

Defence Production Act

almost forever under the bill now before us. We have not intimated that these powers should be relaxed, but we do say that to carry on the powers contained in the legislation for an indefinite period of time is against the principles, rights and other things for which we have fought so dearly, and for which our forefathers worked so hard.

With reference to our constitution and government, the things that we on this side of the house have been talking about, the things that are important, I have in my hand a book entitled "Canada 1954". It is supposed to be the official handbook of present conditions and recent progress, and is published by the authority of the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe). These are some of the things it has to say about our constitution and government:

The Canadian constitution and its present day practice in the arts of democratic government are the product of complex and diverse forces and events that have shaped the evolutionary growth of political institutions in British North America during the past 190 years and witnessed its development from colony to nation.

In his speech this afternoon the Leader of the Opposition indicated how these conflicts and diverse forces have played their part in bringing about our constitution. I continue:

Despite the manifold complex problems inherent in the cultural and local loyalties of the populace, in the diverse regional structure of the economy, and in the application of British political inheritance to the new world environment, there has been a marked continuity in institutional democratic development from the several colonial legislatures of the latter part of the eighteenth century to the national parliament of the present day.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, there has been a great evolution. Are we going back? Are we going to follow the terms of this bill or are we, as this book would intimate, going to carry on our constitutional government as it has been evolved down through the ages?

A few days ago when the minister was speaking he intimated—and I shall not repeat too much of what has been said—that he had heard no word of dissent from any of the people who were working on defence contracts. How about the farmers of this country? What are they going to say about this bill? Think of those who sweated and worked during the war years under controls of all kinds. Their prices were frozen, and then when supply had caught up with demand and there was a surplus of farm products, the controls were removed. Other people made a lot of money out of that, but not the farmers. However, in regard to this dissension that has not been heard, would you expect people who are being fed by defence contracts to bite the hand that feeds them?

What has been the experience of the Department of Defence Production when they call for tenders for contracts? Do they not find a great many manufacturers and distributors in this country lobbying in parliament to get those defence contracts, in an effort to keep factories busy that would otherwise be idle, to keep workers happy and to promote the economy of this country? No, Mr. Speaker, I do not feel that this bill, which will continue these powers for an indefinite time, should go through.

In so far as the minister and his attitude toward this debate are concerned, I might mention a little story I heard the other day about a man who was down in that southern district where they have great floods. In the evening when he went to bed everything was calm and serene. During the night there was a terrific rainstorm and a flash flood came up. In the morning when he looked out the window the whole country was covered with water. But there was one phenomenon he could not understand. There was a straw hat moving up and down across the face of this great ocean of water. He went to the people of the house and said, "There is something I cannot understand. You had a terrific flood last night, but what is that straw hat going up and down?" They said, "That is just grandpappy. Before he went to bed last night he said, 'tomorrow morning, come hell or high water, I am going to cut the lawn'."

I sometimes feel that is the attitude displayed here by the minister. He feels, and he has intimated to this house, that if we have to sit all summer the bill has to pass. That is the attitude; come hell or high water, he is going to have his way.

Mr. G. S. White (Hastings-Frontenac): I rise to take part in this debate to support the amendment moved by the hon. member for Royal (Mr. Brooks), which is found at page 5376 of *Hansard*. This afternoon when my leader was speaking I could not help but think of the plea he made to the Minister of Defence Production to accept this amendment and thus end this debate. The amendment is so reasonable in every way. As has been stated time and time again from this side of the house, the opposition does not object to this department being made permanent, nor does it object to certain powers being made permanent. But it does object to certain of the powers set out in the Defence Production Act being made permanent.

This amendment moved by the hon. member for Royal sets out a simple procedure whereby the bill could be referred to the banking and commerce committee, where there would be ample time and opportunity for the minister and his advisers to appear.