

*Emergency Powers Act*

In supporting the resolution which stood in the name of the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent), we were told by the Prime Minister himself that the government intended to define the authority given by the measure, to give us an indication of what it was that the government proposed to do. At that time we were under the impression, and this is very clear from what is on *Hansard*, that we were going to have a bill placed before us which clearly defined the circumstances under which any emergency measures could be adopted. My words very clearly indicate that this was our thought, and that this was the basis upon which our remarks had been made. There can be no doubt about that. On page 501, a short time after the words quoted by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson), as recorded in *Hansard* of February 20, 1951, I said this:

I very much prefer that there should be presented to this house legislation which will make it clear what powers are being assumed by the government. I shall go further and say that it is of the utmost importance that such powers as the government seeks and as this parliament is asked to approve should be defined with the utmost clarity so that the public is not left in doubt as to what those powers are. Also, the area of our economy within which legislation of this kind is to operate should be stated clearly so that those who are likely to be affected by legislation of this nature are not going to be in doubt as to whether they will be affected or not, and by that very fact possibly contribute substantially to the inflation which has disturbed this country so much today.

That was what was said when we were dealing with the resolution to the effect that it was expedient that an emergency measure be brought in.

Then, on March 1, the bill was brought before the house. On page 800 of *Hansard* for March 1, 1951, I had this to say:

At the time the resolution was before the house, which resolution had the effect of bringing into the house the bill itself, and while the bill was not yet before hon. members, the Prime Minister in his remarks indicated that it was desirable that this bill should place before this house and before parliament their responsibility for legislation and for what would be done. Following his remarks I expressed my own approval of the thought that had been expressed by the Prime Minister, to the effect that parliament was to be called upon to exercise its responsibility, and that parliament was to have the opportunity to deal with whatever measures were to be taken.

I then pointed out that was not the course that was followed. I could not have made it clearer that we were opposed to a bill of the kind that was introduced. I am not going to read extensively from that debate, because on that occasion I quoted Lord Hewart's famous book "The New Despotism", and pointed out by quotations from that book, and their application to this present measure, the danger of the course that was being recommended to this house by the

[Mr. Drew.]

Prime Minister and the government on this occasion. That was when the bill was before us.

Then, on March 5, the bill was in committee, and there again I dealt with this subject and left no doubt whatever about our opposition to a bill which gave such wide-open power to the government. On March 6, this bill was up for third reading, and on that occasion there was no doubt whatever as to what our position was. The only reason that at this stage of this discussion I am called upon to go back to what was said on this earlier occasion is the complete misrepresentation by the Minister of Justice of what did take place, after that misrepresentation has been brought to his attention time and time again.

**Mr. Garson:** Will the hon. member—

**Mr. Drew:** Unless it is a point of order or a point of privilege, I propose to continue my remarks.

**Mr. Garson:** On a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker, I was going to ask my hon. friend a question. If he does not want to answer it, I am content.

**Mr. Drew:** I shall proceed with what I was going to say.

**Mr. Garson:** Perhaps I might ask it before my hon. friend takes his seat.

**Mr. Drew:** The minister can follow whatever course he sees fit at that time. On page 952 of *Hansard* for March 6, 1951, I had this to say:

Over and over again throughout history there have been tragic examples of free legislative bodies handing over their authority to meet an emergency and then not being able to recapture that authority at some future time when those with a different point of view were unwilling to surrender those powers.

To the statement that I have just made the Prime Minister can answer that this bill will terminate next year. In that respect may I point out, Mr. Speaker, that if in the present emergency this bill is necessary, then it will be necessary next year to renew the measure, or an even stronger one, because we are passing a complementary measure, the Defence Production Act, which is to continue for five years and which obviously will go in double harness with this bill now before us. Therefore unless the government is going to introduce or bring into effect by proclamation a still stronger bill, this legislation will continue for some years, and there may come a time when, through pressures, through force of circumstances that we cannot now envisage, a government of another day might be unwilling to abandon the powers so obtained.

The Prime Minister may also say: This is in the hands of parliament. In answer I would say that we have not seen too much evidence, during this session or preceding ones, that there is that measure of independent expression of opinion by the large number of supporters of the government in this house which would suggest to those who are