

Defence Production Act

Mr. Hansell: I know they have that right as a government, and so has this government without this act at all.

An hon. Member: They are just spelling it out.

Mr. Hansell: It is being spelled out and put in the hands of one man forever. That is what it is doing.

Mr. Knowles: Who is the hon. member talking about, Methuselah?

An hon. Member: That is eternal life.

Mr. Hansell: It may be eternal life as far as the minister is concerned, because I cannot guarantee what is going to happen to him when he gets to the golden gates.

Mr. Knowles: Perhaps he will expropriate the gates.

Mr. Hansell: I do not know that he would. When he faces those golden gates I know he will look at them and ask if there is a defence production act up there under which he could expropriate them. I am sure there will not be, because I made up my mind a long time ago that there is no socialism in heaven. I do not cast any disrespect upon my friends; there are socialists in heaven, but no socialism.

An hon. Member: Social Crediters but no Social Credit.

Mr. Hansell: I believe some of my good friends may get in by the skin of their teeth.

Much has been said during this debate about the minister having these powers to protect the taxpayer against unscrupulous big business. No person in this house, no party in this house is going to countenance the unscrupulous actions of big business, or even little business, but this act is not designed to protect the taxpayer. Let us not kid ourselves about that.

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): May I interrupt the hon. member? There is a renegotiation clause in that act which netted the taxpayer over \$600 million after the last war. I suppose the hon. member would want that eliminated?

Mr. Hansell: No, I do not want that eliminated; it is quite all right to have that in the act. But the argument is made that the purpose of this act is to protect the taxpayer from unscrupulous big business, as though they could not be protected without putting unlimited powers in the hands of one man. That is the thing we are getting at.

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): How do you work that out?

Mr. Hansell: That is what we are opposed to.

Mr. Knowles: You had better try A plus B.

Mr. Hansell: My hon. friend talked about the people being exploited. This act is not designed to prevent the exploitation of the people; this act is designed to more effectively mobilize the productive energies of this country for defence purposes. That is the purpose of the act.

An hon. Member: Defence of whom?

Mr. Hansell: Let us not be pulling red herrings over the pathway. That is the purpose of the act, and we support the purpose of the act.

Mr. McIlraith: Then vote for it.

Mr. Hansell: We are not voting for the bill because, as my leader said the other day, it has a most iniquitous clause which gives the minister all these powers forever, by the repealing of section 41.

If the minister wants these powers for another couple of years we are quite willing to give them to him. That is all right; that is reasonable, because the way things look now the complexity of the times will perhaps last that long. If in a couple of years times have not changed we would be quite willing to extend the powers for another couple of years. There is nothing wrong with that. But that is not what the minister is asking us to do. He is asking us to take out of the bill a section which would permit this matter to come before parliament in that way every so often. The powers are to be given to him for eternity, until the act is repealed.

There is another thing I cannot quite understand, and that is why the minister needs these powers for all time. I cannot understand why he would not be satisfied to have them for two or three years at a time, and have the matter brought before parliament periodically so the powers could be renewed. I do not see why that would not be satisfactory to him. If he is willing to do that he will receive the support of this group, but he is not willing to do that. Why is he asking for the repeal of this section? There must be some other reason. I do not know what the other reason is, and any argument as to that would be only a guess, as there could be a variety of reasons.

The minister is not going to be here forever. The saying is going around that he may retire. I do not know, as that is his business.

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): May I ask my hon. friend a question? Does he contemplate that this government will go on forever?