

Emergency Powers Act

members of the house wish me to enforce that rule, I shall endeavour to do so.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

EMERGENCY POWERS ACT

PROVISION FOR ORDERS AND REGULATIONS
DEEMED ADVISABLE FOR NATIONAL DEFENCE
AND SECURITY

Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister) moved that the house go into committee to consider the following resolution:

That it is expedient to introduce a measure to empower the governor in council to do and authorize such acts and things, and make from time to time such orders and regulations, as he may by reason of the existing international emergency deem necessary or advisable for the security, defence, peace, order and welfare of Canada subject to the restrictions enumerated in the said measure.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the speech from the throne forecast the introduction of legislation vesting in the governor in council additional powers to ensure adequate defence preparations to meet the present emergency and to prevent economic dislocation resulting from defence preparations.

The question may be asked, what is the nature of the emergency we are facing? In the opinion of the government, it is as defined in the following language in the speech from the throne:

The increased menace in the Far East reinforces the mounting evidence that communist imperialism is determined to dominate the world by force or the fear of force, and that the only hope of maintaining peace with freedom lies in the rapid increase of the combined strength of the free nations.

I should judge that the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew) would agree with the government's assessment of the gravity of the present emergency, because I feel that no other conclusion can be drawn from the words the hon. gentleman used in the debate on the address. Here is a part to which I might refer, as found at page 17 of *Hansard*:

We meet today at one of the most solemn hours in Canadian history. The immense gravity of the situation is not measured only by those military events which have impressed upon us the urgent need for building the ramparts of freedom with the utmost speed.

On page 19 he said:

The chilling truth is that never since our civilization emerged from the dark ages has that civilization—and even freedom itself—been so gravely threatened with extinction as it is at this very hour.

I believe that both the speech from the throne and the hon. member's speech on the address reflected the prevailing view of most people in Canada about the gravity of this situation. Only this morning the government received a delegation of representatives of the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada,

the Canadian Congress of Labour, the Canadian and Catholic Federation of Labour, and the dominion joint legislative committee of the railway transportation brotherhoods, who asserted to us that they represented practically all of organized labour in Canada, and that their membership was something over one million persons. With their dependents they constitute, so they asserted—and I am quite prepared to believe it—more than one-third of the population of Canada. They expressed their view of the situation in forceful and, I think, justifiable terms. Paragraph 1 of their brief reads as follows:

The free world now faces the most ruthless and powerful aggressor in history. The best it can hope for is long years of heavy defence expenditures, a large proportion of its manpower and resources diverted from productive work to a great effort for sheer survival. In this effort Canada must play a major part. We have no choice. The enemy is no longer at a safe distance. He is on our northern doorstep. Our share of the free world's industrial potential is large and important, far larger and more important than at the outbreak of war in 1939. If we fail or falter, our allies may be critically weakened, and disaster may overwhelm us all.

That is the view of a large proportion of the Canadian people at this time. Since that is so, it might afford justification for bringing into effect the War Measures Act, on the ground that we are in a state of apprehended war. I believe the dictionary definition of "apprehended"—perceived or feared—would be met in this instance. There is no doubt that the possibility of war is perceived. There is no doubt that it is gravely feared. If that is so, why not use the War Measures Act?

One reason why we have not proclaimed the War Measures Act is that the government fears such a course might add to the feeling, already too prevalent here and in other countries, that war is inevitable. Since its passage in 1914 the War Measures Act has been used on two very critical occasions, but they were both occasions of actually existing war. It has seemed to us we should do everything possible to avoid any suggestion that we believe war is no longer likely to be prevented. I believe we must increase our efforts to prevent a world war. I repeat what I said the other day about my confidence in the willingness of the free people of the twelve nations, grouped together in the North Atlantic treaty, to build up their strength to a point where aggression will not appear to be likely, to succeed. Moreover, the enactment of an emergency powers bill will not prevent the proclamation of the War Measures Act if the situation should become more critical than it is now. Of course it would not prevent the proclamation of the War Measures Act if we got into a state of actual conflict.