

Invoking of War Measures Act

I call attention to that last sentence. Last Wednesday the Prime Minister knew what he was going to do and precisely the hour at which he was going to do it. If not, it is the kind of prescient remark which one could scarcely expect even of this brilliant Prime Minister. I wish I had time to cull the writings and speeches of the Prime Minister when he was a great champion of liberty against Maurice Duplessis in Quebec. I wish I had the time to read them, whether in English or in French, because I am certain that in those writings I would find innumerable statements which would condemn his action today in language as eloquent as any used from this side of the House in the debate in which we are now engaged.

In fact, I can imagine how the late Maurice Duplessis must be chuckling, in whatever place he is resting, on seeing one of his arch enemies produce to the Parliament of Canada precisely the kind of measure which he, in his time, had produced to the Parliament of Quebec and which Pierre Elliott Trudeau so eloquently condemned in years gone by.

I feel strongly about this, not only because of what I consider to be the democratic immorality of the measure before us but because I am certain it will do great harm to the unity of Canada and to the relationship between Ottawa and Quebec. In 1968 Canadians thought the Prime Minister might help to unite the citizens of our country. The record is heartbreakingly black. During the 2½ years in which he has been Prime Minister of this country we have seen, not a weakening but a strengthening of separatism in Quebec. Separatism today is stronger than ever before in the history of the province, stronger than it was in 1968. The FLQ has become a dangerous force, such as it never was before, to the point at which the Prime Minister and the government ask us to approve this measure because, they say, they apprehend an insurrection.

What is happening to Quebec as a result of the policies of this government and as a result of the inflexible attitude of the Prime Minister, which he is continually incorporating in his policies. He calls people bleeding hearts and nonentities; anyone who cares about democracy is being soft. The result of this has been an increase in the threat to Canadian unity. When the hon. member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Caouette) spoke earlier he was critical of my leader, mainly, I thought, because he misunderstood my hon. friend from Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas).

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lewis: I may not be able to make myself any clearer than my hon. friend did, and the minds of hon. members opposite are probably no brighter now than they were then, but let me try to repeat what my leader said, in somewhat different words. After criticizing my leader, the hon. member for Témiscamingue then went on to make precisely the same point himself, talking about the poverty, the unemployment and the frustration which results in the kind of thing one sees in Quebec today. This is precisely what our leader was saying.

Though minority groups may advocate violence, they have never been a threat to society unless objective

conditions in society make it possible for them to win the support or, at least, the sympathy of the people around them. The communist party has never made progress anywhere in the west except where objective conditions of injustice, poverty, deprivation and degradation made it possible for it to attract the support and sympathy of the population. In exactly the same way, though to a lesser extent, thank God, this is true in the province of Quebec.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Lewis: It is. The economic and social policy of the government has created the atmosphere in which the FLQ feels strong enough to act as it is now acting, counting on much more support from members of the universities and those in the ranks of the unemployed. Hon. members shake their heads, but that does not alter the situation. That is the fact of life in Quebec. Every economist foretells that this winter unemployment in Quebec will climb to a rate of 15 per cent. This is very likely.

● (4:00 p.m.)

This is why I say to the government that no matter how many Orders in Council it may pass, there will be unrest, demonstrations and violence as a result of the economic policies it has pursued and the unemployment they have created. It is the mess created by the Minister of Communications (Mr. Kierans) when he was Postmaster General, which created an environment wherein the FLQ could hope to gain sufficient sympathy from among the population as to be able to do some of the things it has done. It is the failure of the government to accomplish anything in the field of regional disparity, and the despair and frustration resulting therefrom that has created the objective conditions for disorder which no Order in Council will do away with.

The frustration of the young, the despair of the poor and the hurt of the unemployed are causing the present difficulties in Quebec, as much as anything else. The government must deal with these basic economic and social problems. Depending on this kind of Order in Council is an extremely reactionary way of settling the Quebec situation. Since when has repression solved anything? I challenge the Minister of Justice and any other spokesman for the government to give the House one single example in the history of the western world where repression has accomplished the preservation and reintroduction of order. It never has and it never will. I hope with all my heart that I am wrong, but the result of this action in Quebec will be that a good many of our young students in that province will look upon those apprehended in the middle of the night as heroes and martyrs. It will result in building a still higher and thicker wall between Ottawa and the people of Quebec.

The Minister of Justice said that this entire exercise is directed, not at all the people of Canada or all provinces of Canada but at Montreal and the province of Quebec. I say to the men in government who have just as much concern about the problem of unity in Quebec and Canada as I claim to have—and I respect their sincerity—that they have not given this matter any thought; that

[Mr. Lewis.]