

Emergencies Act

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): Mr. Speaker, I wish to clarify a point that my Liberal colleague made at the outset of his speech this afternoon when he made reference to the fact that with the wisdom of hindsight vision is 20-20, or words to that effect. In other words, he was implying that because we are looking back some 18 years it is easy to be critical of what the Government of the day did.

I wish to put on the record once again, and I wish to remind my hon. friend, that at the time in the autumn of 1970 some 16 members of my Party out of, I believe, 19 Members, voted against the imposition of the War Measures Act. So I did not stand here in my place today with the wisdom of hindsight and 20-20 vision. My Party voted against its imposition and took a terrible beating in the popular opinion polls at the time for having done so. I just want to clarify that point and not leave the misconception on the record.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the Hon. Member for Brant (Mr. Blackburn). Unlike the Tories who said yes at that time, members of the Hon. Member's Party were divided on the issue. There was division within the NDP caucus. Some said yes and some said no, that is quite true.

• (1600)

Mr. Kilgour: Not all Tories supported the measure in 1973, some of us, the Hon. David MacDonald, and others actually published a book opposing the use of the War Measures Act in 1970.

Has the Member read the book entitled *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians During The Second World War* by Ann Gomer Sunahara, who happens to be a constituent of mine, about the internment of Japanese Canadians? If the Hon. Member is aware of those events, and he may not be because it is a long time ago for both of us, would he tell us whether he thinks that the Right Hon. Ian Mackenzie, the British Columbia Minister at the time in the King Cabinet, to put it mildly, was not guilty of racism for what he did in British Columbia? Does the Hon. Member have a comment on that?

Mr. Boudria: The Hon. Member for Edmonton—Strathcona (Mr. Kilgour) is quite correct when he says that I was not around at the time. In my opinion, the internment of Japanese Canadians was an absolutely abhorrent act, just like the deportation of the Acadians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments are now terminated. On debate, the Hon. Member for Esquimalt—Saanich.

Mr. Patrick Crofton (Esquimalt—Saanich): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to offer a few thoughts on Bill C-77. As a member of the legislative committee, I can attest to the diligence and sensitivity with which all Members from various Parties in the House debated the matter. In particular, I would like to single out the excellent chairmanship of my colleague, the Hon. Member for Victoria (Mr. McKinnon)

and the very fine contribution made by our colleague, the Hon. Member for Brant (Mr. Blackburn). To me it was the spirit of Parliament debating a serious issue seriously in the best possible tradition. Consequently, I believe Parliament should make the proposed Emergencies Act the law of the land, for the protection of all Canadians, young and old, and to do it now.

The Bill is flexible. It is responsible, and it is responsive. It is yet another example of a promise made and a promise kept. It is legislation that is long overdue. For the past 18 years, Canadians, and representatives on all sides of the House, have been saying, "The War Measures Act must go".

The Emergencies Act, this replacement for the War Measures Act, is finely tuned legislation, considered with care to deal flexibly with four different types of national emergencies. First, public welfare emergency caused by serious natural disaster, disease, accident, pollution, or breakdown in services; second, public order emergency caused by serious threats to the security of the country; third, international emergency caused by serious acts or threats of intimidation or coercion against Canada or our allies; and finally, war emergency caused by actual or imminent war or armed conflict involving Canada or our allies.

This is legislation which vitally affects the rights of young children, senior citizens, disabled persons, the sick, and everyone who, in an emergency, might depend entirely on the capacities, resources, protection, and the sense of responsibility of the Government of Canada.

I think I can rightly say that each of us in this House is most concerned with three basic issues: the completely unsatisfactory legislation we have had in the past; the compelling need to deal effectively and fairly with national emergencies in the future; and the carefully constructed and remodeled Bill which the Government proposes today.

Thoughtful citizens in each of our constituencies across this country, realize that Parliament must create now a new legal framework to deal with national emergencies, and one that safeguards the civil rights of its citizens. They recognize that the law must provide, on the one hand, authority for prompt action by the Government to protect all Canadians as a nation, and on the other hand, safeguards for our basic rights and freedoms, to protect each Canadian as an individual.

Preparation of this legislation required a just, careful balancing between the interests of the public and the freedoms of the individual person. We are assured that this legislation will be subservient always to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I believe we can agree that leaders of the Government, Public Service advisers, members of the legislative committee, representatives of many associations, individual citizens and, most certainly, Members of the House, can all take satisfaction from having contributed to this endeavour. Many perceptive, prudent people have invested time and effort in this Bill as it was prepared, debated, discussed, and now