

Public Order Act, 1970

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, third reading is the stage at which we decide whether a bill should be passed. Some members opposite decided this bill should be passed long before it was even introduced. If they had paid attention to the debate, they would have realized that some very important amendments were moved, none of which were accepted.

When the War Measures Act was introduced there were many rumours in Parliament and throughout the country regarding the necessity for this measure. The charge was made that many of us did not understand the problems. After seven weeks, most of the information is available to the public. We can now make a decision on that evidence rather than making a supposition on information received from very doubtful quarters.

In the November 25 edition of the *Montreal Star* there is a statement by the Quebec Minister of Justice, who has been given a great deal of authority and latitude by this government under the regulations of the War Measures Act. That minister disagrees with the situation as stated by the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand). The headline of the article reads: "Choquette slams Marchand's estimate of 3,000—FLQ strength 'highly exaggerated'." I read from the article:

"There are maybe 100 or 125 active members of the Front de Liberation du Quebec in my opinion," Mr. Choquette said.

"Mr. Marchand has his own way about him. His statement was highly exaggerated. There were far too many conflicting comments and opinions coming from Ottawa during the crisis."

Mr. Choquette shied away from answering directly any question on government reasoning but, though the answers he did give, left the distinct impression that all, or at least most, of the facts behind the Quebec position have been bared.

● (4:20 p.m.)

There are many who do not blame the government for responding to the request from Quebec in the way it did. To be fair to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), he was one of the few Liberals who thought it was necessary to replace the War Measures Act with some less onerous legislation. There are probably many members of his party who would gladly have given him dictatorial powers had they been asked to do so. One Liberal member indicated yesterday that some Canadians might have to lose their freedom for the sake of the protection of 22 million other Canadians. It seems to me that if freedom is of any importance to the Canadian public, then the freedom of one individual is also a matter of importance. If this view is not shared, it appears to me that the liberties of the 22 million he mentioned are really not worth very much.

I am interested in the position taken by some of the Quebec members belonging to the Ralliement des Créditistes. They have expressed concern about the effect this legislation will have in limiting freedom in their province. I am surprised that other members from Quebec are not equally concerned. The bill before us goes very far in limiting the field of the powers contained in it to one particular province. The people of Quebec must feel ashamed that they have been unable to deal with these

[The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel).]

terrorists. In practice, I believe very few people will be convicted under the War Measures Act or any replacement measure; most will be convicted under the Criminal Code. But no suggestion has been made that we should strengthen the Code so as to keep abreast of present day situations. If the government can show it is necessary, I believe the Criminal Code, applicable to all Canada, should be strengthened in this regard.

In my opinion the government has taken a static position with respect to the situation in Quebec. Though it assisted and, one might say, directed the provincial government in connection with the request made for assistance, when it came to the administration of the legislation, Quebec was left to act on its own. In the past few days the government has been asked to accept changes in this bill, removing the retroactive clause and improving the measure without in any way limiting its effectiveness. I am surprised that none of the Quebec members across the way supported these efforts. After all, they are not provincial members, though they act like provincial members; if they are provincial members, then they are ones who are not able to make it in Quebec, so they came to Ottawa. If they are representatives on the federal scene they should obviously have been asking the federal government to make provision for a review board to look into abuses. Obviously, there will be abuses. Some of them might consider the story coming out of Montreal of a girl being taken to the local gaol, stripped, felt all over, required to discuss her sex life for three hours and then sent back home after being told that if it was to her advantage they would send a couple of policemen home with her and they would probably be able to take her mind off politics and keep her out of trouble. Some members may believe there is no need for a review board, but it seems to me there is.

Sitting on the government benches are many members from the Province of Quebec who are both capable and intelligent. I am concerned that they have not chosen to give others in this chamber the benefit of their advice so that we might solve some of the difficulties which underlie the present situation in the province. Much of the trouble lies within the jurisdiction of the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand); it involves education, it involves the provision of work for the unemployed, it involves proper training for those about to enter the labour market, it involves making people in Quebec feel they have as good an opportunity on the Canadian scene as has any person in any other part of the country.

If there was any reason originally for passing this legislation, it has now disappeared. The situation is totally different now. Underlying it is the need for social and economic improvement, and again I regret that hon. members from Quebec did not take a position which would have supported the efforts put forward by others in this chamber who do have an understanding and a knowledge of the difficulties facing that province.

Some of these difficulties come to my attention from time to time. Last week 20 students from the Province of