

might point out that this tendency on the part of government members to sit in the House of Commons in silence—

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order. I hope my hon. friend is not now going to make a second reading speech on section 1 of the bill.

Mr. MACDONNELL (Muskoka-Ontario): No, Mr. Chairman, I assure you I am not. I am just laying a foundation for one or two questions I wish to ask, and I shall be brief. I was just saying it seemed to me that under our system of government, with all its advantages, we are running a great danger of so denaturing the members on the government side of the house that we lose the undoubted advantage they have in the United States, where the legislative side has much more authority than we have here. Perhaps it has too much authority there, but here I think the executive side has grown out of all proportion to what was originally intended.

I come to the minister's speech. He said the principle of the bill is a very simple one, namely the use of import restrictions to conserve United States dollars. Then he went on to say that one might quarrel with details, but that surely no one could quarrel with that principle. I deny that that is the principle. His statement is correct so far as it goes; but I suggest that it is only a partial statement and that it leaves out what is the most important, or, at any rate, a very important and objectionable feature of the bill, namely the arbitrary powers given to one man.

That is a principle we find now in peacetime in a bill before the committee, and it is a profound misfortune that it has not been discussed at greater length. It is a profound misfortune that the government has been led into a measure of this kind. I find it difficult to believe that the Prime Minister, with his background, could in his heart be in favour of legislation of this kind. I am sorry he is not in his seat at the moment, but I should like to read—

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order. I believe I should remind the hon. member that the principle of the bill was dealt with on second reading and supported by a vote of the house. I should hope that the hon. member would now direct his attention to the sections of the bill, the first of which deals with the short title.

Mr. MACDONNELL (Muskoka-Ontario): I bow to your ruling, Mr. Chairman, but I submit that a practice has grown up whereby we have been allowed a great deal of latitude

on section 1. I have heard that argued in the house on many occasions in the comparatively short time I have been here; and it seems to me that, while the rule has always been stated, the rulings have been somewhat lenient. As I said a minute ago, I am really laying a foundation for some questions I should like to ask, and I can assure the committee that I shall not be long.

I believe it is important for us to have in our minds the great objection which this party has—and I hope it is shared by others—to the arbitrary powers the bill gives to one man. That is something we must keep in mind when we are dealing with these schedules; our whole judgment of what is contained in the schedules and in the bill itself must be affected by that objection.

I was about to say that I find it difficult—and I wish the Prime Minister were here so that he might speak for himself—to believe that the Prime Minister, with his background, could really believe in this. I should like to read briefly from a broadcast made by the Prime Minister during the 1935 election campaign. In his speech on July 31 of that year he said:

It was not until someone began to preach the doctrine that parliamentary methods were not suited to these times; that the constitution was an obstacle to progress; that shorter and swifter methods were necessary to obtain results even if they involved sweeping aside parliamentary restraints, and over-riding the constitution, that in Europe parliaments and democracies alike began to disappear. Have we not all heard this very sort of language from Mr. Bennett, Mr. Woodsworth and Mr. Stevens?

And so I wish to make the point that the real principle of the bill, or at any rate a real principle of it, is its arbitrary power. The minister will no doubt say that flexibility is desirable.

Mr. ABBOTT: On a point of order, I must challenge the statement that the principle of the bill is the use of arbitrary power.

Mr. MACDONNELL (Muskoka-Ontario): I said "a principle".

Mr. ABBOTT: That may be a criticism of it; but the principle of the bill on which the house has voted is the principle I set out in closing the debate; and I do not think we should at this time rehash all the points dealt with on second reading, nor do I expect the hon. member for Muskoka-Ontario intends to do that. If my submission is correct; he was quite out of order in reading the quotation. I did not wish to interrupt him; but if he is allowed to do that, then every member in the committee can be allowed to read copious