

Emergency Powers Act

I find it difficult to understand why comment concerning the wisdom of the government in introducing an emergency powers bill is different from comments concerning its wisdom in introducing the budget. I have vivid recollection of quoting freely from the press in my speech in reply to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott).

Mr. Fleming: May I say a word on the point of order. Surely the essential difference is that an editorial which comments upon a measure before the house may be read. It is perfectly proper for an hon. member to read an editorial under such circumstances. It may not be proper to read editorial comment upon a debate or upon the course of a debate in the house. My understanding is that where editorial comment is to be found in the press relating to measures before the house, it is perfectly proper to read it. As I understand it, that is what the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Macdonnell) was about to do, to read a comment on the measure, not on the debate.

Mr. Speaker: I heard the hon. member's opening remarks and I think he is commenting upon a speech made by the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent).

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): No, Mr. Speaker, a comment on a speech by the Prime Minister, a very short speech. As a matter of fact, it was a comment on the Prime Minister's comment that he did not want to listen to the debate. That is what I referred to here.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that should be permitted at this time. That is the type of remark made outside the house which I think should not be referred to within the house.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): I must defer to your ruling, of course. I pass on to a quotation from Mr. Elmore Philpott in the *Vancouver Sun*, which I think you will pass because it certainly is merely a comment on the measure and has nothing whatever to do with the debate. This is from the *Vancouver Sun* of February 15:

It is no doubt true that there will be no serious abuse of the emergency powers, if they are granted for another year. But it is worth remembering that neither this Prime Minister nor this government will last for ever.

I hope that is not unparliamentary, Mr. Speaker.

Nobody knows who will head our government a year hence. A bad principle is a bad principle—and this is a very bad principle. A bad precedent is a bad precedent—and this is a very bad precedent.

Now I wish to come to a quotation from the *Post-Record* of Sydney, Nova Scotia. I think you will agree that this is discussing

the principle of the measure and is not in the remotest degree discussing the debate. There is one brief reference to the debate, but the article is discussing the principle. It reads:

Thoughtful Canadians will endorse George Drew's timely reaffirmation that parliament is the supreme authority representing the people and that authority should not be delegated to a handful of cabinet ministers.

It is somewhat alarming that a major principle of our freedom—something that is perfectly obvious—has to be stated firmly in the Commons to a cabinet that shows disconcerting signs of forgetting it.

The Progressive Conservative leader would have failed in his plain duty had he not protested against extension of the government's Emergency Powers Act for another year. Mr. Drew has called attention to an unfortunate trend in Ottawa. An aroused public opinion needs to remind the government it is assuming too much.

The government says it has good reason for holding on to a law which gives it wide power of emergency action over almost all phases of Canadian economic life. It has, however, not given parliament any reason whatever and has failed to convince the nation.

Mr. Speaker: I think that is commenting upon what the government is proposing with respect to the matter.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): It is merely this writer's opinion of the measure on which we are asked to act.

Mr. Speaker: I gather it is that writer's opinion of the proceedings in the house with respect to the measure, not on the merits of the measure itself.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): With deference, it seems to me it is commenting on the merits, on the whole principle involved.

Mr. Speaker: May I read this reference again?

Paragraph 265 of Beauchesne's third edition reads:

It is not in order to read articles in newspapers, letters or communications emanating from persons outside the house and referring to, or commenting on, or denying anything said by a member or expressing any opinion reflecting on proceedings within the house.

Surely that article is referring to and commenting upon what has been said by an hon. member in the house.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): As I listened to what you were reading I thought it might refer to some statement made about somebody. This is merely referring in a general way to the principle which is involved here.

Mr. Speaker: I think the article was referring to the debate. I have allowed factual editorials to be quoted here, but not where it raises an opinion about or criticizes the actions of some member of the house or of the government. That is for the members here to do.