

able to supply much information which will be required by hon. members. At this time however there are only the two questions I mentioned in my opening observations which require consideration. Are we still in a condition of national emergency such as to affect the distribution of legislative powers between the dominion and the provinces, and, as a practical proposition, such as to affect what should be the distribution of legislative functions as between parliament and the governor-in-council?

Though active hostilities have ceased since V-J day, I would ask hon. members to bear in mind what took place after the first great war. To refresh their memories I would point out that the cost of living index in November, 1918, showed an increase of 54 per cent above that of 1914, and in July 1920 it showed an increase of 92 per cent above 1914. The wholesale price index in November, 1918, showed an increase of 100 per cent above 1914, and in May, 1920, showed an increase of 155 per cent over 1914. It will be seen that the economic consequences of the disturbance brought about by war conditions were more serious following the cessation of hostilities than they were during the period of hostilities. That is something which might very well be anticipated as likely to happen again—and with increased violence this time, because the amount of purchasing power which has been distributed and saved by the Canadian people is very much larger than it was in 1918, and the shortages of essential supplies, housing and so forth appear to be greater now than they were at the end of the other war.

I submit to the house that without in any way departing from its attachments to the traditional constitutional practices of a free parliament, there is a situation which requires to be dealt with in an extraordinary way, and for that purpose there is required the extension of some emergency powers. This bill provides that it shall be in operation for no more than one year, unless before its expiry the houses of parliament by an address request that it be extended for a further period. That is not only because we are more modest than the government of the United Kingdom; it is because we think it is necessary that there be frequent consideration by parliament of the real situation as it exists, and that the only safeguard for the kind of legislation which was found to be necessary during the war, and which overrides the ordinary aspects of property and civil rights, would be a declaration, not by the government but by parliament, representing the nation as a whole, that parliament considers that that situation

still exists. And there should be at periods not exceeding one year a review by parliament of the situation. No other declaration would comply with the language used by the privy council as a decision of statesmanship. The courts will be loath to interfere, only if it is made by a parliament representing the nation as a whole after due consideration of all the factors and the consequences involved.

I submit that the principle of this bill should be adopted, and I suggest that as expeditiously as may be convenient, we should get to the committee stage so that we may determine there the extent to which emergency powers should be provided for at this time.

Mr. J. G. DIEFENBAKER (Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, first may I say to the Minister of Justice (Mr. St. Laurent) that I followed with much interest his remarks in regard to this bill. It was an address delivered without any suggestion of partisanship, and in what I have to say I intend to follow a similar course.

May I say at the outset that I felt that at times the minister was struggling as he endeavoured to explain why it was necessary for the government to ask for the extensive powers that are requested in this bill. He expressed the opinion that the principle to be decided on second reading was this: First, is there an emergency? Second, by reason of that emergency should certain powers that ordinarily rest in the legislatures of the provinces be allocated to the dominion for a period of one year?

I found myself in agreement with him when he stated that certain controls were necessary, and when he referred particularly to the necessity of controlling prices and goods in short supply in order to assure a fair distribution of scarcity. But I draw the attention of the house to the fact that while the government asks that certain controls be continued, the government through the minister does not designate what those controls are to be. The minister quoted with approval a reference in the speech from the throne wherein the governor general used these words:

You will be asked to approve a measure to extend certain specified emergency powers to meet emergency conditions in the period of reconstruction.

Mr. LALONDE: Do I understand my hon. friend to say that he thinks the minister should have given a list of controls?

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: If the hon. gentleman will permit, I should like to follow through my argument. I want to know what controls are being asked for. I do not want