

*Emergencies Act*

amended. Our fellow citizens in each of our constituencies now expect us to weigh, to decide, and to act on this legislation.

We are fortunate to have had the time and opportunity, now, in conditions of peace and calm, far removed from the relentless pressures of a compelling emergency, to reflect, to discuss, and to prepare for the future.

Sadly, we need merely watch the news on television, or read newspapers and magazines to see every day people and Governments around the world struggling with war, revolt, famine, and disasters. They certainly are reminders of how fortunate we Canadians are.

This has not always been the case in Canada, as we know to our sorrow. One of the darkest episodes of Canadian history took place in my own province. After years of official and unofficial harassment, the ill treatment of Japanese residents of British Columbia reached a new low in February, 1942, when the Government of Canada issued an executive order under the War Measures Act. It decreed the forced removal from their homes of more than 20,000 men, women, and children who were citizens or permanent residents of Canada. They were to be sent to camps and towns at least 100 miles from the Pacific coast.

In the climate of the time the public did have good reason to be concerned. The world was at war. In a sudden peacetime attack on Pearl Harbour, Japanese Armed Forces had just sunk 19 ships of the United States Navy. They had killed and captured hundreds of Canadian troops defending Hong Kong. They were about to launch a successful landing on the Aleutian Islands of Alaska. Japanese submarines were scouting the Pacific coast.

Nevertheless, the local commanders of the Canadian Armed Forces and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police advised the Government that Japanese Canadians, permanent residents, citizens, and people born in Canada, posed no threat to security. In fact, the Government never did charge any Japanese Canadian with disloyalty.

Instead of following reasoned, professional advice, the Government reacted to prejudice and fear. Thousands upon thousands of Japanese Canadians were rounded up and interned. The Government then proceeded to sell their fishing boats, automobiles, farms, businesses, homes, and even their personal belongings at less than true value. All this took place under powers provided by Parliament when it passed the War Measures Act in 1914.

This disgraceful treatment of our fellow citizens by the Government of Canada over 40 years ago is most relevant to the provisions of the Emergencies Act which we have before us today. It underscores the need for Parliament to consider such a serious issue in a period of calm away from the attentions of an emergency situation, in order that we can have on the legislative books a reasoned, proper, fair, and legal method for dealing with emergencies, so that these sad occasions of the past will never be repeated.

Over the past six months, the Minister and the Government have listened to, and acted upon, many of the suggestions of the National Association of Japanese Canadians, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Bar Association, and others. This Bill explicitly rules out detention, imprisonment, or internment of Canadians citizens or permanent residents, on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, or other discrimination.

The types of situations that would justify emergency powers have been narrowed and defined more clearly. Reasonable compensation for loss, injury, or damage will be mandatory, rather than at the discretion of the Government. Emergency orders and regulations must be related directly to remedying the particular emergency, and citizens may challenge these in the courts. Orders and regulations are to be reviewed by a special all-Party parliamentary committee. This independent committee is to report regularly to Parliament on what the Government is doing and why. The Government must table orders and regulations within two days. The Bill now specifies no time limits on debate of a motion to confirm or continue a state of emergency or to revoke orders or regulations. A Member of Parliament may raise a motion to revoke or amend an order or regulation with no time limit now specified in the Bill.

• (1610)

As the result of the contributions of many organizations and citizens, these are safeguards of the rights of the individual and the rights of Parliament which have now become part of this legislation.

There are many other important amendments which greatly improved the Bill. The legislation, as has been pointed out, also reinforces provincial authority and explicitly provides for federal participation by request of a provincial Government.

For example, one seismologist told an interviewer on *The Journal*, the CBC television program, that we might have an earthquake along the coast of B.C. as big as the one which broke the southern coast of Chile in 1960. Five thousand people died there. He said that we must also take seriously the possibility of a much bigger earthquake, as big as any in the world in the last 1,500 years. It would be completely off the Richter scale.

This is a prediction that no one wants to hear, but in B.C. we have to face it. As experts have explained, an earthquake is like having a whole series of disasters all at once. Some day the following, God forbid, could occur suddenly and simultaneously: hundreds of deaths; thousands of injuries; thousands trapped, including the very young, the elderly, and the sick; hospitals swamped; homes destroyed; buildings demolished; bridges collapsed; highways closed; power cut; communications cut; gas mains broken; water mains broken; many fires out of control; massive floods; and streets full of debris and closed to rescuers.