

Emergency Powers Act

that subject, what does the Minister of Finance do? He just peters out and says, on page 296:

A good deal can be done in that field by increasing efficiency, by getting more elderly people into the working force, by employing more women, by all of us—

Now, note this. If this is not a wishy-washy statement!

. . . all of us working a bit harder and if necessary a bit longer.

One can just imagine that accomplishing anything in rousing the people of this country to the necessity of increasing production as one of the serious hopes we have of combating inflation! Then, what does he say about the other method? The other method of course is restraint on the part of the consumer. The Minister of Finance, if you please, winds up a speech that was good in places and very feeble in other places, by saying this, as recorded on page 299 of *Hansard*—“if each individual Canadian will make up his mind that he is going to work” . . . this time he does not say “a bit harder”, but he says “perhaps a little bit harder”. What can you expect from a government that is offering wishy-washy, anaemic advice of that kind to the people of Canada?

An hon. Member: What would you do?

Mr. Fleming: I would do what the leader of the opposition has been calling upon the government to do, namely give a clarion call to the people of Canada; first of all, tell them of the seriousness of the dangers that confront this country, and second, of the need for every individual in this country mobilizing his effort to combat inflation by those two methods that lie within his power: Consumer restraint and increased production. To call upon the people of Canada for anything less than that at a time like this is to abdicate and to fail in the duty of government in days of grave danger. The procrastination that they have evidenced and the kind of fatalistic resignation to inflation that we have seen in the government remind one of the expression used by Mr. Churchill when he said:

So they go on in strange paradox, decided only to be undecided, resolved to be irresolute, adamant for drift, solid for fluidity, all-powerful to be impotent.

Then we come to the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe). What was his contribution to the needed clarion call to the people of Canada? Talk about fatalistic resignation! He went a step further and indulged in what was unquestionably the most cynical remark and the most cynical attitude yet exhibited in the House of Commons. When dealing with this necessity for taking measures to combat

[Mr. Fleming.]

inflation, dealing with this very subject of price control, he just sits back with a grin on his face, if you please, in the face of the dangers that are confronting the people of Canada, and says about the people against whom controls might have been applied: “They are all set.” What a response! What a conception of duty on the part of the government! What a rising to a great national emergency! The Minister of Trade and Commerce sits back, smugly smiles and says: “They are all set.” There we have more of that fatalistic resignation to inflation on the part of the government. Apparently they are quite prepared to sit there and watch it come, and keep their arms folded all the time. When the government was permitting itself to fall into this attitude of fatalistic resignation, I wonder what the Minister of Mines and Technical Surveys (Mr. Prudham) had to say? I wonder if he offered to the cabinet council those words that he uttered last year in a notable address, when he said:

We are kidding ourselves to think we can work shorter hours and maintain a higher standard of living and, at the same time, defend our country and help defend the other free nations of the world.

I hope that he was there and I hope that he called upon his colleagues, particularly the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott) and the Minister of Trade and Commerce, to rouse themselves out of their apathy and meet the danger that confronts our country.

Something has been said today, Mr. Speaker, about stand-by powers. Let us remember, sir, that the house is in session; and presumably the house is going to be in session for some time. At this stage, in these early weeks of the session, surely it is not the time for anybody to put forward a request for merely stand-by powers. Let the government ask us in this bill for powers that are needed to grapple with the present situation; and if we as members of this house are convinced that the government will really use powers that are adequate for the purpose, and will really apply some energy and some resolution to the problem, then the house will not be slow to give to the government powers that will be effectively used.

The nub of the problem is, of course, the use the government is going to make of the powers it is seeking at the hands of parliament. It may be that the government has not fully made up its mind on the subject, and has not yet floundered through the difficulties to reach a decision as to what use it is going to make of the powers sought, if it does get them. Certainly the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) today was extremely vague on that subject.