

Defence Production Act

I feel very strongly, sir, as I have already outlined, that the opposition to the bill itself, as presented by the various members, has not been on the basis of fact or on the basis of principle, but on the basis that because it is a government measure it must be opposed if you sit in the opposition. So far as I am concerned, and I know I am safe in saying that so far as our C.C.F. group is concerned, I approach this bill from the point of view of the facts and the necessity for it. We in this group believe that the direction and control of our entire Canadian economy, at a time when almost half of our federal revenue is required to be allocated to the defence department, should be in the hands of the elected representatives, that is parliament. If parliament is not meeting, then it should be under the control of the elected representatives as represented by the cabinet and, under this bill, as represented by the Minister of Defence Production.

I fail completely to understand the arguments that have been presented by the members of Her Majesty's loyal opposition. The bill does not deal with powers, it only deals with time. They ask for a review. In the intermission since six o'clock I have gone over the act again. According to my understanding the Minister of Defence Production has to make an annual report to this parliament, and the public accounts are open to all members of this house. In addition, all estimates have to come before our parliament. At that time any queries can be put to the minister.

Under these circumstances, sir, when the Minister of Defence Production has to report annually; when the public accounts have to be filed annually; when the estimates can be examined annually in the house, and when nearly one-half of the entire federal revenue has to be allocated to the departments of national defence and defence production, then in my opinion there is still a state of emergency. That being so, and because the present minister in the first year of the last world war had to report that Canada was being sabotaged by private enterprise companies because they placed their profits before their patriotism, I say any understanding, patriotic Canadian has no other choice but to do what I am going to do, support the second reading of this bill.

Mr. E. G. Hansell (MacLeod): It is not very often, Mr. Speaker, I take the opportunity of congratulating my very good friends who sit immediately to my right. They are my very good friends. In fact I always regard the hon. member for Cape Breton South as a bit of a chum. I must congratulate them on doing something I have been trying to do

[Mr. Winch.]

throughout the country for a long, long time. I have been trying to drive my socialist friends and my Liberal friends together. I feel that they have accomplished more in this debate than I have been able to accomplish for quite some time out in the country because—

Mr. Winch: I would rather join the Liberals than the Conservatives.

Mr. Hansell:—they are supporting this measure which, in principle, is a measure for the concentration of power, not only in the hands of a government but in the hands of one man. I have found in my reading and in my appraisal of socialism, and the moves that are made from time to time by my socialist friends, that they can always be depended upon to come to the defence of any measure that concentrates power in government hands.

Mr. Gillis: In the public interest.

Mr. Hansell: As a matter of fact, it is amazing to me that even my Liberal friends, as a party, should be so pleased with the support the socialists have given them in this debate. They seem to be extremely happy. They laugh at certain digs the C.C.F. give to those who are opposing the measure. You would think they were bosom friends.

I congratulate my socialist friends on something else. They have been more powerful in their speeches in support of this bill than have members on the government side of the house. But even though that is so, it seems to me there is something screwy in the discussion of this measure thus far, something that seems inconsistent. Here we have a measure which gives permanency to the Defence Production Act. Not only does it do that, but it gives permanency to the extraordinary powers given to the minister. That is one thing we in this corner of the house are concerned about.

We are in favour of a department of defence production. We believe that at the present time, when conditions are complex and perhaps dangerous, the minister should have those powers. My leader, the hon. member for Peace River, has already said that. The hon. member for Okanagan-Revelstoke (Mr. McLeod) has said the same thing, as has also the hon. member for Wetaskiwin (Mr. Thomas), and I am saying it now. But we are not in favour of a bill that gives the minister this power forever and ever.

I have said there was something inconsistent in what some speakers in this debate have said. I would refer again to my socialist friends, who over the years have described themselves as great peacemakers, as those who are always holding out great hope for peace. Their attitude has been that