

*Defence Production Act*

of the government to go farther than some of us thought was desirable at that time, let us accept the proposition which they put forward that we are going to live under conditions of this nature for some time, and, recognizing that, to remove all powers which are not essential. This would restore to this parliament a feeling of its own authority, a feeling that it has that supremacy over the business of the people which is, in fact, the very basis of our free system.

I then continued to examine the measure which would be brought before us, and I concluded with these words:

I do strongly urge once again that between now and the time the bill comes before us the Prime Minister consider the opportunity presented to this government to give leadership in returning in as full a measure as possible to the members of this House of Commons the fundamental principles of our democratic system, the supremacy of parliament and the rule of law.

There, Mr. Speaker, is what I put before the house on March 14. Other members of our party stated in explicit terms that there should be a continuance of the Defence Production Act as a permanent part of our legislation, not simply as some emergency measure but as part of the ordinary machinery for the procurement of defence requirements. We emphasized in the clearest possible terms that the government should simply act upon its own statement that these powers should not be continued after July 31, 1956; we hoped that it would come back to us with an act to carry out its own concept of the kind of provisions that should be made. The Prime Minister indicated that he would give this consideration.

We had every reason to hope such consideration would be given to the act. Instead of that we were presented with this legislation which, in the first section, merely carries out an arithmetical adjustment so that the minister, if he were to receive any salary—which would only apply, of course, in the case of another minister—would receive the same salary as other ministers at that time.

It is the second section that is important, and that is the only section of importance. It is in the second section that the whole principle at issue is before us. Shall the government abandon its clear undertaking? Shall the government abandon the proposition upon which members of the house were called upon to support it in 1951? Shall we remove any time limit and continue permanently, to use the words of the Minister of Defence Production, powers which the government has said should not continue?

That is the simple issue. What is the answer? The answer clearly is, "You can trust the minister". Well, I hope some members of the house have been a little shaken by some things that have occurred even

[Mr. Drew.]

within the last few hours. I hope some hon. members will carefully read their *Hansard* tomorrow and see just exactly what did take place in the house today. I hope some hon. members will examine some of the other statements that have been made, and decide whether it is in keeping with our parliamentary practices to pass legislation on the assumption that no matter how bad the law may be, it is all right if you have somebody you can rely upon.

That is not our parliamentary system. We do not believe in the fuhrer precept. We believe in parliament, not in the supremacy of any individual. We believe in the responsibility of the government to parliament, not in the omniscience of any great man who says "I have more experience than anyone else in the world". We believe that laws are made or should be made in a form that can be properly examined without regard to who the individual may be. We believe that laws should in themselves be the test of their own correctness or otherwise. There is some suggestion—oh, more than a suggestion, there is the very loose statement—about those who rant about liberty; that was what the Minister of Defence Production called it in describing our efforts to point out what this act could do.

I said on March 14, and not just in the past few days, that under our parliamentary system the test is not what has been done. The test of any law is what could be done. In some substantial measure we find ourselves much like an accused in the prisoner's box. We are told, "Don't worry. It is true that the penalty may be execution, but we never really carry out the law. We are soft-hearted. It will not make any difference if you are found guilty, we will make sure everything will be quite all right. You can trust us". What a comfortable position that would be. Well, that is precisely the proposition put before us.

I ask anyone who says we are exaggerating to tell us at what point we have exaggerated the possibilities under these powers. Neither I nor any member of this party has said that these powers would necessarily be used. Neither I nor any member of this party has said that these powers have been used to their full extent.

In fact when we have the long tale of the dramatic things that have been done, and the need for this act, the question arises as to whether this act applied in any of those cases. We were told by the Minister of Defence Production of the harrowing experience of producing aircraft. We were asked to think of the sleepless nights that would be the lot of anyone who was called upon