

Emergency Powers Act

most. My children are growing up without knowing the taste of juicy steaks. Pot roast is the best they ever taste, and that not often. Under this regime we cannot even think about saving. We have only just enough in the bank to cover our cheques. We are always broke before pay day.

That is the story, Mr. Speaker, of thousands of families in this country at this time. I have dealt with inflation as it affects labour. Other members in this house have already placed on the record the effect of inflation on profits. I do not think it is necessary at this time for me to add to that. I believe that every one of us is cognizant of the fact that the past five years have been five of the best years the larger enterprises of this country have ever known. If you compare their profits during the decontrol period with the effect of rising prices upon wage and salaried earners, you will have no difficulty in deciding which group this government's policy has favoured. It is evident that this government's policy has, year after year, been supporting those who have been profiting out of the inflationary period, as against the million industrial workers and the farmers who have suffered as a consequence of these rising prices.

For the life of me, I cannot understand why we have such a radical change, such a completely different outlook on the part of government towards this matter now and in 1941. It is true that we are not in an all-out war, but our war expenditures this year will exceed our war expenditures in 1941 when we were in an actual war. The expenditures of the United States, which affect us, are several times greater this year than they were then. They are now \$30 billion as compared with \$7 billion in 1941. Again and again in this house we have been told that in 1941 approximately 10 per cent of our people were unemployed. Today we have at the most between 3 per cent and 4 per cent unemployed. If the situation in 1941 required the drastic action which the government took at that time, there is every indication that the situation today requires action just as drastic as that taken then. Again, I feel that the government has no reason whatever to believe that the mass of people in this country will not support them in a price control measure now as it did during the war years. I have already pointed out the groups that possibly will not support the government in price control. I ask this government to listen to the appeal of 75 per cent of the people of Canada who answered "yes" when they were asked in the last public poll whether they wanted price control. I ask the government to listen to those who represent a million workers in this country. I ask them to find out what is the honest opinion

of the members sitting on the government benches with regard to this matter. Having done that, I ask them to formulate government policy on that basis and not on what big business in this country wants.

Motion agreed to and the house went into committee, Mr. Dion in the chair.

Mr. Knowles: I should like to ask the Prime Minister—and I am glad to see that the Minister of Finance is in the chamber with him—what the situation will be under this bill with respect to rent control if the government could be persuaded that the federal authority should stay in that field.

Mr. St. Laurent: The bill as drafted will be in terms that would permit the governor in council to establish federal rent control if that measure was found to be advisable. But of course any such regulation would have to be brought to the house, under the terms of the bill, and would remain in operation only if the house and the Senate did not by resolution choose to invalidate it.

Mr. Knowles: As I understand it, at the present time rent control under the existing legislation will expire as at April 30. That is correct, is it not?

Mr. Abbott: That is right; yes.

Mr. St. Laurent: That is correct.

Mr. Knowles: In other words, if before that date we could persuade the government that it should stay in the field, it would be possible for federal rent control to continue in effect without any gap?

Mr. St. Laurent: If the government became convinced that that procedure was desirable in the public interest, it would be possible for that to be done under the legislation that is to be proposed, if and when this resolution is adopted.

Mr. Knowles: I appreciate the answer that the Prime Minister has made, and I realize that he is protecting himself by making it clear that the government has not yet been persuaded. I should like to take just a moment to argue the case.

Mr. St. Laurent: I am afraid that the hon. member will not be able to do it between now and eleven o'clock.

Mr. Knowles: I was not planning to take the twelve minutes that are left. I was hoping that I could persuade the government in a minute or two that this matter is a serious one that should be dealt with in that light. The announcement made by the Minister of Resources and Development a few days ago cannot but have the effect of cutting down the building of new houses. In fact,