

Defence Production Act

this house on the many matters that are awaiting our attention on behalf of the people of this country.

This act is an extraordinary one. It is unlike any other act in the statutes of this country, because it gives powers to one individual. It gives him wide and sweeping powers which during its existence have not, thank God, been abused.

The hon. member for Rosetown-Biggart in speaking this afternoon said the members of the Conservative party who have participated in this debate have done so in the interests of industry alone. May I point out to him that in the many speeches to which I have listened it has been definitely stated that not only is industry in jeopardy under this act, but so also are persons. May I read from the Defence Production Act, which is chapter 62 of the Revised Statutes of Canada, 1952, section 31 (d):

(d) require any person who supplies any essential service to supply the service to such persons, to such extent and on such conditions as the minister may prescribe;

Certainly the act affects individuals. It affects labour and everyone in this country. Our argument has been based not only on the protection of industry but on the protection of individuals, labour and everyone who comes under the jurisdiction of this act. This act has been in existence for limited periods of time. As a result of that provision it has had review by parliament, and there has been opportunity for private members to discuss the necessity for its prolongation when the life of the act expired or it was reasonably close to expiration.

To my mind, Mr. Speaker, this is an act that has no place in the statutes of a country with a democratic government. The only time it has a place in these statutes is when there is extreme emergency in the production of defence materials. It is not my intention to discuss personalities but rather to appeal to the Minister of Defence Production, to his fair-mindedness and logical thinking. When I describe the Minister of Defence Production in this manner, Mr. Speaker, I do so because in most quarters in Canada he is considered in those terms. It is my hope that his logical thinking and fair-mindedness has not been overcome by stubbornness and obstinacy.

Since this debate commenced I have had an opportunity to talk to a number of Canadians and to ask their opinion on this particular bill. In the majority of cases they have expressed themselves voluntarily but quite forcibly to the effect that the precedent which has been set in this act should be maintained. By this precedent I mean that the

time limit of three years which has been in this act should be again included and possibly should be increased if at the present time there is some logical reason why it is necessary to have it for a longer period of time. Most certainly the opinion expressed very emphatically was that the act should not be extended for an indefinite period, as is proposed in this amending bill.

It is hard for me to understand why an indefinite period is necessary at the present time, particularly when we have had this act during times when world conditions were far more threatening than they are now. No one has expressed the opinion in this house or outside it that this act is not necessary, nor has anyone suggested that the minister has at any time abused the powers contained in this legislation. In his statement in this house on June 28 of this year, as recorded at page 5380 of *Hansard*, the minister stated:

I can say that now we have started on a program of development that gives me the shudders, a supersonic plane and a supersonic engine. I believe those weapons are certainly required as soon as they can be produced, to ward off the threat which hon. members opposite insist does not exist.

Then he goes on to say this:

However, we embarked on that program and already on that program we have invested \$30 million. Before we get through, it will be around \$100 million. That is a program no other country has carried through successfully as yet.

In his remarks of that date he also mentioned that the government has moved into the field of guided missiles, a field in which no country has accomplished very much up to the moment. He also stated that this program will require large sums of the taxpayers' money for its development. If that is so, then the minister knows fairly well that this development will not continue indefinitely, and that it should be completed within a certain length of time. Why is it, then, that this bill cannot have a time limit which would coincide with the development of these weapons?

In the past it has not been the experience that the opposition has refused at any time to give the minister these powers under this act with a time limit set, and it will not be the experience in the future; because every member in this house is well aware of the fact that protective weapons must be developed, that industry must be geared to produce these weapons that are necessary and that are on the government program for defence purposes.