

ment and distress; and whereas the partial failure of the wheat crop of Western Canada has intensified the adverse economic conditions theretofore prevailing; and whereas it is in the national interest that Parliament should support and supplement the relief measures of the provinces and other bodies in such ways as the Governor in Council may deem expedient, and for that purpose should vest in the Governor in Council the powers necessary to insure the speedy and unhampered prosecution of all relief measures and the maintenance of peace, order and good government in Canada.

A little farther on, the Bill provides that the Governor in Council may—

Assist in defraying the cost of the production, sale and distribution of the products of the field, farm, forest, sea, river and mine.

Then, entering a wider field, it says:

Assist provinces, cities, towns, municipalities, and other bodies or associations, by loaning moneys thereto or guaranteeing repayment of moneys thereby, or in such other manner as may be deemed necessary or advisable.

But that is not all. It covers a still wider area of possibilities when it says:

Take all such other measures as may be deemed necessary or advisable for carrying out the provisions of this Act.

I regret to say that the drafting of this proposal is such as to create in the country and abroad a most depressing effect. The terms of the Bill presage calamitous days, such as never before experienced in Canada, and stress the fear of riot and rebellion by calling for unusual powers for the maintenance of peace, order and good government in Canada. Canada's present and its future seem to be painted in unduly sombre colours. Our population is a peaceful and law-abiding one, and I do not know why we should herald the suggestion that great dangers loom up in the near future.

The programme outlined in section 3 is the biggest ever devised by a Canadian Government. It imposes on the Government the most stupendous responsibility. It may create such a situation as will accentuate that responsibility, for without doubt it will sharpen all the appetites throughout the land. It is easy to perceive what may happen when people learn that the Government may assist in defraying the cost of the production, sale and distribution of the products of the field, farm, forest, sea, river and mine. It requires courage to undertake to meet such demands as may arise from the provisions of section 3.

The powers that are sought by sections 4 and 5, for the making of orders and regulations and their enforcement through penalties and imprisonment, suggest very perilous times indeed. It would seem as though we were facing emergencies as in the Great War.

The terms of the Bill strike me as exorbitant, but for my part I will leave the responsibility with the Government, who will have to apply them. I have faith in the honesty of purpose of our Prime Minister, and in the integrity of the Minister of Labour, who will be charged with the direct administration of the Act. I realize that they are assuming very great risks, and I shall be able to judge of their performance when, under the amendment voted by the House of Commons, and which now comes to us, they render an account of their stewardship before or during the month of March next.

The motion was agreed to, and the Bill was read the second time.

THIRD READING

Hon. Mr. ROBERTSON moved the third reading of the Bill.

Hon. Mr. BELCOURT: Before the motion is put, I desire to make a suggestion to my honourable friend. I hesitate to do so, because an amendment of the Bill at this stage might jeopardize its enactment and interfere with the time set for prorogation. However, I should have liked to include in section 7 a provision to cover actions taken where prosecutions are instituted under section 6 and penalties recovered.

Perhaps I had better read section 7:

7. A report shall be laid before Parliament within fifteen days after the expiration of this Act, containing a full and correct statement of the moneys expended under this Act and the purposes to which they have been applied, together with copies of all orders and regulations of the Governor in Council made under the provisions thereof.

Now if we look at section 6 we find that:

6. The Governor in Council may prescribe penalties that may be imposed for violation of the orders and regulations made under the authority of this Act, but no such penalty shall exceed a fine of one thousand dollars or imprisonment for a term of more than three years, or both fine and imprisonment, and may also prescribe whether such penalty shall be imposed upon summary conviction or upon indictment.

That section confers a very wide power, and I think that at the very earliest opportunity Parliament ought to be advised of the proceedings taken during the year under section 6. I do not know that it is possible at this stage to insert a provision to the effect that Parliament should be so advised, but I think that section 7 ought to be made to cover details of actions under section 6 as well as the other items mentioned.