

Mr. Trevor Morgan (St. Catharines): Mr. Speaker, I rise, not armed with the notes that many members across the aisle have had when addressing Your Honour as to the problems concerning Bill C-236. I just stand here. I really cannot find a word to express the antipathy I feel towards this bill. In essence, it really heaps a hunk of horrifying humbug on the people of Canada and this parliament as has never been done before.

I am amazed that we sit here in such small numbers while this bill is being debated. It could really amount to a very horrific thing. I use the word "horrific" in terms of the annals of the government of Canada. Why horrific? It is very simple. The War Measures Act is really a game of Snakes and Ladders or Monopoly in comparison to what this bill can do. I wish some people would take cognizance of the fact that this bill gives Machiavellian powers to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Macdonald). It gives powers that are not only Machiavellian, but dictatorial and totalitarian. I could use all the adjectives in the book, but they would not begin to describe what the minister is doing to the democracy which, when I came to this House, I thought existed. I was naive enough to think that in a democracy, the means should justify the end, but I am satisfied from this piece of so-called legislation, this evil, vindictive bit of parliamentary nonsense, that the minister does not give a damn about ensuring that the end must always justify the means. That is horrific.

I used the word "humbug". Members opposite who think of "humbug" as a Christmas expedition or as having some such connotation should look up the word in the dictionary. It seems to deceive, to mislead, to lead one person to think what is so is what is not so, and what the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources proposes is sheer humbug. He is an intelligent person. I would ask him to look up the definition of humbug to see why I say that is true. It bothers me that this terrific humbug is developing because what he is doing is unbelievable, unnecessary and unconstitutional. Unbelievable, because I am convinced in my own mind that this whole bill has arisen because there is a power conflict, a real fight going on within the cabinet at the moment as to who is to achieve power. I would say there is no doubt that the present Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is sacrificing the best interests of the country on the cross of self-expediency and the cross of self-indulgence and the cross of what he wants, so that he can control what goes on in this country of ours.

● (2010)

What does the legislation call for? He can do anything he wants. We are often accused of being hewers of wood and drawers of water. We cannot even do that under this legislation because the forest industry is now caught by this bill. We cannot even draw water because that is under transportation. The provisions of this bill affect the electrical industry, the transport industry and the automotive industry yes, the automotive industry. Do members across the floor realize there are 150 parts in every automobile which are fabricated by the petrochemical industry and if you can control that industry you can control automotive manufacturing in this country? That is the power you give to the minister under the present bill. Is it comprehensible you would want one minister to have this power?

Energy Supplies Emergency Act

Under clause 16(1) the government is not responsible; it can pass any regulations it wishes and not be responsible to anybody. Where do they go from here? The government says it is answerable under law, but what does it do? It makes certain little rules and regulations which permit the government to say: We don't care about the three or four hundred environmental laws and regulations passed by the provinces; we don't care, out of the door they go, because this little commissar—he will be known as Commissar Macdonald before this bill is through—wants this power. I thought we got rid of all that stuff at one time or another. You look to the Combines Investigation Act and find the same results. That law is out of the window.

I thought the government was interested in doing something for the people of Canada. I thought they were interested in making sure we are all equal under the law. But they do nothing, and I point the finger at you, Mr. Minister, and I say actions speak louder than words. Do not tell me what you think about the grandiose words you may speak. I say to you, if you have any responsibility for government in Canada, actions speak louder than words and your actions belie what your words may say. We could go on and describe unto you the way you treat the laws of this country. You have no respect for the laws of this country. You defy the constitution of this country. Under section 92 of the British North America Act the provinces have certain rights and obligations, but you do not care about that. You say: if you don't agree with us about what the price of electrical energy shall be, that does not matter to us; the board will report to me and I will be answerable only to one or two members of the cabinet who are fighting for power. That is all it means, unfortunately, as I see it. There is no question about that. It is so obvious it makes my heart sick.

I think this legislation was conceived in desperation because the government had no national energy policy, so we flin and flan and wail and wassail from one end of the bill to the other without knowing where we are going. It is strictly desperation politics trying to salvage something from nothing. And all you get from that is garbage, which is all this legislation amounts to because it will not achieve anything worthwhile except give to the minister the dictatorial power to run everything within this country. Tell me of one basic industry which is not dependent on oil to do what they have to do!

If you look at the interpretation section of the bill, Mr. Speaker, you will be amazed when you realize the extent of these powers and the care the minister has taken to ensure that actions under the bill should be accountable only to the cabinet, not to parliament. Yet, surely this is our purpose in being here. Surely, we should have some responsibility. But the minister would say: I want it all myself. How totalitarian can you get? How Machiavellian can you get? Any phrase you can lay your tongue to does not describe the essence of the power the minister wants to have. If he were responsible he would never design legislation of this kind. His guts would not let him. I say the legislation was conceived in desperation. It will be pursued with the indifference the government has always shown toward parliament. They do not care what parliament does or what parliament thinks.