

*Emergencies Act*

● (1650)

When one thinks of the history of Canada one thinks of the Japanese Canadians and the October crisis of 1970 which should surely have taught us all some lessons. It is so easy in the name of national emergency to trample on the individual freedoms and rights of people. It is my belief that a country that cherishes its democratic tradition, freedoms and individual civil liberties would take great care to ensure that in the defence of those freedoms and liberties it does not destroy the freedoms and liberties of its citizens and others. That is why again I repeat that a great amount of wisdom is needed. In times of national emergencies there is a tremendous groundswell of public opinion by the majority wanting quick, decisive action. It is a wise government and wise legislators who are able to say no, that the preservation of individual rights and freedoms must be fully considered.

We heard earlier today from the Hon. Member for Saint-Denis (Mr. Prud'homme) stating that during the October crisis 80 per cent of the population wanted action. That must have been very difficult for legislators in this House to deal with. After all we are political animals. We do read our mail, and when 80 per cent of our constituents tell us to put this violence that was occurring in Quebec down and to put it down fast by giving consent to the War Measures Act, it was very difficult to stand up for one's own feelings and one's own sense of what is right.

**Mr. Benjamin:** In the face of hysteria.

**Mr. de Jong:** As my hon. colleague from Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) has stated, in the face of hysteria.

In addressing Bill C-77 today I wish to pay tribute to Members of this House. I understand that there were members of the Conservative Party who had misgivings. I understand that the Leader of the Opposition at that time had grave misgivings and there were numerous government Members who had grave misgivings about the measure. A large number of my colleagues from the New Democratic Party were able, in the face of that hysteria, to stand up and do a very non-political thing in expressing opposition to the measures being taken. I hope all of us as legislators in the future, if ever situations like that occur again, will have the courage to exercise our wisdom.

I urge the Government to consider amendments to the proposed legislation so that when this legislation is passed by the House it will have the support of all Members.

**Mr. Prud'homme:** Madam Speaker, I have listened with a great deal of attention to my esteemed colleague who has just spoken. It is always very difficult to talk about a subject that dates back so far. I agree with the Hon. Member that it took a lot of courage to vote against the measure. I agree that when hysteria hits the fan it is always difficult to make a decision. But I have to remind him that what was happening was happening in the Province of Quebec so the people in Quebec were right in the middle of the turmoil. This turmoil did not

happen overnight. I am pleased to be still here today because it was an unbelievable debate, I admit that, and it was a terrible decision to take.

I have not looked at the speech I made in 1970 since then but I think I could repeat it today. I was not part of student life at that time. I was a leader in a way at many universities. I had in mind Kent University. My colleague is well aware of that. Kent University had a youth rebellion, a rightful one. I was a protector of American deserters and draft dodgers. It is written in many books in the United States what I did then, so I have no lesson to learn from anybody for having taken a tough decision then.

I do not know if the Hon. Members know the Van Doos in Quebec, but that regiment was given the task. I was afraid that if a student from my province had jumped on the military in Quebec, someone could have been shot. I repeat again that the agony I personally and others went through was terrible. I had a choice to make, being an elected person. My duty was to stop something that may take place, never knowing if the event would take place. If one does nothing and something happens one is forever sorry for not having acted. That was the agony many Members had to go through then. We will never know in our conscience if we were right. In our conscience some of us, as repugnant as it was, voted for the War Measures Act because we thought we were stopping something from taking place.

I just want to tell Hon. Members something before I sit down. Someone from my own family attended the meeting of the youth at *l'aréna Paul Sauvé*. They were being warmed up to go out in the streets. My relative called and said that they were about to go out in the streets. She was convinced that terrible events would take place. So I voted for the measure.

The Member was very kind in saying that it was repugnant for some, but I noticed that all people from Quebec then voted for the measure.

**Mr. de Jong:** Could I have one minute before we recognize it being 5 o'clock, Madam Speaker?

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne):** The Hon. Member for Regina East.

**Mr. de Jong:** I thank my colleague, the Hon. Member for Saint-Denis, for his comments. I understand the internal turmoil and difficulty that he faced and which many faced at that time. I also remember the October crisis in 1970. I was in Vancouver working with a youth agency. We had a mayor called Tom Campbell who wanted to impose the War Measures Act against the Georgia Strait, against the organization I was working for called Kool-Aid as well as against a number of other people. Had people of the ilk of Tom Campbell had the power of the War Measures Act within their hands they would have thrown into jail hundreds of young people who were involved in legitimate, democratic organizations. That showed me how power in the wrong hands could have done