

Defence Production Act

council a statute of this country in order that materials which were necessary to war and which were controlled by certain people could be brought into production at a time when the very life of the nation was at stake and the future of the world hung in the balance. I think that example alone is sufficient to justify the minister in asking for this authority.

If the minister is to be responsible he must have authority. If we place the Minister of Defence Production in the position where he must face the circumstances which he is trying to prevent or avoid by this bill, if we give him that responsibility, then we must go along with him and give him the necessary authority. There is no doubt in my mind about that.

In my judgment this bill is designed to prevent sabotage. I am amused when I hear my hon. friends the Conservatives say these powers are not necessary in peacetime. Is this peacetime? When you look at your national defence estimates, right now you will find we are going to give the Department of National Defence \$1,769,680,500. Then there is another \$5 million in round figures fixed by statute. That certainly does not sound like peace, does it? Then again, if we were sure that there was no danger of war, there would be no need of the defence production department over which the minister presides. There is another \$23 million in round figures being voted for this particular department here.

To suggest that the minister is asking for wartime powers in peacetime, in my judgment, is just not being realistic. We believe that these powers are necessary. Why should they be limited? The argument is made that the minister will be in a dictatorial position, that once he gets those powers he can exercise them and no one has any control over him. That is nonsense. This minister has to come to this house once every year with his estimates and account for his department. During that period we can examine that department from top to bottom. Where is the necessity for limitation? There is no more need to limit this department's functions than there is those of any other department of government.

The crux of the problem here is this. We believe in responsible controls. We believe the people of this country who are elected to represent the different ridings across Canada in this house have the right to control and regulate as suggested by this bill in the circumstances for which the bill is designed. What my hon. friends are quarrelling about is that they do not want that power here. They believe that power should remain on

[Mr. Gillis.]

the outside with the large corporations. As I said before, as these corporations grow and amalgamate and seize more power over the economic processes of this country, that in turn forces us in this house to accept the responsibility of setting up machinery so that we can at least talk to these people on even terms.

While we believe in responsible controls, my hon. friends the Conservatives believe in irresponsible controls, the right to manage the country on the outside without any reference to the elected representatives of this country. I am sure I would much rather be able to talk to the minister in this house on things that will happen under the terms of this bill to different corporations that I know across this country than I would try to get in touch with someone in Mount Royal in Montreal over whom I have no control and with whom I have no contact at all.

That is the difference; irresponsible control on the outside, and responsible control on the inside. The question of price controls in this picture is the same question that existed in the profits limitation act; it is the same question that existed when a controller had to be placed in the steel plant in Hamilton. They were not concerned about the emergency of war. They were still thinking in terms of making money.

With regard to this suggestion that contracts can be broken, I say any contract should be broken that interferes with the security of this country.

An hon. Member: Including a labour contract?

Mr. Gillis: Exactly; any contract that interferes with the security of this country should be set to one side during the emergency. There is no doubt about that. There is not one labour man in this country who would disagree with that. I am not unmindful of the fact, either, that during the process of fighting the war one very prominent gentleman who sat in the Senate and was at one time a leader of the Conservative party, made the statement—

Mr. Sinclair: Two times.

Mr. Drew: "Twice" is better grammar.

Mr. Gillis: His attitude to the war was—and this statement was made publicly in the Senate—that I and some of my associates are riding on our oars; if there are no profits to be made out of war there is nothing to fight for. That is not the position taken by the labour men.

Mr. Drew: Mr. Speaker, before the socialist ally of the government makes any more irregular statements of that kind, he should