

*Defence Production Act*

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to say just a very few words, and I might indicate at the outset that my purpose in rising once again in this debate is to attempt what I think many people would like to see done, namely a little job of conciliation.

It seems to me that on one point there is pretty general agreement throughout this house. I had it down as a note even before the hon. member for Leeds (Mr. Stanton) spoke, but he confirmed my view that on one point there is pretty general agreement among all of us. The words I took down from the hon. member for Leeds were these: "We have no quarrel with the Defence Production Act". It is perfectly true that he indicated the type of amendment his party would like to have in the act, but he said it very clearly and repeated it: "We have no quarrel with the Defence Production Act".

That view, I suggest, is held in all four corners of this house. We all recognize that there is needed at the present time a Defence Production Act. We all recognize that the minister in charge of that department must have certain powers if the job of defence production and defence procurement is to be carried out, and if this is to be done without adversely affecting the economy of this country. I repeat that we are all agreed on that. Some of us feel the need of such an act more than others, and for that reason we of this group have indicated right through the piece our support of the legislation and our readiness to vote for second reading of this bill.

Because we feel the act should be continued, because we want to vote for second reading, we do not feel we can support any amendment which has in it the words that the bill be not now read a second time. Any such amendment, no matter what other ideas it may contain, in our view has the effect of killing the bill and, frankly, we support the bill.

I could go into the arguments as to why we support the bill, but that might not be consistent with my desire to do a job of conciliation. But may I move on and point out that the only question over which the house is divided, the only question that is keeping us here—not only keeping us here but keeping us from the consideration of other important business yet to be dealt with in this session—is this question as to whether the act should be put on a permanent basis or whether there should be a time limit written into the act.

**Mr. Lennard:** And the powers.

**Mr. Knowles:** I want to be perfectly fair. The hon. member for Wentworth (Mr. Lennard) indicates that there is some question about the powers. That is a correct statement, and it is particularly true among my friends of the Progressive Conservative party that some of them decry the nature of the powers and think the powers should be limited. Others have said, as did my hon. friend from Leeds just now, that they have no quarrel with the act. The one point on which there is a real difference, a real impasse, is the question as to whether the act should be permanent or whether it should have a time limit.

At the resolution stage I spoke on both aspects of the matter, namely the need for the legislation and the question as to whether or not there should be a time limit, and I indicated then that our prime concern in this group is that we need the legislation. I indicated, putting it on a secondary basis, that we thought that consideration might well be given by the government to the suggestion that a time limit be written into the bill. During the debate on second reading we have said next to nothing about this aspect of the question, whether or not there should be a time limit, because basically we think that industry, particularly industry dealing in war contracts, must be made subject to the control of parliament and the government in the interests of the people, and we support this legislation.

Now let me come to the question as to whether there should be a time limit in the bill or whether it should be permanent. I said on the 14th of March that I wished the Conservatives would consider the government's plea for the legislation and I wished the government would consider the Conservatives' plea for a time limit, but let us look at this quite frankly. If the act is passed without any time limit, it is really begging the question to say that means it is there in perpetuity, that that means it is there for all time—for eternity, as one member said.

The fact of the matter is that any act that is on the statute books can be repealed by parliament at any time. We know very well that, just as the munitions and supply act was repealed on the motion of the government when its usefulness had run out, so, if the usefulness of this act or the need for it were to run out, the government would repeal it. On the other hand, if a time limit were put in the act and when that point were reached it was still necessary for the powers to be continued and for the department to be continued in existence, parliament would extend the legislation.