

the leader of the New Democratic Party were Prime Minister of Canada today, how long do you think Canada would last? I say it would last about ten minutes. I would sooner have my good friend, the leader of the *Créditistes* as Prime Minister and gamble on him.

We are lucky in our choice of Prime Minister—and in saying that I am certainly not waiting for any call. When I first came to Ottawa after long experience in the legislature of the province of Ontario, I was not a Trudeau man. I did everything in my power to see that he did not become leader of the Liberal party. But having been here for a couple of years and seen the sincerity and brilliance of the man, the quietness with which he does business, I say we should all thank God that he is Prime Minister of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whicher: He is one of the few men who can hold Canada together.

Mr. Aiken: Why are we in this mess, if he is so damned good?

Mr. Whicher: If I were a Tory, I would not talk about a mess. They have three leaders and do not know which to choose. That would be enough to bother anybody. Talk about acts of insurrection! It is a wonder they have not invoked the War Measures Act in their own caucus.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Whicher: I do not wish to take further time, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure my Tory friends will applaud me for saying that. I want to end on a serious note. Having talked to my friends from the great province of Quebec, I know of the serious difficulties confronting that province, indeed the whole country. I also know this measure was not invoked lightly. I have every confidence that legislation will be brought before the House, if not next week then the week following. The War Measures Act will not be the law of the country and legislation more limited in scope to look after the present crisis will be put before Parliament. I hope that instead of taking four or five days discussing it, members of the opposition will pass it quickly.

Mr. McGrath: It has been passed since four o'clock Friday morning.

Mr. Mahoney: He is talking about the proposed legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. I bring to the attention of hon. members that the hon. member for Bruce (Mr. Whicher) still has the floor.

Mr. Whicher: Contrary to what some of the front-benchers in the New Democratic Party and the Conservative party may think, we Liberal backbenchers do have a little say about what goes on around here. We certainly express our views. We are as interested in civil liberty as anybody else. Dozens of members of

Invoking of War Measures Act

the Liberal party had many years of war experience, as did other members. In a situation like this it is possible that innocent people will be taken to jail, and that is indeed very unfortunate. But we are just as interested in their liberty as other hon. members. This is why I am confident that the government will bring in new legislation a little better suited to the present crisis than the War Measures Act.

I have many friends from Quebec, some of them who speak both languages well. In view of the crisis we are facing, I want to close on this note. I do not know whether hon. members are familiar with the works of a great English poet who many years ago wrote a poem which I think is apropos the present situation. I am sure the Prime Minister will know this poem, because I think he is acting in the way Rudyard Kipling described in the first two lines of the poem "If":

• (5:20 p.m.)

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,—

The Prime Minister is keeping his head and will continue to do so whether or not all about him lose theirs. We are in good hands.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, as a Canadian and a Quebecer, I would like at this time to express some very objective and personal opinions in the course of this most important debate, in view of the consequences of the measure now under discussion. Of course, as a member of an opposition party, I have responsibilities but these are not necessarily of a nature to compel me to oppose this measure now before the House.

My first responsibility does not consist only in participating to debates on various legislative measures, but it includes as well compelling the government to take action when I feel that the legislation being examined is necessary for society. However, it is also my duty to oppose the passage of a legislation which might go against the interests of Quebec or Canada.

Belonging to a political group is not conducive to an end, it is a means. As a chosen representative in the last election, I am entitled to express my opinions and my constituents expect that I do so freely and objectively. They do insist that I protect not only the interests of my constituency but those of my province and my country as well.

Therefore, I shall carefully refrain from political partisanship in the course of such an important debate. I shall carefully leave aside certain arguments which can be discussed at the proper time.

I did not think that so soon after being elected I would have the opportunity to take part in the passing of such an important measure. In the name of the majority of the people of Quebec, in the name of the French Canadian nation and of its future, I do not have the right to give in to partisan considerations.

I did not hesitate to say, when I was elected, that I would first of all represent my province in Parliament.