

Defence Production Act

other parties in the house that the legislation itself was the kind of legislation that should be continued.

I hope I have not spoiled in any way my honest attempt to do a job of conciliating. I make my plea directly to the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent). I hope he will, before many hours have gone by, call to his office these men whose names I have indicated and any others whom he wishes to invite in; and to those who may be called to such a meeting I make my plea that they sit down in good faith and reach a settlement of this extremely important question.

Mr. Churchill: May I ask the hon. member a question?

Mr. Knowles: Certainly.

Mr. Churchill: Does the hon. member think that an act which is permanently on the statute books is in exactly the same position as an act which has a time limit attached to it?

Mr. Knowles: Technically, there is a world of difference. A statute without a time limit is technically there for all time. A statute with a time limit expires when that time limit has arrived. I thought I had made it clear that in actual practice what works out is that statutes that have time limits in them are frequently extended because—

Mr. Churchill: By parliament.

Mr. Knowles: By parliament, yes. They are frequently extended because it is found at the end of their time that they should be extended. On the other hand, statutes that have been put on the statute books without any time limit are frequently repealed by parliament.

Mr. Churchill: At whose suggestion?

Mr. Knowles: Usually at the suggestion of the government; indeed practically always at the suggestion of the government. My point is that whichever way the statute is written, the determining factor is the needs of the situation later on. Temporary statutes get re-enacted. Permanent statutes get repealed. I am quite prepared to answer any question asked by my friend and neighbour the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill). But I say again that my point is that this issue over which the house is divided seems to me to be one which is subsidiary to the main issue on which there is general agreement.

Miss Sybil Bennett (Halton): Mr. Speaker, after listening to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) I think I should tell you of a suggestion which was

made to me by one of the members from across the floor of the house when I was walking up to the house this morning. He said to me, "When you stand up to speak, you suggest to Mr. Speaker that this house take 40 minutes of very profound silence." I do not know whether or not the hon. member was discriminating against me and meant that he did not want to hear me speak. But we should be quite willing to take into consideration 40 minutes—and I must say that I should be extremely glad if that 40 minutes came at this moment—of profound silence if at the end of that 40 minutes we felt that there would be any change, that any good might come of it, that there might be any developments, or that the members across the way and those to my left might really see the light in this matter in the way in which we have seen it.

Mr. Speaker, this has been a protracted and long-drawn-out debate. But this debate has produced some fine and good things in this country. One thing it has produced is proof that democracy in Canada is very much alive. While we have hon. members in this house standing up to defend our constitution and our parliamentary rights, there is no question that we in this country and in this house are cognizant of the rights, privileges and freedoms that we enjoy under our constitution and under our institutions.

I think it is a most unfortunate thing, Mr. Speaker, that all the members of this house on this occasion have not risen to express their opinion. If their opinions are opposed to ours with regard to what is the proper thing to do and if they are favouring this bill, by all means hon. members on the opposite side of the house should rise in their places and express their opinions, as should hon. members on all sides. The people of this country should know why they think this bill should be enacted. The people of this country should know why they think these powers should be extended indefinitely. The people of this country expect that kind of thing. They expect it of their various members coming, as they do, from the various constituencies all across this country. I want to say this. I think every hon. member across the floor of the house, as well as those to my left, will thoroughly agree that this debate that is taking place in this distinguished house has had a great impact on the people of this nation.

Now, this fact is evidenced in the editorials that we see in the newspapers across this country. It is to be noted that these editorials are coming, in many instances, from newspapers that are and have always been entirely friendly to, and have always supported, the