

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2.40 p.m.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale) moved that the bill be read the third time and do pass:

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, shortly this House, in its infinite wisdom, will give final approval to this bill and it will be on its way to the other place—that is, if the other place is receiving legislation from this place at that time. I do not know what the score is there, though I hear the bells ringing and I suppose it will be a question of for whom the bell tolls.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Not for thee or me.

Mr. Baldwin: It may toll for the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles); I am sure that is what he is thinking about.

I have a few comments before the bill passes out of our hands. I say that in all sincerity, since I hope the government will have had sufficient apprehension from what has happened in this House not to regard lightly, as it did before the opposition was generated, its power to do what it intends to do, namely bring in an emergency declaration. As I told the minister the other day, as the matter now stands if the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) were to wake up one morning and find his furnace off he could consider that an emergency and make a declaration, which is the kind of thing we do not accept.

There have been improvements made to the bill. We have asserted at length, because we had to, the right of parliamentary control. There has been a little dispute over what parliamentary control consists of, but at least there is no doubt in the minds of all parties that it includes the control exercised by this House, and to that extent the bill has been improved.

There was a particularly good amendment by the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Fraser) to ensure that any violence done to the ecological and environmental safeguards which have been built up over the years would be limited. I am sorry that the other amendments that we offered were not passed, but that is the way it goes.

So it is not a good bill, but it is a better bill than it was. This is what happens so often in this place with the system under which we operate. It is a kind of compromise, the kind of compromise which, with this government, at times emphasizes the sour smell of decay and rot which the government has brought to our parliamentary system.

All that has been done in this bill has been done in the name of crisis. There is always talk of crisis. There was much talk of crisis in October 1970, and we know to what extent that crisis was seen to evaporate against the cold facts of daylight later on. There was talk of crisis in September 1971, I think it was, when we were called back from our respective constituencies where we were doing our best to explain some of the odd antics of this government to our constituents. We were dragged back here because we were told by the government that Mr. Nixon had introduced a new economic policy in the United States

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that would have terrible effects on Canada, and that the government had to bring parliament back to legislate post haste. We passed an \$80 million bill, I think it was, for the purpose of providing employment opportunities, and there were the most dire predictions made by the government as to what would happen if we did not pass the bill. We passed the bill, some small percentage of the money was spent, and we found there was no crisis at all. And so it goes, and this is just one other example of the same thing.

• (1450)

What is the evidence of crisis which was put before this House, or before the committee, to justify this bill? Certainly, there has been none given to the House, and in the committee we attempted to call witnesses but the minister, supported by his faithful group of cohorts, prevented us from doing so. We were left with the evidence of the minister and one of his officials who was allowed to give evidence. That evidence did not justify the creation of a crisis atmosphere.

There were one or two spot situations; one on the east coast and one on the west coast, of potential crisis, but both of those have been remedied. I see some of my friends here from the Atlantic provinces to whom I have listened in respect of the problems they have experienced regarding the fisheries in the Atlantic provinces, and the problems they have faced with so many of their people attempting to find some means of replenishing their income because of what has happened to their fisheries. Those hon. members from the Atlantic provinces have brought overwhelming evidence before this House to show that great numbers of people in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and the other Atlantic provinces have suffered, but the government did not call that a crisis. However, the situation there certainly had as much of the element of crisis as does the situation presented us by the minister in respect of this bill.

There have been similar situations in western Canada with as much of an element of crisis. There has been a situation in my own part of the country during two successive years when, because of inclement weather, thousands of farmers were not able to harvest their crops. They are not the kind of people to go on government assistance programs, and some of them travelled hundreds, sometimes thousands, of miles to get work. They were not able to harvest their crops until the spring. That represented a reasonable crisis but the government laughed at it. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) was asked what he was going to do and he skipped around the question. He would not give the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) a reasonable answer by indicating what he intended to do to help those people.

The evidence the minister has brought forward to indicate that a crisis did or was likely to exist was very limited. Certainly, anyone with commonsense and intelligence understands that there are economic problems closely related to the matter of petroleum products in the sense of quantity, but more particularly and primarily in the sense of price. Pricing is a matter which we have attempted to bring to the knowledge of this government for over a year, almost since this session began. The hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) and other hon. members of this House have brought forward this problem in respect