

*Emergency Powers Act*

most of the people in my province thought was wrong because I could not tell them why I had done it. In 1945, when the fighting had ceased, I was then in a position where I could use the information which had motivated my conduct and explain to them why I had acted as I did. The response was satisfactory and I felt that I was vindicated by the applause which greeted the explanation that I gave at that time. But for months my repute was not very high among the people of my race. If I had to do it again, I would do it again. I think one must do what he thinks is right. One must accept the consequences. One may make mistakes, but if he thinks that what he is required to do by his responsibility is right, he should do it without fear of the criticism that may be the outcome of such conduct.

I know that our people do not like secret orders in council. I do not, and I know that our people do not. I know that some of them will be worried about what may be in this secret order. If the Leader of the Opposition, the leader of the C.C.F. group and the leader of the Social Credit group were to say that they would look at it, it would mean some sharing of the responsibility and might be some reassurance to the public that what is there is not a threat to the things which we hold so precious. We have no right to ask anyone to share that responsibility.

That order has to continue in existence or we have to go to our associates and say we are not going to do our part to discharge the responsibility that has been assumed by the 14 countries of the North Atlantic treaty. That is not something any member in this house wants to have done.

**Mr. Drew:** May I ask the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) a question? I followed with great interest his explanation with regard to this particular secret order in council; but our contention, of course, is that, whatever this secret order might have been, a similar one could be passed. However, in regard to what the Prime Minister has just said, I thought we had made our position clear. If not, I ask this question now. Would it not be possible to have an act which authorized the government to pass such measures as would be required to carry out their security or other definite requirements in relation to the mutual obligations of the North Atlantic treaty or other matters? I ask this question in relation to our repeated proposition that we would like to have a specific order defining certain authority without disclosing what that might be, instead of a general thing under which this is done. Obviously this legislation was not passed

originally in contemplation of the enactment of that secret order.

**Mr. St. Laurent:** No, and that just illustrates my point. When this legislation was originally contemplated, I may say, we asked the law officers to make it just as restrictive as would be sufficient to meet unforeseen circumstances. They told us we would have to make it very sweeping or we could not be sure that it would suffice for anything we might have to do under it but which we were not able to forecast at that time. That is the reason for its sweeping terms.

I am not quarrelling with the law officers but they do use very sweeping language so they may not at any time be open to reproach because what they did was not broad enough to meet a situation which might develop. Not later than yesterday I was considering, with one of the senior officials, whether we could not have something else that would not appear to be so sweeping. Well, so far we have not come to the conclusion that we can take the risk—and it does involve a risk—of something less extensive; because we are not in a position to foresee how and when and for what purpose the power may have to be used. It has been very little used in the past and I hope it will not have to be used at all, just as we all hope that these armed forces that are being built up by the North Atlantic nations will not have to be used at all. However, they exist, and without them we would not feel the security we do feel because of their effect upon world affairs.

I am not complaining of the criticism, of the warnings, of the appeals to the public to watch against the building up of any autocratic machine. Here we are appropriating over \$2 billion a year just to ward off any possibility that we, or our successors, may have to be subject to any regime of that kind. But the warnings are frequently couched in words that remind one somewhat of the young shepherd's cry of "wolf!" when there was no wolf.

It is not advisable to exaggerate dangers. At the end of this year, or when we come back, whether we are on this side or the gentlemen opposite are on this side, or if some gentleman sitting farther down from the Speaker's chair occupies my place, I do not think any of those Canadians would misuse the powers that were given for the purpose of enabling them, if circumstances should require, to act promptly and effectively for our common safety.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Green:** Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Prime Minister a question? If the government insists that this measure must be