

ing shortages in food, housing accommodation and clothing, which are the three most important items in living costs, are such that sharp price advances would appear to be inevitable. The immediate price increases resulting from the hungry market and the removal of subsidies on such key commodities as milk, bread, butter, cotton textiles, would accumulate rapidly as workers sought to protect themselves through wage increases, as producers raised their prices in response to rising wages and material costs, as buyers scrambled for goods and shelter to protect their individual needs, and as the speculative tendency gained momentum. It would be difficult to say how high the cost of living would go before the inevitable collapse. At first, higher prices in the United States and in other countries would stimulate increases here. Later perhaps price levels of the United States, if that country maintained some measure of control, might provide a ceiling.

Nevertheless it seems to me clear that the increase in the Canadian cost of living before the recession set in would be very substantial, and the consequences of this would appear to be serious. The weaker producer groups in the community would be unable to increase their incomes to compensate for the higher cost of living. Savings of the whole Canadian people would depreciate. The returned service man would get poor value for his gratuity and re-establishment grant. Dependents of those fighting men who, unfortunately, did not return, would face serious privations. Pensioners and others who have made provision for their old age, through life insurance or other means, would find that that provision would be imperilled and their security materially lessened. Many citizens would not get a fair share of the necessities now rationed, and those who did would do so only at a very substantially increased cost. And above all our post-war objectives would be lost or indefinitely postponed in the atmosphere of confusion, bitterness and class conflict that would certainly ensue. Orderly reconversion to a high level of peace-time employment would not be possible under such circumstances.

It may be said that, according to correct international principles, the war is still continuing—and that is so. We still have troops in the occupational forces. But the adoption of measures designed to cope with economic conditions, under the War Measures Act, in the manner in which it is drawn, would not appear to be desirable. The War Measures Act was enacted for the purpose of protecting against the immediate consequences of the state of war; and it would not appear to be proper to try, to use the technical terms of

[Mr. St. Laurent.]

that act to deal with matters which were not intended to be included by the parliament which sat when the terms of the act were drawn.

It is submitted to the house that it is preferable to face the situation. The emergency which now exists overlaps the war emergency, and is a consequence of that war emergency, but is not in itself a part of the war emergency with which it was intended the War Measures Act should deal. I would not be prepared to say how far the courts would go in holding that measures adopted now were for the purposes envisaged by the War Measures Act, though technically the act is still in force and still provides a delegation of powers therein contained. It must be remembered that parliament can delegate only that which is within its jurisdiction; and one of the important questions for the consideration of the house is this question of fact: Is it or is it not true that some matters normally of provincial jurisdiction have aspects at this time which are other than their normal aspects as dealt with in the subsections of section 92 of the British North America Act?

I think all hon. members will agree that it is necessary that those controls which were established during the war period should not be abrogated at one fell swoop. I mention bread, milk, butter, the prices of which have been controlled by the payment of subsidies. If these controls were removed the prices would jump to much higher levels, and it would not be possible to maintain wage controls. The whole of these controls are integrated, and each part is necessary to the harmonious functioning of the whole system. A large number of the controls have already been removed, and all are under active consideration by the respective departments which are administering the regulations made under the War Measures Act. The Department of Justice is in the fortunate position of having been able to recommend the repeal of practically all that had to be administered by its officials. Nearly all the defence of Canada regulations have been repealed, and those small portions which remain to deal with such matters as prisoners of war and with the troublesome question of residents of Canada of the Japanese race, et cetera, and are constantly under active consideration for the purpose of effecting restriction to the greatest possible extent.

The bill as drawn will of course be subject to very careful scrutiny, as to each of its sections, when it is considered in committee. This is not the time to discuss the extent to which its provisions go. When the bill has reached the committee stage I expect to be