

Emergencies Act

someone else. To say that something is above politics and then to enter two lines later into political diatribe is somewhat inappropriate in my considered opinion.

Notwithstanding all of that, I am happy that we have this Bill. I am pleased with the amendments that have been proposed. I know of a text which was written for a publication entitled *The National* in its March, 1988 edition. The article is entitled "Committee Outlines Problems in Emergency Measures Bill". This publication is published by the Canadian Bar Association, and I quote from it:

It is our submission that the definitions of the various classes of emergencies need "tightening up" . . . As it presently stands, this legislation could permit the government to invoke sweeping public order emergency powers to combat such problems as unemployment and inflation.

For example, a "public order emergency" could be declared under the legislation in order to regulate a situation of rising unemployment and inflation.

Indeed, there have been other countries which have used similar legislation to deal with such matters as labour strikes and so on. Of course, we do not want that in Canada, or least I do not want that. I do not think that any Member of the House wants that.

I am glad that the amendments which were proposed and adopted earlier today were worded in such a way as to tighten up the language of the Bill. They remove some of the confusion that could have otherwise been there so that a situation whereby this legislation could be used in such a way has been avoided. I am not suggesting that the Government ever wanted to use the legislation in a situation of strike or anything else. I am not saying that. However, it is important as well that the legislation be perceived as being fair and just. The proposed amendments will give that appearance and will make Canadians generally feel better about the Bill, notwithstanding the good intentions of the people who proposed the Bill in its original form.

As Hon. Members will know, I did not sit on the parliamentary committee that dealt with this Bill. However, judging from the debate earlier today it seems obvious that the committee was not only a very good one but that it was also very well chaired and organized. I congratulate the Members of the House on all sides who participated in the committee and who have proposed the amendments which were carried earlier today.

It is quite obvious that when the Government agrees to adopt amendments of opposition Members and when members of the Opposition unanimously agree to adopt government amendments that means that there was indeed a good spirit of co-operation on the parliamentary committee which dealt with the Bill. I underline that point, along with my other colleagues who have done so. I congratulate the Members of the House who worked on this Bill at the parliamentary committee level.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for allowing me to participate in the debate on this Bill. It is my hope that it will become law very soon.

[Translation]

Mr. Ferland: Mr. Speaker, I may have a small question for my colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell (Mr. Boudria).

He said a moment ago that in my speech I had referred to the federal Government's unilateral action. I do not believe I said that in my remarks. However I listened carefully to what he said concerning the requests of the Quebec Premier in 1970, and the way he read the document my understanding was that at the time the Quebec Premier sought the assistance of the federal Government but, unless I am mistaken, he did not specifically ask that the War Measures Act be invoked.

Now in light of Mr. Jamieson's statements which, to some extent, were confirmed recently by certain people who were in Cabinet at the time, it would seem much more probable that the then federal Liberal Government had indeed wanted to resort to the War Measures Act for what we Quebecers have understood to be a means to get Quebecers to toe the line. It was much more a means of retaliation of the federal Government against the people of Quebec than an attempt to respond to a request for assistance on the part of the Premier of Quebec, as my colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell has suggested.

I wish he would shed some light on the documents he has been reading, because the way I see it it was simply a request for assistance and not for the implementation of the war measures.

[English]

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I will be glad to respond to my colleague who just asked a question of me. I want to refresh his memory with respect to the contents of the letter. I quote in part the letter from the Premier of Quebec which states:

—I request that emergency powers be provided as soon as possible—

That is the first point. The next sentence states:

I request particularly that such powers encompass the authority to apprehend and keep in custody individuals who, the Attorney General of Quebec has valid reasons to believe, are determined to overthrow the Government through violence and illegal means.

I remind the Hon. Member of what the Mayor of Montreal said after consulting with his Chief of Police. He said that he needed the assistance of "higher levels of government". He also said that it has become essential for the protection of society against the seditious plot and the apprehended insurrection in which the recent kidnappings were the first step. Those are not my words, those are the words of the Mayor of the city and of the Premier of the province, a Premier who is in office today as we are speaking.

Something else I wish to say to the Hon. Member is that if he thinks and feels that his Party would have done differently in 1970, and if that was so bad, then why did his own Party support this measure at that time?