

*Munitions and Supply Act*

in any critical sense, but as a suggestion of what I think is proper draftsmanship in legislation of this kind. We have an example in the Income War Tax Act. Unless one is favoured with being provided with a copy of the office consolidation which the department issues from time to time, it takes the proverbial Philadelphia lawyer to know what the statute law is in relation to income tax. However, I mention that merely in passing.

One other general observation. I wonder whether hon. members, aside from members of the ministry and those who have given some attention to the subject, realize the enormous power that this bill confers upon the minister. I am sure he has a sense of responsibility for the powers vested in and conferred upon him. This is a statute which in peace time no parliament ought to pass. I realize, however, and, indeed I was one of the first to realize, that in time of war extraordinary powers must be granted to the executive. But for that I should be opposing this type of measure with all the power at my command. Those are powers that ought not to continue after the war or for more than a reasonable period thereafter. I put that on record as a suggestion to those who follow after us, that legislation of this kind should not be allowed to continue in the post-war period, because it delegates to the executive powers that ought to be reserved to parliament in peace time. These are general observations and are not made with the intention of in any way holding up the passage of this bill.

There have, I think, been experiences in the immediate past of the department which probably call for some of these drastic powers. Within the memory of all of us abuses have crept in. As far as I am concerned, and speaking for myself alone, I say that the minister did right in connection with certain prosecutions that were instituted in Montreal. Public opinion has supported the ministry in the action taken; public opinion will continue to support it if they operate in the same way. Anybody who conspires to make by fraudulent means undue demands upon or undue profit out of the heavily taxed people of Canada should get what is coming to him. I make that statement without any reservation and irrespective of any individual to whom it may apply. I only wish that we could be sure that all the guilty people are being properly looked after. I have no specific cases in mind, but it is almost certain that in the huge transactions being carried on by the department there will always be someone trying to make an

[Mr. R. B. Hanson.]

undue profit by ways that will not bear the light of day. I am, however, glad to think that industry as a whole in this country—I am sure the minister will support me in this assertion—has gained favourable reputation by the way in which they have dealt with these great public contracts. I know one of the biggest corporations in this country, a corporation that some hon. gentlemen take occasion to throw mud at from time to time, that is carrying on huge operations for this department without one cent of profit, not even a management fee. I have pleasure in naming it; it is Consolidated Smelters. I know of no company which has a better record in that regard. It is a pastime with some people in Canada to throw mud at big business. Well, there is big business, which is giving an example to the people of Canada to-day of carrying on huge operations without a dollar of profit from the taxpayers of this country. I could name others, but I am not going to. I could tell of the paper companies—I am saying this for the benefit of those who criticize industry from time to time—who have put at the disposal of this nation at war all the facilities they have in certain instances with respect to mechanics and industrial production. I think this word of credit ought to be spoken regarding them at this time.

I am a little far afield from the purpose of this bill, and I am not going to follow that further. I say this to the minister, that the powers given to him under this bill are great powers, and arising out of that very fact they ought to be exercised with the utmost discretion. Under this bill power is given to go in and take over my plant if the minister in his judgment thinks I am not operating it properly. That is a great power to vest in any one man; it is a power capable of great abuses if one were so disposed. I am not suggesting that there has been in any specific case an improper exercise of the powers given to the minister, but I recall that with respect to one company the management of which was taken out of the hands of the directors, they did protest against the minister's action. I am not in a position to judge as to the merits of their claim, but it illustrates this point, that unless the greatest care is taken great injustice may be done under the powers conferred by this bill. Therefore I beseech the minister and those who are advising him—because he must depend upon the sagacity and wisdom and judgment of his advisers, those who are sitting around him in an executive capacity—that they will be as wise as Solomon himself when they come to deal with this matter.