

Defence Production Act

natural that he should obtain such broad powers, since he had a job to do and was responsible for doing it. I can understand that. As far as I can learn no one seriously quarrelled with his motive.

However, at the same time he realized that such laws should not be made permanent, and I assume he set the time limit. He was responsible for drawing up the act and he realized that it was giving one minister great powers. The present minister had no assurance that he was to remain in charge of this department as long as it lasted. Therefore, since he realized the danger, he himself recommended and put a time limit on it. In my opinion, and from the experience of the last four years, I believe the time limit was sufficient to bridge the gap in the emergency.

There certainly is no evidence, and no information has been given to the house, as far as I know, that convinces me that section 41 should be repealed. If it is repealed it will have the effect of placing on the statute books of this country a bundle of laws. It seems to me that we are being handed a bundle of laws in the same way that you would be handed a bundle of kindling wood. There is some good and some bad. I do not think that is a good way to present legislation to any parliament, without considering too much its effects. That is the way it seems to me. It is giving us a bundle of laws, part of which is good and part of which, in its administration, could be most vicious.

When I say that I am not thinking of the present parliament; I am not thinking of the next five, ten or fifteen years. I am thinking of the law that is being written into the statute books and that is going to remain there. Once it gets there it is going to be difficult to get it off. It could be used for the following purposes: for the control of the complete economy of this country; to destroy business; to kill private enterprise; to make inoperative provincial and municipal laws and regulations; to make ineffective contracts between labour unions and management; and, worst of all, as an efficient political machine to ruin our free and democratic methods of choosing a parliament.

No doubt hon. members will say that I am taking this too seriously. They may say that such things cannot possibly happen here. I hope they are right and that I am too pessimistic. I have not said these things are likely to happen, but I say they could happen under powers like this granted in peacetime. Once this bill passes and becomes law there is a vehicle waiting, ready to be put into action any time hereafter.

[Mr. Montgomery.]

I do not believe the members of this government or their supporters have really stopped to realize what would result from such legislation. I am not at all surprised that hon. members who believe in the socialist doctrine welcome this type of legislation, because as far as I can learn from listening to their speeches they believe in a fully controlled economy. I do not question the sincerity of any hon. member sitting in this chamber, nevertheless socialism in action can be dangerous. Socialism in action has been compared to a car going down a mountain.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Applewhaite): I hesitate to interrupt an hon. member in the middle of an argument, but I can see again the danger, with which we were faced on a similar occasion not so long ago, of this debate on the advisability of adopting certain amendments to the Defence Production Act becoming a debate on the merits or the demerits of socialism. I would ask the hon. member to co-operate by holding his remarks as closely as possible to the bill we are discussing.

Mr. Drew: Mr. Speaker, I submit that it is proper, because this in fact is socialism. I think it should be open to us to discuss it from that point of view.

Mr. Harkness: On a point of order, we have heard a great deal during this debate from members of the C.C.F. and also from the hon. member for Rosthern on the values of socialism, and I think it should be open to hon. members of this party to refute those claims.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Applewhaite): All I have done at the moment is to ask the hon. member to co-operate by making his remarks pertinent to the bill we are considering, and I have the right to insist on that. I do not propose to permit an abstract debate on the merits or demerits of socialism at this time. I do not believe it is within the rules of the house that the debate should be allowed to stray that far afield. I have not at the moment ruled any hon. member out of order, but I have requested the co-operation of the hon. member who has the floor so that we may not find ourselves in difficulties which might be the cause for a more drastic intervention.

Mr. Montgomery: I shall try to co-operate, and possibly I should not continue from where I had reached; I shall leave that out. This legislation seems to me to point to full control of our economy, to what in other words would be state control. We have seen examples of where state control can place dangerous governments. I would hate to think that we were parties to placing legislation on our statute books which could be used to bring about such conditions in this country.