

*Emergency Powers Act*

Minister of Trade and Commerce, no matter what his views may be on other subjects, is not so innocent of ordinary practices in this country to be in any doubt as to what will happen if it is believed there is going to be control of profits and nothing is done. He has already indicated what happens in cases of that kind, and we would assume, in view of his association with price controls on earlier occasions, that he would speak with some knowledge on this subject. He pointed out that one of the difficulties in dealing with controls at this stage is that the government did not move in as they did when price controls were introduced before. He explained that the element of surprise was lacking, and for that reason he said adjustments had already been made to meet the situation. Then, he used those words which the house is not likely to forget, "They are all set."

If the people to whom the minister was referring on that occasion were set, they are going to take care that they are even more set if they think controls over profits are to be introduced. This is simply another inflationary pressure created by the government itself. The minister, who seems to have such an influence over most departments of government, has said that within a couple of weeks we may expect further information. I suggest that the time for that information to be received by this house is now, and before this bill receives third reading.

There is one other consideration that should be in the minds of the members in dealing with this subject. The Prime Minister indicated some of the reasons why this bill was being drawn in such general terms. He also indicated that he thought there should be some limitation on the scope of the bill when it becomes law, because he believed it was desirable to impress upon the people of Canada the fact that we are not in a period of war; that we are in fact striving for peace, and that is the idea that should be emphasized in the public mind. I believe there was general agreement with that proposition. What was emphasized in relation to that subject, however, was the fact that there is a long period of emergency ahead of us, and that it would be desirable to retain as much as possible of our ordinary peacetime atmosphere and ordinary peacetime arrangements as we would be able to carry forward over an extended period with as little strain as possible upon our economy and upon our people. It is for that reason that concern should be felt about wide powers of this kind unless the full intention of the government under those powers is indicated to members of parliament.

In regard to the sweeping nature of the powers, the Prime Minister had something to say which I thought did not receive sufficient attention at the time, and which should be in the minds of the members before this bill becomes law. Referring to the reason for the powers which, with few exceptions, are as wide as the powers under the War Measures Act, the Prime Minister had this to say, as reported at page 807 of *Hansard* for March 1:

With respect to the extent of the powers, it would be a much easier thing to do if we could come here and say: This is what is going to have to be done and nothing more is required.

A little later on the same page he had this to say:

But with the possibility of various things that we just cannot determine at this time having to be done, in order to meet the changing conditions, I suggest that the powers have to be drawn in fairly broad terms. We did not want them any broader than the Department of Justice told us was enough. But what they say is this: These things mean restrictions on some individuals and they are subject to contestation before the courts. It is therefore important to have the language so broad that the courts will not say: "You have gone beyond what parliament authorized you to do."

Parliament, Mr. Speaker, has not authorized the government to do anything, because we have not been told what the government intends to do. Therefore, this would be an utterly meaningless statement unless it were intended by the wording of this bill that the government, by order in council, from time to time may do things far beyond anything that has been suggested in this chamber during the discussion of the bill. We have asked the government to tell us a single thing they intend to do, and they have not told us one thing. Therefore the suggestion that parliament is going to say what the government can do, and that the government is only going to do what parliament has said it can do, is meaningless and will be misleading to the people of this country if they accept it as the limitation under which the government legislates by order in council within the terms of this bill when it becomes law. It is for that reason, Mr. Speaker, I repeat my request that the Prime Minister inform us fully as to what these controls of the profit margin are to which the Minister of Trade and Commerce has referred, so that there may not be further inflation by procrastination; further inflation by invitation; further inflation simply because someone is trying to get set. In using those expressions I am only using the words that have been employed by the Minister of Trade and Commerce, who has had wide experience in dealing with the subject matter that might be contemplated by this bill.