

*Defence Production Act*

The fact is that we are exercising our democratic right and our democratic duty to place before this parliament reasons why the government should not go back on its own statement made in 1951. It was this government—this same government that now asks us to remove any time limit—which told us there were in this act powers which should not be continued.

Today we are asked to make them permanent. Do not let any hon. member opposite say that the word "permanent" goes too far. That was the word used by the Minister of Defence Production. He used the word "permanent". The intention of this amending bill of two sections is to make permanent, as part of the law of our land, provisions which by-pass parliament.

I think there must be disappointment in the mind of every hon. member that the Prime Minister, as head of the government, as a lawyer, and as the honorary president of the Canadian Bar Association, did not tell us something of his own concept of the supremacy of parliament and the rule of law. There were times when he did not shun discussion of this subject. There were times when he did not think this was something to be passed over and ignored. There were times when he thought this was perhaps the most important thing that could engage the temporal discussion of any Canadian citizen. Why have we not heard from him as to what this act does mean? Why have we not heard from him some correction of the misstatements of the Minister of Defence Production with regard to the effect of this act?

The Minister of Defence Production has told us that the powers of this act are narrower than those of the corresponding acts in the United Kingdom and the United States. The Prime Minister knows that is not so. The Prime Minister could well have made a comparison of these acts.

Let us concede that the Minister of Defence Production, who asserts that he was responsible for the draftsmanship of this act, was unaware of its consequences. The Prime Minister is not unaware of them. The Prime Minister is not unaware that there are subjects at issue here that go far beyond the question of confidence in the minister. We were perfectly frank in stating why we were continuing this debate. We are perfectly frank now in saying why we continue this debate.

We know that unless there is a revival of conscience and responsibility on the part of the Liberal members of the house, ultimately the act will pass. We hope, however, that it will not pass, because we still hope that a free press will assert itself and that the

members will not be unconscious of the fact that right across Canada today editors of responsible newspapers are expressing opinions which are strongly opposed to the indefinite continuance of these powers without any refinement or redrafting.

The suggestion was made, Mr. Speaker, that we had suddenly, at this stage, started opposing this measure simply for the sake of opposition. For that reason it becomes necessary to remind hon. members opposite of exactly what did take place. This act did not come before us just within the past few weeks. On March 10, almost four months ago, after notice had been on the order paper for some time, a motion was presented to the house by the Prime Minister asking the house to declare that it was expedient that a bill be introduced to amend the Defence Production Act.

At that time there was a discussion of this subject. As has already been pointed out, it was then suggested that appropriate steps be taken to give permanence to the Department of Defence Production and to remove from the act those arbitrary powers which the government itself had said should not be continued.

Since it has been suggested that we have merely been conducting factious opposition at this stage, I wish to quote briefly from what I said at that time, when this motion was under discussion. I quote from page 1985 of *Hansard* for March 14 of this year:

We all recognize the need for a Department of Defence Production. We all recognize that this department should have the necessary authority to acquire the necessary materials which are essential and to direct the production of those things which can be used in our participation in the joint defence of freedom.

I then went on to point out the position the government had taken when this measure was before us in 1951, and later in the debate I had this to say as recorded at page 1987:

... the nature of the threat of any departure from long established practices is not to be measured by what has happened; it should be measured by what could happen at some other time. I am not attributing to any member of the government any motives other than those stated by those who have put forward their support of this measure. In these serious days we are all citizens of Canada deeply concerned about the future of Canadians growing up in this great land of ours and their freedom in the years ahead. I would not seek to draw any distinction between the sentiments of any member in this house in regard to the future of Canada, and of the people who will live in it in the years ahead. The statement has been repeated to us over and over again that this may be a long and tedious struggle for freedom, which we hope will reach a secure peace in the years ahead without the blight of such a terrible war as is now pictured to us as a possibility.

Let us break new ground. Even though four years ago it may have seemed wise in the mind