

Of course, to reach this goal, we must obviously and necessarily deal with the financial problem. This is where the trouble lies. It is so true that if a war should be declared, the government would not have to talk about inflation, but it would find a job for everyone now unemployed. Here is the proof: they sent the Canadian Armed Forces to Quebec. Neither the Minister of Justice nor the Prime Minister said that we did not have enough money to send soldiers there. Apparently, that was an urgent matter.

When people starve in Canada, that is an urgent matter.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Caouette: If we want to avoid a repetition of the events we have just witnessed, the time has come to pass other laws than those which aim at jailing wrongdoers. Let us pass laws which will enable wrongdoers to behave better and then, society will be better organized.

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. Members: Question, question!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order. The hon. member for Joliette has the floor.

Mr. La Salle: As was said so well yesterday by a member of the New Democratic Party, I think that the members from Quebec have not only the right to speak on this bill, but also a responsibility to express certain opinions. In view of the importance of the bill it is my responsibility to express my opinions and to give some explanations about the fact that we could be in favour of the adoption of the War Measures Act, without necessarily being in favour of the adoption of a special act.

On this point, a certain summary must be made. Let us refer to the circumstances which necessitated the application of the War Measures Act.

First, the War Measures Act was proclaimed and this move was supported by most hon. members.

Mr. Speaker, when the house is on fire, it is too late to discuss whether or not firemen should be called. In my view, no wavering would have been justified. In view of the abduction of these two men and of the psychological climate prevailing in these days, it was necessary to invoke such a drastic measure. Indeed, we had no choice, particularly if we consider that our criminal law leaves no place for us to take the necessary steps.

Since then, there has been quite a number of arrests, and it seems that several people have been arrested for the most futile motives. Searches and questionings have been carried out. The province of Quebec has been occupied by the armed forces and the government has made all sorts of statements in the House. But those statements have never been adequately explained and questions asked by members have not yet been answered satisfactorily.

The enforcement of the War Measures Act was urgently needed when the Act was proclaimed. But since then,

Public Order Act, 1970

thirty days have passed. Parliament, therefore, has had all the time it needed to introduce a law better suited to the present circumstances which are not—we must recognize it—as disquieting as they were thirty days ago.

There has been, for quite a long time a climate of dissatisfaction in Quebec which is due to many reasons. It might be believed that exceptional legislation would settle this problem and would give back confidence to the Quebec people and to the whole country but it would be a mistake to believe it.

In Quebec we went through, perhaps in a rather peculiar way even if some are afraid of the word “peculiar”, years of frustration both linguistically and economically. At the same time, we have had a far too high unemployment rate, a per capita income much lower than that of the whole country and this situation does not seem to be improving. In Quebec, we now have 500,000 unemployed and this figure will reach 700,000 by springtime.

Those are so many factors which for several years have provoked discontentment in Quebec. A special law will not be sufficient to restore the population's confidence in Parliament nor will it improve the lot of the people of Quebec.

When this bill was introduced a few weeks ago it was understood that the opposition parties would have an opportunity to participate in the debate and to make useful contributions. After five weeks, it seems clear that the government will accept no amendment. Not one suggestion made by the opposition is deemed likely to improve the bill. It seems that only the government members are enlightened by the Holy Ghost when a bill is being drafted. According to them, we do not enjoy the same advantage.

The government has serious misgivings; I am sure that only through the enactment of social measures better adapted to present conditions can a proper climate of stability be restored in the province of Quebec as well as elsewhere in Canada.

I do not say that a special legislation was not necessary. I think that after the War Measures Act was enforced, we had enough time to draft a legislation more in keeping with present needs.

● (8:30 p.m.)

The retroactivity of the act can allow justice to go very far indeed. The act is vague in that it does not specify for how long it will be applied. The use of the expression “any identical association or almost identical association” can only lead to confusion.

Some other amendments are vague as well. In spite of that, the act is specific enough to warrant its being supported.

After studying the bill and having realized that the government refused to accept any amendment, I can say that, at the same time, the participation of the opposition parties, in short, the participation of Parliament, was turned down in the preparation of this bill. As members of Parliament, we were entitled to participate in it. To say the least, we were entitled to a better hearing on the part of the government.