

Emergency Powers Act

supported this sort of legislation in previous years. But as we considered the failure of the government to use this legislation to meet the needs of the people of the country, and as we considered the way in which they have used it simply as a convenience, we feel it is time that parliament should rethink its position with respect to this matter and should discontinue the granting of emergency powers.

In our view no case has been made out for the necessity of this legislation. In fact it seems to us that the government simply finds it convenient to have this kind of legislation on the books, and it has been used only as a convenience. Having had it for so long they cannot imagine themselves without it.

This afternoon the Prime Minister made a fairly interesting speech. One thing he said was that in his view it was the right of the opposition to level legitimate criticism at anything that was out of the ordinary. To me that was a most revealing comment. In using those words the Prime Minister made it clear that in his view this request is not out of the ordinary. That is precisely what is wrong with it. This government is asking for these emergency powers for its own convenience, and the tragedy of the situation is that this legislation has become not extraordinary but ordinary in so far as this government is concerned.

The Prime Minister said something else this afternoon of which I took particular note. He said that if the situation had been reversed over the last number of years and the Liberals had been sitting on the opposition side of the House of Commons they would have fought legislation of this kind. Truer words were never spoken. Just imagine for a moment members like the hon. member for Spadina (Mr. Croll), the hon. member for Charlotte (Mr. Stuart), the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Applewhaite), the hon. member for Marquette (Mr. Garson), as the Minister of Justice would be in that case, and the hon. member for Quebec East (Mr. St. Laurent), as the Prime Minister would be in that case, sitting on this side of the house and some other government asking—

Mr. Stick: Don't leave out the rest of us.

Mr. Knowles: There are quite a number who would take the same position. There would be the hon. member for Trinity-Conception (Mr. Stick), the hon. member for Quebec South (Mr. Power) and others who would be railing for all they were worth against any government that would ask parliament to give them the kind of blank cheque that is involved in this legislation. I suggest that

it is a very sorry picture when the Liberals, of all people, have become so used to asking for wide powers of this kind that even when they realize that if they were on the other side they would oppose them, they go on asking for them year after year.

The Prime Minister, after he had admitted that the Liberals in opposition would oppose legislation of this kind, in the very soothing manner he adopted this afternoon said this to us: But can anyone say that parliament is any weaker because we have had this kind of legislation enacted several times in the years since the end of the war? The Prime Minister asked that question in a tone of voice that seemed to imply that he could not imagine anyone saying yes. But I rise, Mr. Speaker, to say that parliament is weaker because it has become so accustomed to passing this kind of legislation. The very fact that it can be passed without any criticism or objection from any Liberal member of the house suggests that parliament has become accustomed to providing the government with this convenience, this easy way of dealing with problems which they find it awkward to bring before parliament in the usual way.

To the extent that parliament has become accustomed to granting powers of this kind to the executive, I suggest that this institution has in fact become weaker; and that the time has come when parliament should rethink this whole question and should call a halt to the granting to the executive of these powers to take steps of this kind without coming to parliament.

This question has been debated at length, and all the issues have been rehashed over and over again. It is not my purpose to continue further at this time, but I do once again express the view that the time has come for parliament to reassert its position, to reassert its strength in this matter, and that in fact we should defeat this measure at this time.

The house divided on the motion (Mr. Garson, for Mr. St. Laurent) which was agreed to on the following division:

YEAS

Messrs:

Abbott	Bradette
Applewhaite	Breton
Ashbourne	Brisson
Balcom	Bruneau
Bater	Campney
Beaudoin	Carroll
Benidickson	Carter
Bennett	Chevrier
Blanchette	Claxton
Boisvert	Cote (St. Jean-Iberville- Napierville)
Bonnier	Cote (Verdun-La Salle)
Boucher	