

week before the action took place a dispatch containing such a story should go from Ottawa to the London *Daily Mirror*, I think it was.

In view of what the Prime Minister said this evening I wish to say that through the ages our forefathers have fought vigorously to prevent secret trials and actions affecting the liberty of the subject without fair and proper trial. During the war hon. members who were here will recollect there was considerable debate in this house. The defence of Canada regulations were modified, but many hon. members were disturbed by the manner in which those regulations and the War Measures Act were used not only against those who endeavoured to assist the enemy but against members of religious sects and, indeed, Canadians of Japanese origin. Quislings and traitors must be punished, but we dare not allow any government to act except in accordance with the established principles of justice.

The persons now held are believed to have violated the Official Secrets Act and betrayed their trust. I repeat that if they are guilty, they must be punished. But I have carefully read the reports that were tabled in this house by the Prime Minister last Friday, and I confess that I still have grave doubts concerning the procedure followed in some of these cases. Indeed, I do not believe the Prime Minister is aware of all that has gone on. I almost hesitate to say this because when I heard it first it seemed to me unbelievable. But I was informed by a minister of the gospel last week that he saw a person who had been held at Rockcliffe for some time, and that for six days and nights that person was in a room which was brilliantly lighted, and the lights were never out. I wanted to check that statement, and I telephoned the counsel of another of the accused, asking if such a thing could have occurred. I was told by that counsel that his client, a different person, had told him precisely the same story. It may be said, of course, that this was done in order to prevent the possibility of suicide, but again I asked questions and was informed that neither of these persons was ever left alone.

I would ask the Minister of Justice (Mr. St. Laurent) to look into this. If that is so it savours of the totalitarian system, and it must be neither permitted nor condoned in this country. I said I could scarcely credit the story, and indeed that is so. No one can have sympathy for those who betray the interests of their own people. For our nationals, who accept the rights of our citizenship but give their first allegiance to any foreign

[Mr. Coldwell.]

power, and thus gear their political and secret activities to its external policies, I have nothing but the utmost contempt. These are the quislings who, if their guilt is properly established, must be dealt with according to the law; but it must be in accordance with the law.

Let me sum up my feelings in this way. In spite of all that has been said to-night and last week the fact remains that men and women have been summarily arrested. As a letter I received from one of them states, they have been held for weeks without charge, without access to their friends and without counsel. From the documents tabled here I have gathered that this procedure had been followed not on the initiative of the government but upon the advice of the justices of the Supreme Court of Canada who are the commissioners under order in council P.C. 411. For my part I shall await with a good deal of interest some further statement from the Minister of Justice at the proper time. In the meantime I should like to recommend something for his consideration. I have in my hand a copy of "The Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier" by Doctor Skelton. In the press and in a letter which came to me I saw a reference from this book. I looked it up and should like to put it on the record, and I commend it both to the minister and the government. Sir Wilfrid Laurier was speaking on the case of Louis Riel in this house in 1874. It was his maiden speech; he entered into an argument and then said this:

It will be argued, perhaps, that the reasons which I advance are purely legal subtleties. Name them as you please, technical expressions, these legal subtleties, it matters little; for my part, I say that these technical reasons, these legal subtleties are the guarantees of British liberty. Thanks to these technical expressions, these legal subtleties, no person on British soil can be arbitrarily deprived of what belongs to him. There was a time when the procedure was much simpler than it is to-day, when the will alone of one man was sufficient to deprive another of his liberty, his property, his honour and all that makes life dear. But since the days of the Great Charter, never has it been possible on British soil to rob a man of his liberty, his property or his honour, except under the safeguard of what has been termed in this debate technical expressions and legal subtleties.

That is something we might recommend to the government for its perusal and for its consideration.

I want now to deal with some of the other pressing problems before the country. I think I have said all I wish to say to-night in connection with matters which have arisen under the Official Secrets Act.