

Public Order Act, 1970

them. The host of abuses which have already taken place under the War Measures Act, including those moves made against political opponents for obviously political reasons, should serve as a concrete example to us. The abuses which have taken place will for the most part be perpetuated in the new legislation. Again, at this late stage of the legislation I appeal for suitable amendments to protect Canadians against these potential abuses.

Mr. Speaker, before I close may I touch briefly on the root cause of the FLQ trouble in Quebec. It stems primarily from the lack of basic social and economic reform. Contented citizens do not turn to terrorism if social and economic conditions can guarantee them a decent standard of living. But if unemployment is ever-present and basic social reforms such as housing, etc., are lacking, then groups like the FLQ can fester and grow on this type of discontent.

Why have we had this problem in Quebec and elsewhere without adequate action being taken? Who is to blame? We have had Liberal federal government since 1963—

An hon. Member: That is when the FLQ started.

Mr. Harding:—and precious little has been done on the federal level to alleviate the worsening situation in the province of Quebec. It is time the people of Quebec and the rest of Canada realized that the Liberal government of the past seven years has not done anything to alleviate adverse economic conditions or recognize the need for social reform in the province of Quebec. This lack of reform is the basic and the root cause of the growth of the FLQ.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Harding: In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would say that under the War Measures Act a host of abuses have already taken place. A large number of innocent people have been ruined by being picked up and having their names associated with the FLQ. Some individuals have lost jobs and their wives and families have been harmed by these arrests. The powers under the War Measures Act have been used politically in the city of Montreal and in other parts of Quebec to get at political opponents. Every day some new abuse under the War Measures Act comes to light, and when Canadians are able to read the full story of what has actually taken place they will never again want to see the War Measures Act invoked in Canada during peacetime. Mr. Speaker, if this bill is to be voted on at third reading without being amended, I shall have no choice but to cast my vote against it.

● (8:30 p.m.)

[Translation]

Mr. Romuald Rodrigue (Beauce): Mr. Speaker, no right-thinking citizen could remain indifferent to the serious problems that faced the Quebec and the Canada governments following the events of last October.

[Mr. Harding.]

No citizen could remain insensitive to the anguish felt by the Cross and Laporte families.

No Canadian could fail to disapprove of the offences committed, nor deny that in certain circumstances, the implementation of extraordinary measures is justified.

When the tragic circumstances we have known led to the invoking of the War Measures Act, we trusted the government and its leader, the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) when he said there were very good reasons to invoke the War Measures Act.

Now, on October 16, the federal government, at the request of the government of the province of Quebec and the city of Montreal, invoked the War Measures Act.

In the light of the facts known and outlined by the Prime Minister and his cabinet, Parliament approved the action of the government on the understanding that a legislation not as stringent as the War Measures Act would be introduced in the House as soon as possible.

Therefore, Parliament acted in good faith on October 16 last. After a month, one would be inclined to believe that the reasons stated were groundless.

The act invoked to apply extraordinary measures was not adapted to the present circumstances. It had been drafted to cope with a wartime situation. In this instance, Parliament was facing an unusual situation, different however from the conditions prevailing in a country at war. We were therefore at grips with a situation without legislation appropriate to circumstances.

The replacement of the War Measures Act was consequently necessary. It was extremely important that a new legislation be discussed and passed in order to put an end to such a situation.

We have supported the principle of a new bill and made suggestions to the government. We were expecting a bill different from the one before us. During the discussion in committee, we have proposed amendments to Bill C-181. Members of other parties have also moved amendments, but they have all been turned down by the government.

The rejection by the government of any reasonable amendment makes Bill C-181 the twin brother of the Regulations for the preservation of public order.

As the government has not kept its word, I do not see why we should give unqualified support to an incomplete legislation which grants almost unlimited powers. We have supported the principle of an emergency measure, but not necessarily this one.

Rather than an emergency law with a permanent character, such as can be found in the Western countries, this government has preferred to introduce a temporary legislation, so that if a similar situation arose in another part of the country, or in a different way, it would again have to ask Parliament to promulgate the War Measures Act.

Could it be that the passing of the War Measures Act was not justified or still, that it was promulgated in a moment of panic? Both are possible.