

*Defence Production Act*

trend toward autocracy and the passing of parliament is marked by a path toward a planned economy, particularly a planned economy where government monopolies predominate.

I submit that we are moving in the direction of all three in this house; and the only thing that has slowed down the process is the fact that we do have an opposition which has prevented the executive from assuming absolute powers in this chamber. I say this matter is of profound importance, because if we are going to perpetuate in peacetime conditions the powers that have emerged during a wartime situation, then we are definitely assisting in this undesirable trend described as "the passing of parliament".

I listened to a discussion on "Citizens' Forum" not so long ago on this subject. "Citizens' Forum" is a program arranged by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to sound out public thinking on public matters. During that discussion, whether it was put forward seriously or not, someone described parliament in terms which I shall set out in a moment. "Citizens' Forum" is a responsible discussion group, and discussions reach a high level. Therefore it is rather a tragic state of affairs when we find someone defining parliament in these terms:

Parliament is an inept, rigidly regimented, desperately overworked and intellectually exhausted agglomeration of lobby-fodder going through the motions of lawmaking under the scornful gaze of a public well aware that power rests outside the parliamentary system.

The person making that statement went on to describe the increasing resort to orders in council and the procedures of delegated legislation when, as Keeton describes it, there is a continuing shift in the governmental centre of gravity from the floor of the House of Commons to the offices of the great departments of state.

I say again, Mr. Speaker, that I feel all these matters are involved in the legislation we are debating this evening. I have indicated that exceptional powers are necessary in time of war, but I would just as strongly suggest that as soon as actual war is removed as a threat to the country, we should try to withdraw from those exceptional powers as rapidly as possible, if we are going to preserve our free democratic parliamentary system of government.

Power became concentrated in the cabinet during the war. I quote from a government publication which reached my desk just the other day. It is an outline for discussion

leaders issued in connection with *Current Affairs*, volume 8, No. 11. The first question asked in this pamphlet for discussion leaders is as follows:

Is a democratic system of government an effective instrument in time of crisis?

Here is the answer appearing in the pamphlet:

Parliamentary procedures, with full discussion of all sides of the question, are not always the swiftest way of arriving at decision and action. In times of crisis almost instantaneous decision and action are sometimes necessary. Parliaments have consequently developed the device of delegating more power to cabinets during emergency periods. Thus the cabinets of both Canada and the United Kingdom had more directly exercisable power during the second world war than they have now. Parliament grants those powers, usually for a specifically limited time—

I underline the words "usually for a specifically limited time".

—and parliament can withdraw it when it is considered no longer necessary.

I suggest that the members of the official opposition are quite justified in demanding that some limit be placed on the powers incorporated in this act, particularly when we are in peacetime conditions. It is bad enough in wartime to have absolute cabinet control, but it is tragically dangerous in time of peace.

I know the difficulty arises from the fact that there has been no change in administration since the end of world war II. The United Kingdom perhaps is a little more mature in this regard than we are, because they turn their respective parties out of office more quickly than we do here. Unfortunately we have not had that salutary state of affairs since the end of hostilities in 1945, with the result that you have a group of politicians who have become inoculated with the power complex. The only argument I have heard in attempting to refute the opposition is, "We must be right, because so many support us. We have been returned time after time to a majority position in the House of Commons."

Well, I do not have to repeat that popular statistics concerning recent election results indicate that the government holds office on a minority popular vote, mainly because the opposition is divided in its councils. I feel that it is a tragedy if in defending freedom, which is the purport of this resolution—and we are all for it; we all realize that we must have a permanent Department of Defence Production to provide our armed forces with the necessary equipment—we lose by the subtle process of inner decay the very freedom we are defending.

I have another observation on this point from a Canadian writer, George Hambleton, who has recently produced the book "The Parliament of Canada". And—