

The late Queen Mary

It will not have been forgotten, Mr. Chairmen, that two years ago this parliament did pass legislation that vested very wide powers in this government. That legislation was passed with due knowledge of the existence at that time of conditions in Korea and in the world which were quite similar to those that exist today. Parliament passed the Essential Materials (Defence) Act, chapter 6, 14-15 George VI, and section 4 of that statute conferred very numerous and very wide powers. Its provisions run to this effect:

(1) The governor in council may do and authorize such acts and things and make from time to time such orders and regulations as he deems necessary for the purposes of this act to control and regulate the production, processing, distribution, acquisition, disposition or use of essential materials or the supply or use of essential services.

Section 2 of that act defines "essential materials" as:

—such materials and substances as are designated from time to time by the governor in council under section three as being essential for defence purposes;

It also defines "essential service" as meaning:

—the carrying on of any commercial activity, including the generation and distribution of electrical energy, as is designated from time to time by the governor in council under section three as being essential for production, storage or distribution of essential materials;

Then follows in section 3 an enumeration of powers that are amazingly wide. Parliament, I am sure, only agreed to pass such legislation and vest such sweeping powers in the government in the belief at that time that the situation in Korea was rapidly deteriorating and the dangers of a spread of that unhappy conflagration were very serious. Parliament gave to the government these wide powers which permit the government to do virtually anything that is required for the purpose of rearming this country and re-equipping this country to defend itself, and to discharge its international obligations. All the powers to which the government has any legitimate claim are contained in that act.

Then the government, not satisfied with those powers, asked the house to enact as well the Defence Production Act, which is chapter 4 of the statutes of 1951. Section 15 of that statute provides:

The minister may, on behalf of His Majesty and subject to the provisions of this act,

(a) buy or otherwise acquire, utilize, store, transport, sell, exchange or otherwise dispose of defence supplies;

(b) manufacture or otherwise produce, finish, assemble, process, develop, repair, maintain or service defence supplies or manage and operate facilities therefor;

(c) construct or acquire defence projects and sell, exchange or otherwise dispose of them;

And so on and so on. The enumeration of powers extends to a very long list.

Mr. Chairman, I have cited these provisions because I think the Minister of Justice must have forgotten about them. I will be charitable and say that he must have forgotten about them, because nobody aware of these provisions on the statute books in this country could have any possible justification for making the assertion which the Minister of Justice made this afternoon.

I say to you, Mr. Chairman, and I say to the Minister of Justice and I say to the committee that with the possession of powers like those in these two statutes, this government has all the powers it needs and more powers than it needs. It has no justification whatever for coming back to this house and seeking to wrench additional powers from the house, or a continuation of the sweeping and unnecessary powers of this act which are virtually identical with those in the War Measures Act.

Will you call it six o'clock, Mr. Chairman?

At six o'clock the committee took recess.

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AFTER RECESS

The committee resumed at eight o'clock. Progress reported.

THE LATE QUEEN MARY

ANNOUNCEMENT OF DEATH—ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE

Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it is with deep regret that I announce to the house the death of Her Majesty Queen Mary. I would suggest that tomorrow, after prayers, I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Drew), with whom I have communicated, an address of sympathy to Her Majesty. I move that to mark our deep sorrow and respect for Her Majesty, the Queen Mother and the royal family, we do now adjourn until tomorrow afternoon at 2.30 o'clock.

Motion agreed to and the house adjourned at 8.01 p.m.