

Defence Production Act

week end when I was home for probably the first time since this parliament opened I heard more comments about our debate and about the things we were fighting for than I have ever heard in my short time in this house. It is a debate as to which many favourable comments have been made in the press.

I should like to quote just a few words from a couple of these press reports. The first is from the London *Free Press* of June 30. It is entitled "Principle Bad in Defence Production Bill". I shall not read all of this article. I shall read just this part:

No one objects to wide powers for the Minister of Defence Production, or even to their extension over a considerable period.

The objection is to an indefinite delegation of the power of parliament.

Then here is another news report, one which appeared in the Ottawa *Journal* of Thursday, June 16. It is entitled "The Men of Parliament must speak for Parliament". I shall quote just one or two portions of this editorial:

They fight the permanent right being given a minister, among other things, to requisition defence supplies, and appoint controllers to operate businesses.

They fight everlasting authority to the governor in council to designate essential services of any kind and make them subject to the minister. . . . The issue is the power of parliament. . . . If the bill is passed parliament is deprived of powers that should belong to it unless emergency exists, and the government has not proved there is an emergency.

Sometimes I wonder what manner of minister this is who can listen to all these outstanding and intelligent speeches, all this argument requesting a simple little thing like putting a time limit in the bill, and who can say as found at page 5377 of *Hansard*:

We have seen any legitimate objections to the bill drowned in a torrent of exaggeration, and the corpses of the arguments are now floating around in a vast ocean of words.

I sometimes wonder, Mr. Speaker, whether this is not history repeating itself. We heard the minister intimate the other day that ever since this debate began he has felt that he is living in another world. Could it be a world of ghosts and mystics? Is it a supernatural world to which he refers? Probably that is where he goes during his sleepless nights, a world in which he depends upon the ghosts of the past to lead him through this vale of tears.

He also made another statement which he corrected, and as corrected it is to the effect that he has not seen any legitimate objections to the bill. Does he mean to say that after many days and innumerable speeches of exhortation, pleading and coaxing by people who are his equals in the house inasmuch as they have been elected to parliament by the wish of the people of their constituencies, the

[Mr. Howe (Wellington-Huron.)

people for whom they are speaking, he has not heard any legitimate objections? I am sure that is not the way the people in our constituencies will feel about the matter.

I sometimes think if the minister is going into that supernatural world he had better be careful, because he will find there many men who have fought for the things that might be destroyed by this bill. He may find there some of the fathers of confederation, who fought so hard to prepare our constitution and bring this country into confederation. In that supernatural world they will probably fight just as hard as they did when they were here on earth.

This debate could have been finished yesterday, but instead the Prime Minister made one of his platitudinous speeches about always doing something for the people of Canada and giving them what they want. He also intimated that the government intended to be back. What a wonderful weapon a bill like this could be in returning the government to office. Yes, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister could have ended the debate by indicating that the government was not an immovable body, that it was willing to listen to reason, that it was willing to listen to all the pleading and exhortation of members on this side of the house and agree to place a time limit in the bill. Yes, Mr. Speaker, this could have been done in just a few minutes.

The hon. member for Spadina (Mr. Croll) spoke on June 20, and as found at page 5005 of *Hansard* he said:

Whether we can afford to drop our guard, whether we can afford to relax, is a serious decision to make.

No one on this side of the house, Mr. Speaker, has intimated that we should relax or that the period of tension is over. We sincerely hope and pray that the time will come when we can relax, but none of us has intimated that the powers and the work of the defence production organization should be lessened or that there is not still reason for us to keep up our defences and carry them forward in just as capable and efficient a way as possible. No, Mr. Speaker, no one on this side of the house has intimated anything of the kind.

Later in his speech the hon. member for Spadina went on to say:

In the light of all this can we afford to be unprepared? The opposition says that everybody is prepared to vote powers in an emergency, but if a greater emergency comes upon us it will be too late for those powers.

We do not quarrel with the powers that have been given. All we quarrel with is the lack of a time limit. All we quarrel with is that these powers are going to be carried on