

Defence Production Act

them in particular. The first point I would make is that section 7 of the act must be read in conjunction with the general power to take over all kinds of goods, supplies and services—I repeat “and services”—which the minister may think are desirable for the purposes of defence production. Section 7 reads:

(1) The minister may, if he considers that the carrying out of the purposes or provisions of this act is likely to be facilitated thereby, with the approval of the governor in council procure the incorporation of any one or more corporations for the purpose of undertaking or carrying out any acts or things that the minister is authorized to undertake or carry out under this act.

(2) For the purposes of this section, upon the request of the minister, the Secretary of State of Canada may, by letters patent under his seal of office, grant a charter under part I of the Companies Act constituting such persons as are named by the minister and any others who may thereafter be appointed by the minister in their stead or in addition thereto a corporation for any purpose mentioned in subsection (1).

(3) The minister may remove any members, directors or officers of a corporation incorporated under this section at any time and may appoint others in their stead or may appoint additional persons as members.

The remainder of the subsections contain the details relating to those corporations. But in those three subsections of section 7 there is power by the governor in council upon the recommendation of the minister to set up crown corporations to take over any of the undertakings which the minister can be empowered to take over under the general provisions of this act. This would include almost anything conceivable in the Dominion of Canada, including hydroelectric power plants, pipe lines, gas and oil production, forest operations or anything else of that nature. I know that it is said, “Where has this been done?” I emphasized this morning and I emphasize again that our responsibility as members is to examine what can be done in the hands of any government administering this act.

It is all very well for the Prime Minister to express his confidence in what may happen at the next election. Perhaps that is a perfectly human and natural thing for him to do, but the fact remains, as the hon. member for Spadina (Mr. Croll) will recall, that very sudden changes do take place. Sometimes a very large majority on one side is transposed into a very large majority on the other side. It is not our duty to speculate on these possibilities of change; it is our duty to enact legislation with the recognition of the fact that it is within the realm of human possibility that the public may become more or better informed about some aspects of our public affairs. In fact that is what we hope to do as a result of continuing this debate.

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): In that case this legislation would not be permanent.

Mr. Drew: What is that?

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): No legislation is any more permanent than the life of the government that sponsors it. Why are you worrying very much about the permanency of the legislation?

Mr. Drew: I do regret that this has opened up an entirely new line of discussion. It is in view of the fact that the Minister of Defence Production is the minister who has been asking for these powers in the name of the Prime Minister and he makes the statement that no legislation has any more effect or is binding except in the life of the government.

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): I did not say that.

Mr. Drew: I will ask the minister to state what he did say.

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): I said that no legislation is any more permanent than the life of the government that passes it. The next government can revoke it.

Mr. Drew: No legislation is any more permanent than the life of the government which passes it.

Mr. Fleming: The government does not pass it.

Mr. Drew: In the first place may I point out that this shows just what is permeating the thinking of the minister, who outside the house is such a good and estimable citizen but who inside the house has so absorbed the esteem of his own power which is put forward from time to time by those behind him in enthusiastic terms. It is not the government that passes this legislation, it is parliament. I know the minister thinks that it is the government, but it is parliament. It is to the members of parliament that I am directing my remarks. I know what would happen if it were the government. That would be done now. At least I do assume that the minister extended the courtesy to the government of letting them know he was introducing this bill. However, that is something that naturally remains within the secrets of the government itself.

My remarks are directed primarily to the members who are being asked to support this legislation. Yet they are also being directed to the people outside the house who in this democracy have their opportunity to indicate to the members themselves exactly what they think about legislation of this kind. After all, we have been encouraged by the fact that interest in this subject has been increasing and we still do hope that there