

bers doubtless know that there has been recently adopted by the parliament of the United Kingdom a bill dealing with supplies and services, and transitional powers to continue for a period of five years the delegation to His Majesty in council in respect of regulations which had been made for the purpose of meeting conditions arising out of the war.

Hon. members know that the parliament of the United Kingdom adopted in 1939 the Emergency Powers Defence Act, which provided that:

Subject to the provisions of this section, His Majesty may by order in council, make such regulations . . . as appear to him to be necessary or expedient for securing the public safety, the defence of the realm, the maintenance of public order and the efficient prosecution of any war in which His Majesty may be engaged, and for maintaining supplies and services essential to the life of the community.

This bill of 1939 had been passed for a period of two years subject to its being extended from year to year if an address were presented to His Majesty in that behalf by each house of parliament. The last extension by address would have expired on August 24, 1945, and the coalition government had introduced a transitory powers bill for a period of two years. Before the resignation of the non-Conservative members from the coalition government, it had not been possible to have the bill considered and passed.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: The country was still at war.

Mr. ST. LAURENT: Yes. The caretaker government modified the project and provided for a bill that would extend it for a period of six months, to February 24, 1946. But after the general election and the constitution of the new government, a new bill was introduced to enable His Majesty in council to exercise those extraordinary powers for a period of five years. The bill was the subject of animated debate in the House of Commons of the United Kingdom, as one would naturally anticipate it would be; because I have always felt that there no people were more careful of the preservation of their constitutional rights and the traditional functions of parliament than the British people.

The criticism of the bill seems to have been predicated on its duration, not on its principle. I understand that Mr. Eden declared in the debate that had it been restricted, as was the original bill, to a period of two years, opposition would not have been raised against it. Here the situation is different. Of course in the United Kingdom

they have only one of the two questions facing them which I mentioned in opening my remarks. They have no problem of distributing the legislative powers as between themselves and any other authority. They have only the problem of distributing the legislative functions as between parliament and His Majesty in council. Here we have the other problem, which is a serious one. On Monday we are to resume the deliberations of the dominion-provincial conference. This parliament and this government have a responsibility to respect in its terms and in its spirit the provisions of the constitution. I think that only a declaration of this parliament will be sufficiently impressive upon the Canadian people to be accepted as to whether or not there exists a condition which gives to some of the things normally within provincial jurisdiction aspects which require that they be dealt with in another sphere in the national interest. That is a matter upon which each member of this house will have his responsibility to assume by his vote upon the principle of this bill, because the adoption of the motion for second reading would imply that in the opinion of this house there exists a situation in which some matters which would normally be of provincial jurisdiction have to be dealt with by a central authority, by the state as a whole, through this parliament representing the people as a whole. This is a serious matter, one not to be passed upon lightly, and not to be passed upon without good and sufficient reasons.

On a former occasion I suggested that I did not think there was any member of this house who would have been prepared, since the cessation of active hostilities, to take the responsibility of declaring that the war had come to an end and that everything which had been done under the War Measures Act had ceased to be operative. I suggested to hon. members on that former occasion that a very interesting reference book on economic controls had been placed before the dominion-provincial conference, in which the situation was discussed and in which the reasons for its appearing to be necessary to maintain for a time some measure of control, and to decontrol gradually, were set out. I hope that hon. members on that former occasion that siding the thirty double-column pages of that interesting reference book. I am not going to read it into the record at this time; I am merely going to summarize it and to state it is my view that if all the remaining controls were removed to-day the consequences would be immediate, drastic and far-reaching. Prices would rise sharply; the cost of living would move steeply upward; exist-