

*Emergency Powers Act*

Now, what are some of these powers that are conferred upon the government? I shall refer to them in particular. There is the power to take over the telephones and telegraphs of this country; to take over transportation by land, air or water. For what reason is the government asking the power to control the railways, canals and seaways or airways of this country? Why ask for these powers? What justification has there been in anything that has been said by the minister in the last few days for virtually asking parliament to go on a holiday if the government exercises the powers requested? There is the power to control persons and things. Why does the government request the power to control transportation, the truckers, the railways, the airways and our great lakeways? For what reason do they ask for these powers? For what purpose do they want them? There has been no explanation as to why the government seeks power to control by order in council all trade in Canada, all "exportation, importation, production and manufacture."

Why do they ask for these powers, Mr. Chairman? Under them they can control every field of agriculture, every person engaged in farming and every labour man. Under the provisions of this act every labourer can be directed to go to one particular line of production and leave his own business at the whim and will of a government which in the past has shown no particular consideration for the rights of the individual. People are beginning to realize that. There was an outstanding article on this subject by Mr. Pat Nicholson of the press gallery. There is an article in the Vancouver *Sun* of February 7, written by Dillon O'Leary, under the heading "What price democracy", which deserves to be referred to. The article reads in part as follows:

It's my view that if Canadians set any great store by free speech and parliamentary institutions they would be up in arms about a measure now before parliament, the Emergency Powers Act. Here is the issue:

Will parliament of our elected representatives govern, making its decisions in open debate? Or will we have government by cabinet decrees made in secret discussions behind closed doors, legislated by order in council?

We prate often about our "democracy", about our "freedoms." We agree with fervent after-dinner speakers that we reject totalitarian communism.

In doing so we take for granted that our parliament of elected representatives rules supreme.

His concluding words are:

But if Canadians get used to allowing their governments to have these special powers up their collective sleeve, to be whipped out in an emergency, then some day a sad reckoning is ahead.

We will have forgotten that these powers are there (as indeed I think most Canadians have

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

forgotten that today), and will be surprised by some government confronting us with dictatorial powers . . .

Why, Mr. Speaker, not only do some hon. members object, as they did a while ago, to criticism, but we are coming to a point where some of the ministers resent criticism. But the Prime Minister surprised me most. On two occasions, one when the hon. member for Kamloops (Mr. Fulton) was speaking on February 6, and the other when the hon. member for Eglinton (Mr. Fleming) was speaking yesterday, the Prime Minister walked out. On February 6, as recorded at page 1712 of *Hansard*, the Prime Minister said:

Mr. Speaker, on a question of privilege, the Prime Minister has other things to do than to listen to the hon. gentleman, when he is using that tone.

That is a strange attitude for the Prime Minister to adopt, a man for whom we all have respect in his position and in his person. It shows, Mr. Chairman, that power does have its influence, and that power is intoxicating. The other night the Prime Minister was temporarily piqued in that he did not wish to listen to the hon. member for Kamloops, who apparently had not that modulation of voice which the government asks for in criticism. Yesterday when the hon. member for Eglinton was speaking the Prime Minister left again, and suggested the following, as recorded at page 2095 of *Hansard* for February 19:

It is suggested that "the whole story" is going to take forty minutes, and I think I can use the forty minutes to better advantage.

Those are strange words, Mr. Chairman. The Prime Minister is not here now. I did not interrupt him when he left because I did not know what the next version would have been. Surely, Mr. Chairman, the Prime Minister ought to be in the house when a measure such as this, which stands in his name, is before parliament. This is a strange attitude, and coincides with the attitude of so many members supporting the government in the last few days who, by their interruptions, have been deriding the arguments of the opposition which, under our system, has a responsibility to vigilantly scrutinize all legislation, and in particular any that infringes the freedom of the individual or constitutes a danger to the maintenance of parliamentary government.

We have had too many of these instances lately. The Minister of Trade and Commerce over and over again has uttered words that I would not have thought would have been adopted by any other minister. I have some quotations here which, because of his