

*Defence Production Act*

will be members opposite who—no, I see one hon. member nodding his head; in his case at any rate that is a forlorn hope and we will wipe him off. The hon. member for Waterloo North (Mr. Schneider) apparently is not going to be beguiled by any argument.

Nevertheless the fact remains that arguments are made presumably on the assumption that reason and the traditions of this house and the principles that apply to parliament can bring some impact upon the thinking of members, and above all in a democracy which is responsive to the thoughts of the people. As the Prime Minister has quite correctly pointed out, it is highly desirable that the members respond to the opinions that they find being expressed. I do not think there is much doubt in the mind of any hon. member who has been following the press across Canada what the predominant opinion is, if the press of Canada at the moment expresses on its editorial pages the opinion of the people no matter what their political affiliation may be.

There is another reason why I should refer to the remark just interjected by the Minister of Defence Production (Mr. Howe) when he says that any legislation is no more permanent than is the government which passes it. I shall leave that statement as it stands, having pointed out that it is not the government that passes it, and deal with the other aspect of it. One of the things which people have learned in some other countries is the obvious lesson that you cannot put the eggs back in the shell once they have been broken, or that in any event it is an extremely difficult process.

In Britain, where a government nationalized the steel industry, the transport industry and other industries over there, a government which was strongly opposed to the nationalization of steel and other industry and which stated that it would return those industries to private enterprise, has found that to be an extremely difficult operation. They have been struggling for some years now to unscramble the mess created by the action of a previous government in nationalizing the steel industry.

Hon. members opposite may say, "Oh, what has that to do with the situation here?" If we believe that we are dealing with legislation and not with the power of a single man or a group of men called the government, then we must recognize immediately that under this act—not in the name of any emergency, not in the name of any special need but merely by their decision that it is desirable from the point of view of defence production—they could nationalize the steel

industry, the aluminum industry, the nickel industry, every mine in this country and every pulp and paper industry in this country.

Oh, yes; I recall the remarks that were made about the fact that we are concerned about big business. What utter nonsense! This legislation does not limit itself in any way to big or little business. It applies to big business, to little business and to the individual. When the minister says there is no section of this act that applies to the individual, it is difficult to take him seriously because over and over again throughout this act there are provisions that deal not only with the freedom of the individual but with the right of the individual to carry on his own work under clearly stated laws; and that is the rule of law.

This is a thing that hon. members opposite should examine. May I submit that unless an hon. member opposite is prepared to agree that the power should rest with this government, without consulting parliament, to nationalize any industry or any activity, then that hon. member opposite has no right to support this amendment. It is as simple as that. The amendment writes into the future as permanent law, to use the expression of the Minister of Defence Production, the power not only to acquire things needed but actually to have crown corporations set up that would take over any of these things. It does not mean merely nationalizing steel, metal, forest products or things of that kind. The act expressly uses the word "commercial", and the government could take over a commercial operation as well if it thought that was desirable for defence activities.

Then as to those who still retain some appreciation of the fundamental concept of our federal system, may I urge them most earnestly to re-examine their attitude toward this act in the light of the clearly-defined authority of the provinces over property and civil rights, over the development of resources, and over other matters of the kind that fall exclusively within provincial jurisdiction. Under this act the minister is expressly required to carry out an assessment of the resources and, wherever those resources may be regarded as needed for defence production, to take over their operation if that situation arises. That cuts right across the British North America Act. That cuts right into the jurisdiction of the provinces. Then, just so that there would be no need to guess, the act expressly states that the right to take over these operations includes hydroelectric development; and there has been no more exclusive field of development in this country under the provincial