

would read: "... altering the provisions of this or any other act." You would be happy to accept that?

Mr. Beatty: I would not be prepared to see amendments made which would delay the progress of this bill.

Senator Stewart (Antigonish-Guysborough): So, delay would be the only ground on which you would object to that amendment?

Mr. Beatty: There may be specific instances where it is necessary for the Governor in Council to use such powers, properly safeguarded by Parliament and by courts as provided for in the statute. But, at this point, reopening the bill and going in, as you say, for greater certainty, if that is the concern, would, I think, do a disservice to Canadians. The bill has been before Parliament now for almost a year. The time has come for Parliament to deliver on the commitment it made some 18 years ago to repeal the War Measures Act and to put modern legislation in its place.

Senator Stewart (Antigonish-Guysborough): You seem to imply that if we take, say, half the time that you took in the other place it will be reasonable, and I would be prepared to accept that.

Mr. Beatty: I do not know, Mr. Chairman, whether Senator Stewart was simply throwing that comment out facetiously or whether he intended to have a serious reply from me.

I think the members of the House of Commons took their responsibility very seriously as, indeed, did the government. The government tabled the bill at the end of June. I announced my intention to have such a bill on June 5 in the defence white paper. I tabled it before the summer recess. I left it out for public scrutiny and invited public commentary. We had extensive hearings in the parliamentary committee. A large volume of amendments were made to it. The elected representatives of the people, I think, did their job exceptionally well.

The real question comes down to whether we, as members of Parliament, both houses, are prepared to honour a commitment that was made in good faith and to act, or whether we are prepared to delay the progress of this bill and to have opened up the possibility that Canadians could either be forced to deal with a crisis for which there is no appropriate authority on the part of the government to deal with, or that the civil liberties of Canadians could once again be abrogated in the way they have been abrogated in the past by using this odious War Measures Act which is on the books today.

Senator Stewart (Antigonish-Guysborough): I do not want any misunderstanding. You say that the government introduced the bill in June of 1987. It was passed by the House of Commons on April 27, 1988. It is now just a little over the month later; yet you seem to be suggesting that we are already delaying the bill.

Mr. Beatty: No, I was not suggesting that, senator. Certainly, I would not try to put words in your mouth and I know you would not try to put them in mine. I am not suggesting you are trying to delay the bill. I am suggesting that you should not delay the bill.

[Senator Stewart (Antigonish-Guysborough).]

Senator Stewart (Antigonish-Guysborough): That seems to be not war, invasion or insurrection apprehended, but delay apprehended. I suggest that it is unreasonable to apprehend.

Mr. Beatty: Any delay, senator, would be unreasonable. We should proceed.

The Chairman: Since there are no other questioners, Mr. Minister, it is left for me to thank you very much on behalf of my colleagues for the time you have spent with us, which is now almost two hours. We very much appreciate that you made yourself available to appear along with your officials. I hope that you have found your first venture into the Senate a pleasant one and we look forward to having you with us again on some other occasion.

Mr. Beatty: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

The Chairman: Honourable senators, we should now clear up the matter that was before us and put into suspended animation prior to the minister's entering the chamber. There had been a discussion regarding the establishment of a steering committee. We became involved in the beginning of a vote and then it was my understanding that there was no need for a vote and that the matter could be settled by agreement.

Senator Doody: I gather from speaking with Senator Stewart that there is a desire to have at least one more and perhaps other witnesses appear before the committee. To that end, I think the suggestion of Senator MacEachen is a sensible one and we should ask the two whips to set up a steering committee. The numbers involved in the committee and so on will be the same as they have always been in this place. I see little point in pursuing the cause of justice and equity. I will let it go at that.

The Chairman: I suppose that depends on how one defines "justice and equity."

Senator Doody: We had a discussion a moment ago about fairness and reasonableness and I do not want to plough all that up again.

Senator Petten: Mr. Chairman, the numbers are five and three.

The Chairman: The suggestion is five and three.

Senator Stewart (Antigonish-Guysborough): Mr. Chairman, I think we have had an example of how dangerous it is to use figures in this place. Senator Doody has implied that I indicated that there would be at least one more witness. Technically, he is correct, but the implication is that one, perhaps two more witnesses will be heard. I did not wish to convey that impression.

What I have in mind, honourable senators, with regard to this bill is that, since the government is asking for such extreme powers, such great powers, we ought to know precisely what powers we would be giving the government if the bill passes. We can satisfy ourselves on that by hearing a reasonable number of witnesses. I do not want to say "at least one,"