

Invoking of War Measures Act

We are forwarding as a matter of the utmost urgency the report describing the scope of the threat and the urgent need to reinforce the machinery to cope with it.

We ask for every measure of assistance the federal government may deem useful and desirable in order to carry out the task of protecting society and the life of citizens in this difficult period.

Lucien Saulnier
Chairman of the Executive Committee

Jean Drapeau
Mayor of Montreal

[English]

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, would the Prime Minister agree to table those two letters?

An hon. Member: They are on record now in *Hansard*.

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, Mr. Speaker, if they can be tabled; I have some copies here. I might add a longer letter which would be of interest to the House but which I shall not read at this time. It is a letter to the Mayor of Montreal and to the President of the Executive Council from the Director of the Police Department of the city of Montreal. This document might also be of interest to the House. Perhaps the three letters could be printed as an appendix to *Hansard*.

Mr. Speaker: Is this agreeable?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

(Editor's Note: For text of letters referred to above, see Appendix.)

Mr. Trudeau: Following the proclamation of the Act and the approval of the Governor in Council of the orders and regulations tabled at the beginning of this sitting, the several police forces in the Montreal area were instructed to increase the volume and the intensity of their activities. Commencing at approximately 4.30 a.m. this morning a number of arrests were made. As of an hour ago, the number of persons taken into custody as a result of these operations was, I believe, in the vicinity of 100. No, I am told it was approximately 154.

The letter from the government of Quebec requesting special powers followed by several hours an earlier request from that government for the deployment of armed forces personnel in some parts of the province of Quebec.

The House will know that the government of Quebec had earlier yesterday evening proposed to the FLQ kidnapers that in return for the surrender of their two hostages, Mr. James Cross and Mr. Pierre Laporte, safe conduct out of Canada would be promised them and that parole would be recommended of five FLQ members now in jail who had requested parole. That proposal brought no positive response.

It is a matter of deep regret and grave concern to me, as I am sure it is to all hon. members, that the condition of our country makes necessary this proclamation. We in this House have all felt very strongly, I know, that democracy was nowhere in a healthier state than in Canada; that nowhere was there less need for frustrated

[Mr. Trudeau.]

men to turn to violence to attain their political ends. I still believe firmly that this is so. Yet in recent years we have been forced to acknowledge the existence within Canada of a new and terrifying type of person—one who in earlier times would have been described as an anarchist, but who is now known as a violent revolutionary. These persons allege that they are seeking social change through novel means. In fact they are seeking the destruction of the social order through clandestine and violent means.

Faced with such persons, and confronted with authoritative assessments of the seriousness of the risk to persons and property in the Montreal area, the government had no responsible choice but to act as it did last night. Given the rapid deterioration of the situation as mentioned by Prime Minister Bourassa, and given the expiration of the time offered for the release of the hostages, it became obvious that the urgency of the situation demanded rapid action. The absence both of adequate time to take other steps or of alternative legislative authority dictated the use of the War Measures Act. After informing the leaders of the opposition parties of our intention to act in this fashion, and following receipt of the letters that I tabled a moment ago, the government proclaimed the Act.

The government recognizes that the authority contained in the Act is much broader than is required in the present situation, notwithstanding the seriousness of the events. For that reason the regulations which were adopted permit the exercise of only a limited number of the powers available under the Act. Nevertheless, I wish to make it clear today that the government regards the use of the War Measures Act as only an interim and, in the sense mentioned above, somewhat unsatisfactory measure.

Following the passage of enough time to give the government the necessary experience to assess the type of statute which may be required in these circumstances, it is my firm intention to discuss with the leaders of the opposition parties the desirability of introducing legislation of a less comprehensive nature. In this respect I earnestly solicit from the leaders and from all hon. members constructive suggestions for the amendment of the regulations. Such suggestions will be given careful consideration for possible inclusion in any new statute.

• (11:20 a.m.)

May I say in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, that no Canadian takes less lightly than I the seriousness of the present situation in Canada and the gravity of the measures which the government has been asked to assume in order to meet that situation. Coincidentally, the fate of the two kidnapped hostages weighs very heavily in my mind, as it does on all of us.

I recognize, as I hope do others, that this extreme position into which governments have been forced is in some respects a trap. It is a well known technique of revolutionary groups who attempt to destroy society by unjustified violence to goad the authorities into inflexible

* An offer to deal had been made

* Evid. Bourassa had asked W.M.A.
He proclaimed the prev. Sunday.
** "firm intention"