

Invoking of War Measures Act

The people of Canada are entitled to know the procedure that will bring this situation to an end.

The conditions in the country that will require revoking this drastic step should be made absolutely clear to all Canadians. I am a little surprised that the Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand) did not do this. We are left to assume when the act will be revoked. I wonder whether the government has taken the opportunity in the last several hours to advise, in an official way, the premiers of the provinces who are members of the privy council of the background which led to the implementation of the War Measures Act and the regulations under it? If not, will they be advised? The sooner they are advised, the better. Even at this late date, the privy councillors should be fully advised of the reasons behind this step.

The people of Canada, as well as the press, are curious. They want to know if there have been any bomb threats or any bombs found in public buildings. How many people have had their lives threatened by the FLQ in the last 14 days, apart from the two about which we know and which hopefully are still alive and in their charge? When will charges be laid against the approximately 300 people who have been arrested since early yesterday morning? When will they be charged and what will the charge be? Who is working on the charge? What will the information contain that is laid against these people? Who is drafting it? Is the federal authority involved or is it purely a matter of provincial administration? Will all the charges be the same or will there be different charges? If this were not such a serious situation, one might be tempted to ask when construction will begin on the penitentiary that is going to house these people.

Has the government given any thought in the last 12 days to the tremendous costs that are involved? Will the defence purse strings be loosened prior to 1973? Are there contingency plans? Will the Department of National Defence plans suffer as a result of this situation? I am not suggesting they should not suffer if it is necessary to make a change. Will any program be curtailed because of the mounting costs resulting from what is happening today?

If this situation continues for any extended length of time, where will the financial assistance come from to meet the tremendous administration costs in the city of Montreal? When will we learn whether the terror in Quebec has clear international implications? One minister of the Crown has hinted at this in this House and on television, yet denies full information to the people of Canada. As a result of this, we can only expect the Canadian people to be concerned.

I do not suggest that the government is attempting to stir up the feelings of the Canadian people. I am sure this is not what was intended. However, this is what has been done. The hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Thompson) earlier today made very clear that there are international implications. If so, those who have the detailed knowledge should communicate to the people of Canada how extensive these implications are.

[Mr. Forrestall.]

I wish to reiterate my support of the Prime Minister and the government in any action to bring to a halt all the terrorist activity that exists today. These people are so cowardly they are really not worth talking about. There must be an end to the conditions that give rise to thoughts that lead men to react violently against their fellow man. If I am satisfied that the situation warrants the implementation of this drastic step, I will support it. However, I first want the answers to a few questions. As my leader stated, there might have been another way for the government to act. It is not enough to simply say this was not possible. If it was impossible, we should be told why. Answer some of these questions and I am sure the people of Canada will accept being deprived of certain of their freedoms for as long as is necessary to rid this country of the evil that exists in it.

• (9:00 p.m.)

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of Agriculture): I should like to take part in this debate briefly this evening for two reasons; first, to indicate to this House and the people of Canada the very high level of support for the action which has been taken by the government in that part of Canada from which I come, the Province of Alberta. I have spent many hours on the telephone today, and before today, with respect to this matter and I think I can say, without reserve, that the action which has been taken by the government along with the explanations which have been given has the almost unanimous support of the people of Alberta in all political parties. I want to say that this support has come from good Canadian citizens of all political affiliations.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Olson: My other reason is to argue that there is at least a degree of misunderstanding which is being perpetuated with respect to the legal base for the kind of action the government is taking. I think it should be known to this House and to the country that all the people to whom I have talked in Alberta recognize the gravity of the situation. Indeed, they regard this as a national problem, not as a Quebec problem. I might say I do not believe the people of Alberta who are not as close to the scene where these acts of violence have taken place have the same level of fear, because they are not as closely exposed to it, so I think there is some difference between their understanding of the situation and that of the people who are living with it in Quebec.

An hon. Member: Hear, hear.

Mr. Olson: But there is no difference in the views of the people of Alberta, nor indeed is there any difference in the underlying apprehension of the long term effects if the government had not taken action. I say this because the people from western Canada, and from Alberta in particular, realize that the kind of thing which has manifested itself in Quebec in the last few days is certainly not confined to Quebec. The people of Alberta are concerned lest it could be a condition which is contagious,