

*Invoking of War Measures Act*

ter of Regional Economic Expansion would like at this moment to take the floor I will yield it so that they may make perfectly clear that what is being attempted here is not in any way directed toward suppressing the free expression of the opinions of those who believe there is another political possibility for the province of Quebec that can be achieved through a rational and democratic process.

● (11:40 a.m.)

The Prime Minister, the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion, and no other minister, has made this fact clear to the people of this country. If the Prime Minister wishes to avoid, as I most sincerely hope he does, the very grave possibility of misunderstanding on this matter, he will not hesitate for one moment to let all the people of the country know that at the very least what is being attempted here is that the government is dealing with those who will not respect law and order and the democratic process of choice and change. If, in fact, the Prime Minister is directing his ammunition and the repeal of law in this country at a wider audience, at those who disagree with the federal option, what hope can any of us have for the workings of a rational, democratic process in this country? I remind him, as I would remind the Premier of Quebec if he were here, that those members from that province who were elected to this House and to the Legislature of Quebec who support their governments do not represent even half the people of that province. If one looks at the matter merely from the standpoint of those who speak French in that province, one sees that the proportion who did not vote for these governments is even greater.

I want to refer to what surely is another basic question, the extent to which this action will be effective. Presumably the basic reason behind the measures the government has taken is the belief that only through the use of extensive powers of this kind can the authorities detect with effectiveness the kind of terrorism that they believe is at present abroad within the province of Quebec. Yet I remain very seriously troubled.

I have found from my reading and from my listening to the news media in the past few days that those who are being detained are from all ranks of society, that some of those who are suspected of having connections with the FLQ are even in the police. How is it possible, just through the use of increased and wide-ranging powers, to assure us of the effectiveness of the detection that we are told is so badly needed? What are the long-term effects of this kind of detention going to be in our society? Surely we realize that when we throw great numbers of people into prison, sometimes on short notice and with very little information, a number of them are bound to be peaceful and innocent citizens who may have expressed a point of view at some time or other which is in disagreement with that of others. They may not be inclined toward violence. What will detention for 30, 60 or 90 days in jail do to innocent people who have held opinions differing from those of others? May I remind hon. members that what we have learned over the past

two years of the general jail situation in Quebec would not lead anyone to believe that the kind of bitterness that may result from holding people under those conditions will not lead to more and greater violence. Will that solve the basic problems confronting us in this situation?

We have been told time and again during the past two and a half years that the government and the Prime Minister knew how to deal with the situation. The Prime Minister knew how to solve these big, basic problems. Have they been solved? Have they been alleviated? Speaking yesterday, the Prime Minister reminded us that the action that had been taken could be considered by some as a trap, that by the state's use of strict and authoritarian—one might say totalitarian—measures, there is a danger of giving both encouragement and credibility to the forces of darkness the government is trying to stamp out. Earlier this week the Prime Minister said that what this group really wanted was lots of publicity. Has any organization ever received more publicity than this organization has received as a result of the actions the government took?

There is another troublesome thought that comes to my mind increasingly. By this action of dealing with terror by imposing a kind of state terror we have descended to the level at which these people operate. Mr. Speaker, this House must have, if it is to maintain its freedom and its responsibility, more information. A free society can only live by free communication. If the government, in addition to bringing in the War Measures Act, has actually said to the people of this country that they no longer have a right to information, then our situation is even more grave than we are willing to admit.

The lives of two men, Mr. Speaker, are central to this tragedy. No one in this House this morning knows whether or not they are alive. All of us cannot help but be deeply troubled by the dreadful circumstances into which these men, their friends and their families have been cast. Yet I cannot help feeling that we have compounded the tragedy by endangering the safety and security of all our people. I remind all hon. members, Mr. Speaker, that democracy can not be inherited; it can only be preserved. There has been a tendency over the years in Canada to be smug about the kind of tolerance and freedom we have exhibited. That we may have endangered our freedom by one stroke of government action this week is taken altogether too lightly.

Does one not see a paradox when one considers man and his social system? In the world of today, or of any day, one will find men of strong opinions and individual differences. Most often they live in a society which itself is of a fragile quality. Greater or lesser risk always underlies the functionings of such a social system. On the other hand, you will find weak and docile individuals within authoritarian and totalitarian systems. If we are opting in this House to bring in that kind of system, then we have seriously endangered not only the liberty of individuals in our country but their future opportunity to be the strongminded, independent individuals that surely God has given each one of us the right to be.

[Mr. MacDonald (Egmont).]