

*Defence Production Act*

that he went far enough and gave us enough information to enable me, at least, to support the continuation of the department. He said, as recorded at page 1904 of *Hansard* for March 10, 1955:

This amendment is being introduced to extend the life of the department so that it may operate on a more permanent basis. We feel that there are a number of reasons for recommending this action at this time.

Hon. members will recall that when the Department of Defence Production was established on April 1, 1951, it was to meet an emergency situation brought to a head by the fighting in Korea. At that time it was impossible to predict how long the need for greatly increased military defence procurements would continue. To meet the immediate situation, the government embarked on a three-year defence preparedness program which it was later found necessary to extend because of circumstances which continued to exist. Procurement machinery to carry out this was established on a short-term basis. Almost four years have elapsed since the Department of Defence Production was set up and it is now apparent that the temporary character of the department is neither in keeping with the international outlook nor satisfactory from an administrative point of view.

As far as the need for a separate department responsible for the production and supply of Canada's military requirements is concerned, the situation has not changed. The peak of the defence program is past—

I think those are significant words.

—at least we hope that what is past will prove to be the real peak, that will at no time be exceeded—but it is levelling off at a relatively high level and the magnitude of the program is such that we feel it should not be left to the responsibility of crown agencies or branches of other departments with important functions of their own to perform.

Then, leaving out certain portions and coming to the foot of page 1904 of *Hansard* for March 10, 1955, we find this:

To carry out production and procurement to meet Canada's present sizeable and complex defence program requires a department staffed by competent and experienced officials. Hon. members will appreciate that it is difficult to attract and retain high-calibre civil service personnel in a department that is looked upon as temporary, that is to say, to have them come there for an indefinite time, and that is particularly true in peacetime.

This was on March 10, 1955, and it will be noted that the Prime Minister refers to this period as one of "peacetime". Then he continues:

When the situation is really critical, well, the critical nature of the situation weighs heavily in the minds of those who make their services available for the benefit of their fellow citizens. But when it extends as something which nevertheless becomes a semi-permanent feature of the necessary requirements, it is desirable, we feel, to have some permanent character to the organization.

That does give some information. I think every member in the opposition, including myself, agrees that if we can be shown something is necessary we will not oppose it. We

[Mr. Montgomery.]

are satisfied it is important that the department be maintained for the purpose of retaining the personnel.

Then we have no quarrel with that clause in the bill which fixes the minister's salary. However, when we come to the powers being conferred upon the minister we feel that an important principle is involved. The Prime Minister is not very definite on that point, and says this:

I do not feel that the time has come to take out of the act those powers which are there and which enable the department to deal expeditiously with any situation that would interfere with the regular maintenance of Canada's defensive strength and the regular carrying out of Canada's undertaking.

The Prime Minister says he does not feel the time has come. I suggest that neither would he feel that these powers about which hon. members have been speaking, and which they have quoted, should be written into the law of the land. And that is where we take issue with this bill. Certainly no one wishes to tie the hands of the minister. When the Defence Production Act was introduced in 1951 it was my understanding that it was considered to be emergency legislation. The country was engaged in actual warfare. We had troops fighting in the front lines. We had commitments with our allies which had to be carried out with the least possible delay. Apparently, however, there was nothing but disorganization facing the government. We were neither prepared nor organized to meet that sudden emergency. Apparently no efficient machinery was available, and the country was faced with an emergency.

I understand that at that time the government did not wish to invoke the War Measures Act because it might indicate that our people were becoming involved in a major war, which the Korean outbreak was not considered to be. As has turned out, the military activities at that time were confined to what might be described as only a minor disturbance when compared with the two great wars which in our generation have bled not only this but other countries.

Therefore the government at that time, and I believe rightly so, decided that it should have these extraordinary powers. While I was not in the house and did not hear the arguments, I understand there was very little objection to the legislation. It was considered to be of a temporary nature and for a limited time only. It was to bring about speedy and efficient action in meeting a sudden emergency in which the country found itself. It was deemed expedient and wise to set up a new department of government. And as the years have gone by everyone seems to agree that this was a wise