

Defence Production Act

I stand in my place and say I think most Canadians try to do their best, I do not think any member in this house has the right to say to me, "You speak for yourself". I think I speak for a good many people, and I shall continue to do so. I shall continue to defend them until such time as I find that my faith has been misplaced.

To get back to my story, Mr. Speaker, the plans and specifications for this first armour-plate vehicle were brought to Ottawa by General Worthington. After that vehicle had been thoroughly tested at Camp Borden, whether or not the demonstration was persuasive I cannot say but we did produce armoured cars and tanks in Canada. In regard to this particular vehicle I might add that I remember it well, with its revolving turret. It patrolled the streets of Hamilton for some considerable time as mute evidence to anyone who might think otherwise that there were serious-minded, patriotic citizens who intended to undertake the protection of vital military supplies even if they had to do so independently of the government of the day.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have indicated that we think the establishment of a permanent Department of Defence Production is an admirable thing. But I wonder if the government is convinced of this necessity? I wonder if it is planning for the industrial production of defence supplies? Does it propose to resurrect its former plan for a series of so-called pilot plants to develop designs and techniques for defence purposes to be made available to industry? I admit that I ask this question because of a very provocative article which I read this morning in the *Globe and Mail*. I noticed a reference to a scheme by which, as I understand it, the development and production of defence requirements could be fused with the normal peacetime facilities with a minimum of dislocation of ordinary production methods.

In commenting on this matter this morning the article to which I refer alleges that the pilot plants scheme died a peaceful death in a government pigeonhole. If this is true I should like to ask the government whether or not a resurrection is imminent or at least a de-pigeonholing? Do the government now take the view that such a scheme was not feasible, or do they propose to pull it out of its little niche and examine it again?

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): What does this pilot plant pilot?

Mrs. Fairclough: The minister should know.

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): I do not.

[Mrs. Fairclough.]

Mrs. Fairclough: You should know, because it was a scheme that was considered very carefully by the government some years ago.

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): We have many pilot plants.

Mrs. Fairclough: It was a plan whereby pilot plants would investigate the feasibility of defence requirements, do the necessary research to promote these and then pass along to the plants which were engaged in defence production the results of their investigation.

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): We always pilot one weapon at a time.

Mrs. Fairclough: Well, I am sure the *Globe and Mail* will be glad to know there is no pilot plant scheme and no pigeonhole.

Mrs. Shipley: The *Globe and Mail* would not be glad to know anything.

Mrs. Fairclough: I have at times accused my hon. friend of having many attributes, but I never knew before that she was psychic.

Mrs. Shipley: You do not need to be psychic.

Mrs. Fairclough: If we are to give permanent status to the department it stands to reason that arrangements will have to be made whereby the production of defence requirements may be accomplished without imperilling the stability of industries, either financially or productionwise. I should like to quote just a word from an article about which I spoke. It is this:

Instead of reviving the basic idea that national peacetime production and national defence production are both integral parts of our economy, the government now asks parliament permanently to convey to the cabinet some more of its own basic responsibilities.

Before the dinner recess I had something to say about the allocation of extraordinary powers to an executive, in general, and to a specific minister, in particular. Such power as would be conveyed by this measure to the minister and the cabinet exercises a disruptive influence on industry and trade in general. I quote again from the same article:

If the whole defence production problem was thought out again from the beginning there would be no disruption and no production emergency; and nothing but active warfare would again lead to conveying the constitutional powers of parliament to the cabinet or a single minister. An industrial dictatorship is no substitute for more thorough defence production planning either now or at any time.

Since that article was written the minister and his followers have turned down our request for alternative measures, but I urge him to consider this matter once again. We are patient; we can wait. In fact we would be most happy to wait until the next session