

*Unemployment Continuance Act*

economists and students of world affairs suggested the possibility. Canada was faced with an emergency, with a condition which called for immediate action. What action did we take? Under the powers of this act we passed an order in council prohibiting the free export of gold. In other words, we simply said this: Anyone desiring to export gold shall first obtain a licence from the Minister of Finance. The government in the best interests of the country took power to control the export of gold, and its export by the banks was allowed on licence from the Minister of Finance. Now I ask: Did we do wrong or did we do right? Was it in the best interests of the country to take that position, or was it not? Has the country suffered any injury as a result of the action then taken by the government? Can any hon. member say that a single constituent of his suffered any real injury as compared with the welfare of the country at large by the action of the government in that respect? I think the answer must be no, that there was no injury suffered, that it was an action which ought to have been taken and which was properly taken. And again I say it could not have been taken except under the powers given the government by this act.

Now, I turn to the insurance companies. The country was confronted with the possibility of the serious impairment of the interests of insurance companies generally—by the way, a very similar problem arose in the United States—and under the powers given to the government by this act an order in council was passed fixing June 30 as the date at which securities held by insurance companies should be valued. Again I ask: Was that an action in the interests of the general stabilization of the conditions of the country, or was it not? Was it wise and advisable, or was it unwise and inadvisable? I think in this case as in the other cases the answer is that it was a wise act on the part of the government and well taken in the general interests of the country. The same thing applies to the action taken by the government with respect to bank securities. The action was taken in order to steady financial conditions and to prevent an unreasoned attack upon these great financial institutions. Such an attack, I believe, would have resulted in financial chaos in this country had the government not taken the action it did.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have these actions on the part of the government which I am certain were all taken in the national interest. There is one other order in council, and it

[Mr. Stevens.]

has been cited as evidence of the autocracy of the government. It is said there was an increase in the numbers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. What are the facts? Two hundred men were added to the force. Under legislation previously passed by this parliament and by two of the provinces the federal government was asked to take over the policing of those provinces, Alberta and Manitoba, and I think a third province has made a similar request. Was the action taken by the government in this instance necessary or was it unnecessary? Was it wise or was it unwise? Should the government be condemned for doing it? If so, why? Not a word has been said to elucidate that problem, only the general sweeping condemnation that the government has done something autocratic under this act.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think I have reviewed the various actions of the government which might be termed as abnormal actions under the terms of this act.

Mr. GARDINER: What is the date of the order in council increasing the number of the mounted police?

Mr. STEVENS: I think it was in December.

Mr. GARDINER: That is before negotiations were opened with Alberta.

Mr. STEVENS: I do not think so, although I have not the precise dates. Just at present we must prepare to take over the policing of the provinces; we cannot wait until the thing is all over. And the same remarks apply to two other provinces whose governments have suggested that we should take over the policing. But the point I am seeking to impress upon the house is that the government is challenged at the present time on the constitutionality of this act, and it is urged that by giving the government these unusual powers there is danger of their being abused. What hon. members opposite ought to be searchingly inquiring into is this: Having clothed the government with these powers some nine months ago, has this government improperly used those powers, has it abused them, has it taken any undue advantage of its authority, have any citizens suffered because of any action by the government under this act? The answer in every case is no. On the contrary, in every instance the action taken by the government under these special powers resulted in some marked benefit to large sections of the country.

I do not intend, Mr. Speaker, to labour the point. We are asking the house to extend this legislation until the first of May. There are