

National Security Measures

The Prime Minister and the members of the cabinet knew perfectly well it was a wrong rumour, but they never stopped it. The Prime Minister repeated it the other day and ministers of his cabinet helped spread the rumour. Why did they do that? I say now, as I said last fall, that they did it deliberately. They knew that if the people of Canada read some headlines suggesting that a group of men in Montreal were discussing an alternative government, they would naturally come to the conclusion that it was a group of members of the FLQ plotting to overthrow the government of Quebec.

It has been this kind of dishonest, misleading social context for which this government was responsible last fall, and now it comes to this Parliament and says that in its opinion there should be special legislation and asks that a committee of the House tell it what kind of legislation there should be. The members of the government know what they want, and they will get it before the committee in some under the table way. Their members in some way will tell the committee what they want in the law. But they want the people to believe that it is not the government's idea but the idea of a parliamentary committee. So far as I am concerned and so far as the members of my party are concerned, inside this House and outside this House, we will not be a party to this kind of dishonest misrepresentation of an important situation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: If anyone wants further proof that what was done last fall was shameful, I suggest he read the book by the Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier). I read it some weeks ago before I could obtain a copy of my own; I borrowed a copy from a member of the press gallery. What does that book add up to? The Secretary of State will have an opportunity to disagree with me if he wishes to do so. I read the book carefully from cover to cover. It adds up to this; that there was never a threat of a popular insurrection. What the Secretary of State meant by using the word "popular" instead of merely "insurrection" I do not know, but it is this kind of semantics which confuses the situation a little. He states clearly that there was no danger of a popular insurrection. That is what he said, I believe word for word, or at least that is the effect of it.

Then he goes on to pile up the escalation of the FLQ activities over seven years and the dangers thereof. The dangers are those of marches on the streets of Montreal which might have resulted in riots. That is all there is in that book. That is all there is as an explanation of the invocation of the War Measures Act. All that is fact, instead of fiction, in that book is that there was a danger of marches, particularly by students and other young people, on the streets of Montreal which might have ended up in violence and riots. That was reason enough, Mr. Speaker, to invoke the War Measures Act; that was reason enough to take away personal liberties from people or to incarcerate 440 Canadians, innocent people, for days on end!

[Mr. Lewis.]

Some of these people lost their jobs as a result and many of them are still suffering from the ignominy of having been in jail and of being associated with violence and the FLQ, by reason of the fact that they were in jail. I say that this could not have justified anything and that the only thing which made this government do what it did last fall was the obvious danger that the Liberal government of Quebec was not keeping together.

• (8:50 p.m.)

An hon. Member: Nonsense.

Mr. Lewis: The obvious danger for the Bourassa government was in being divided within itself on the question of negotiating with the kidnappers or not negotiating with the kidnappers. The War Measures Act was invoked for no other purpose but the ignoble one of saving a Liberal provincial government from going to the dogs. That was the erosion of will about which the Minister of Justice talked. That was the confusion about which the Prime Minister talked, for there was no other in the province of Quebec at that time.

As a result of that, as I have said, some 440 innocent people suffered great injustice and there was a worsening of the situation with regard to the fragile unity of our country.

An hon. Member: The Prime Minister would call you a bleeding heart.

Mr. Lewis: The Prime Minister might call me a bleeding heart, but I have not hesitated to tell the Prime Minister what I think of him, so we are even-Steven.

Mr. Speaker, I should like now to spend a moment dealing with some misunderstandings which have also been spread among the people of Canada. If you put a thing in a certain way, then the facts disappear and something that is not fact becomes fact in the public mind. The art of communicating carefully wrapped non-facts so that they look like facts is an art in which this government, and particularly its leader, are expert. Every time the Prime Minister speaks about what happened last fall, he says something to the effect that there were two kidnappings and there was one murder, so obviously they were right in invoking the War Measures Act. He never tells his audience that the unfortunate, the brutal, the unforgivable murder of Mr. Laporte came after the invocation of the War Measures Act and not before.

An hon. Member: That is right.

Mr. Lewis: He never tells his audience that the War Measures Act was invoked at 4 a.m. on Friday, October 16, and that Mr. Laporte was not murdered until some time on Saturday, October 17, 1970. I say, Mr. Speaker, that it is more logical to see a causal connection between the invocation of the War Measures Act and the murder