey: Absolute nonsense.

Mr. Harkness: It is obvious from that paragraph that those powers were liquidated in 1948 and the minister was lonesome without them. He felt lost without them. He had had them for about nine years at that time, and he just did not feel at home without them. He had become accustomed to these special extraordinary powers, and he was delighted to get them back. That is what he said in this statement. He was happy that he could resume with these special powers.

This is a most revealing statement from the psychological point of view. I think it points up strongly what we have all been told quite