

*Defence Production Act*

last week end. If the situation is more tense, if the threat of war is closer, I do not see how the government could consider selling our wheat to Poland and our butter to Czechoslovakia. In my opinion that would be most careless.

On the one hand, the government through its actions and through the statements of its spokesmen leads us to believe that peace is much closer than in the past but, on the other hand, it asks us to grant the Minister of Defence Production powers more absolute than those he enjoyed during the war. The opposition can surely not condone such inconsistency.

Prior to the amendment moved by the hon. member for Royal (Mr. Brooks), we learned during the debate on the main motion that the amendment to chapter 62 of the Revised Statutes of Canada, aimed at rendering the legislation permanent, was necessary, because Russia now has the secret of the H-bomb.

Following the amendment moved by the hon. member for Royal, we learned that, in addition, the minister had to build supersonic planes and guided missiles and, for that reason, those powers should be made permanent. That means that, even though our amendment would not be carried, it would have enabled us to obtain more information, and this could lead the opposition to move further amendments in order to obtain additional information, upon which we could decide whether this legislation was advisable.

Mr. Speaker, all these things I am discussing at this time could be minutely discussed in committee. We could see there exactly what powers are necessary for the minister to construct supersonic aircraft or guided missiles. Should more powers be required to build flying saucers, if need be, for defence, he can be assured that the opposition would be ready to go along with him.

The opposition is not opposed to the establishment of the Department of Defence Production. The amendment is quite clear on that point. Here is subsection (a) of the said amendment:

... placing the Department of Defence Production on a permanent basis and conferring on the department such powers as ought to be of a continuing nature.

We recognize that at this time, at any rate, the department is necessary. We refuse to establish it on a permanent basis, however, with the powers that exist at present, unless we have been given evidence of their absolute necessity. I must say that the arguments put

[Mr. Perron.]

forward up till now have not been very convincing, except those dealing with the H-bomb, supersonic aircraft and guided missiles.

The minister told us that the act has been in existence for 16 years, that there was reason to make it permanent and that, at any rate, the government could revoke it one day or another, should the minister feel that it was no longer necessary. In other words, to summarize the minister's opinion, he told us, before proposing the change in the act, that the act was permanently temporary and, after proposing the amending bill, that it would become temporarily permanent.

Mr. Speaker, we are being asked at this time to adopt an amendment of which we can hardly foresee the consequences and we are told: "It is all or nothing; take it or leave it."

It seems to me that this is unfair to parliament. As regards the opposition, whose main duty is to keep watch over the prerogatives of parliament, it cannot support a bill which would deprive it of its justification before parliament. That would be quite illogical on our part and that is why the amendment moved by the hon. member for Royal is quite consistent and wise.

**Mr. Gauthier (Portneuf):** Now is the time to applaud.

**Mr. Perron:** I hope the house will give unanimous support to this amendment. Otherwise, we might believe that the government, which managed to carry on a war successfully, seems unable to achieve lasting peace.

(Text):

**Hon. George A. Drew (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, there is only one reason why this debate should continue. That reason is the insistence of the government on proceeding with an act which is entirely unnecessary, which is contrary to the clear undertaking given to this house in 1951, and which should not, in any event, have been presented to us at this time.

Many hon. members had been waiting to hear the statement of the Prime Minister in regard to this measure. We heard from him yesterday. In that speech he repeated, almost in exact terms, the statement made by the Minister of Defence Production. His words are to be found at page 5643 of *Hansard*:

—we are not prepared to put any definite time limit upon it at this time.

That is the reason we are here. There has been some tendency to call this a filibuster. Any hon. member can call it what he likes.