

there is a question of judgment as to whether the story is false at all.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): I have a taped record and it is false all right. Would you care whether it is false or not?

An hon. Member: Bring in the tapes!

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): I will be glad to bring in the transcript.

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, it really does not matter what letters the minister might write or to whom. The proof of the pudding with respect to the competency of this government will be made known in the next few months. I am prepared, no matter what the minister might have said or where he said it, to defer my judgment on that, and I am sure the Canadian people will do the same.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): You do not care whether it is true or not.

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the minister has intervened at this point because he has been sitting there rather quietly. I hope he has been considering the enormity of his sins of omission and commission with respect to the energy situation in this country.

I want to say to you, Mr. Speaker, that by any standard this is no mean bill in terms of the power requested. There is one thing about the Liberal Party, Mr. Speaker; they are not backward when it comes to appropriating power to themselves. In some quarters, according to the way they operate, they might have been considered crude, although I would not want to put it that way tonight.

Perhaps the enormity of the power in clause 11 of this bill has been lost on many people. It gives the government the right by order in council—and just by order in council—to declare a national emergency all by themselves, perhaps to suit their political convenience.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Baker: If this parliament passes that clause in its present form it gives this government the right to bypass parliament and to pass an order in council sometime in the middle of the night—after two o'clock in the morning perhaps as has been known to happen in this country. I should like the civil libertarians on the other side who make speeches out of both sides of their mouths on this matter to think about the enormity of the power they are trying to give to this government. Some people would say that they must have it because to come to parliament would be too inflexible a procedure; that they must have this power to bypass parliament.

Mr. Speaker, if any Canadian is so foolish as to believe that kind of claptrap let me remind the House that parliament was called to settle the rail strike and came together within 48 hours. That rail strike was settled by that parliament, despite the foot dragging by the NDP. So, that procedure is not so inflexible that there would be a justification for departing from the principle that if the government is to have those powers let it come to this parliament, this public forum and discuss the necessity for these powers. If they make a case, then I am satisfied that this parliament, acting in the best interests of all Canadians,

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would be prepared to grant the government that kind of power. I want to make it absolutely clear to this government that we believe this arbitrary, irresponsible and undemocratic principle, this ability that they ask for to govern by order in council, is not satisfactory to this party as a matter of principle as well as by reason of the fact of this particular government's bad record or judgment.

Mr. Speaker, this is an immense bill in another way. I have dealt with the power that will be left to a group of small men who are responsible from then on to no one but themselves. They have the power to allocate and ration. These powers apply to petroleum, petroleum products, secondary petroleum products such as plastics, alternative fuels—which incidentally are not specifically defined in the bill—anything capable of being used as a fuel, any product from anything capable of being used as fuel, coal, coal products, electrical power and probably following from that, any electrical power products. This board is to be a powerful board. Perhaps in an emergency, such powers are necessary, but that emergency must be demonstrated.

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The principal powers of the board will relate to dates of allocation, to apportionment of product to wholesalers, to assigning of supplies to wholesalers, to storage control and prices to wholesalers, to market area determination and so on. Then, comes this omnibus part of clause 16, which always frightens me, which says that the board may undertake any other action that "the board considers necessary for the purpose of carrying out a mandatory allocation program...". That covers a whole host of actions which may or may not be justified by circumstances of the day. That is why we must be careful. It is not that the government may not need these powers at some time; rather, it is that the government ought not to have these powers all the time. That is the principle which concerns me.

Other speakers have indicated that once this declaration regarding a national emergency is made, statutes such as the Combines Investigation Act, the National Energy Board Act, environment statutes, the Transport Act, the Motor Vehicle Transport Act as well as other acts are to be superseded. The rights and duties of citizens, together with their burdens and benefits under these acts, are to be superseded by five faceless men who are not elected and who are responsible only to the minister. I think that is a lot to ask parliament to give away. For that reason, we must look carefully at the principle behind this bill.

Members have spoken about the power of the board to alter supply contracts, to impose wholesale rationing, and so on. It is important for the House and country to know the extent of these powers and the industries and people in Canada which could be directly controlled under the emergency powers conferred by this bill, emergency powers which, as I said, any government should have if there is an emergency. This government has not established that emergency.

The activities of the board could affect forestry and uranium mining, mineral fuel mines, the rubber industry, synthetic textile mills, fabric preparing mills, the carpet, mat and rug industry, linoleum and coated fabric indus-