

*Unemployment Continuance Act*

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: What did I leave out? I left out something for the sake—

An hon. MEMBER: For the sake of fairness.

Mr. BELL (Hamilton): And generosity.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I left out something that was non-essential.

An hon. MEMBER: Oh, yes.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I will give the whole of it, then. It will be found at page 1414 of Hansard of March 23:

Now I go a step further. I would not ask this power from any parliament except reluctantly, and I so stated when I introduced the resolution the other day.

Here is the portion I left out:

But, sir, after discussions between my colleagues and myself, and taking into consideration the views expressed to us by others who look at the matter dispassionately and from the outside, dare we as a government, charged with the tremendous responsibility in this emergency of caring for this dominion to the best of our ability, be without that power? We have said, no.

Then he goes on:

We do not believe that this power will be called into play; nay, more, we sincerely and fervently hope that it will not be. But, sir, what is a man without a weapon in the midst of armed force? What is a man who has no instrument for his protection in the midst of the strife of brigands? Without this power we should be without a weapon that could be used except through a bill in parliament; and with the strange views that obtain in these days there is no assurance that the mind of the government would be sufficiently strong to secure consent for any measure it might introduce. And from what we know and have seen, we should certainly be opposed with respect to consent. Then the matter would go its weary way, for there is another chamber to be considered before legislation is enacted; and in the meantime the injury may be done.

There is the entire quotation.

Mr. BELL (Hamilton): You read Hamlet with Hamlet left out.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: This makes perfectly clear the point of view not only of the Prime Minister, but apparently the contaminated point of view of his colleagues as well.

As though that were not enough, Mr. Speaker, what have we witnessed since? In order to secure this power, this weapon which will enable the ministry to ignore parliament, which will render them independent of parliament whether parliament is in session or not, what do they do? They make use of the one coercive measure which was enacted

[Mr. Stevens.]

for legitimate as well as coercive purposes, but which was never intended to be used as a weapon wherewith to gain a weapon for an administration which would render it independent of parliament. They are seeking powers which will enable them to coerce parliament, and in order to get that power they use coercion as a means to that end. They bring in the weapon of closure, and with that weapon they strike at the very heart of this House of Commons thereby stifling all further discussion on a great question having to do with the very foundations of parliamentary government and the constitution of our country. They say, "We will not even allow you to discuss in committee matters which relate to the control by parliament of expenditures; we will not allow you to say another word in regard to this right, under the peace, order and good government provision, which we are claiming, to be independent of parliament and to legislate as we please, whether parliament is in session or not. They have used the weapon of closure twice in the course of a short debate in order to end all discussion and debate on the most important question which has engaged the attention of parliament since this ministry was formed. If ever in this world there was evidence of an autocratic power used to the 'nth degree, we have it in what we are witnessing at the present time.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that, with the position as hon. members of the house must now see it, if they have sought to follow the matter at all, they should consider very carefully whether they are going to vote for the third reading of a measure brought to its present stage by closure, and which will enable the ministry to usurp the powers of this House of Commons to the extent to which this measure does. It is no longer a question of the rights of minorities. Hon. gentlemen opposite have been talking about that, and minorities have their rights. This is a case where a minority should fight for its rights. But this is not a case where the rights of a minority only are at stake. It is not even a case of the rights of the majority though the rights of the majority are also at stake. This is a question of the rights of parliament itself and all that parliament stands for.

Mr. BENNETT: And that is government by the majority.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: If my right hon. friend can just keep quiet for a moment, I will be obliged to him. The mere mention of the rights of parliament causes my right hon. friend to burst forth with an interruption. So