

Defence Production Act

been made that almost amount to contempt of parliament. It is a far cry from the Liberal party of Sir Wilfrid Laurier's day, and it is a far cry from Mackenzie King's day. It is well known that in Mackenzie King's time when an appointment was made to the cabinet and the member accepted his appointment, he signed a resignation that could be used at any time. This kept the cabinet under the control of the Prime Minister. Today a change seems to have taken place in the rules and laws, because the Minister of Defence Production is now giving instructions to the Prime Minister.

Under this bill the minister is given full control. He has personal control. He does not have to come back to the cabinet or to parliament for anything. It goes much further than any blank cheque legislation. It goes much further than the munitions and supply bill. The minister has the right to appoint controllers. I have talked to some of the managers of defence production plants, and so on. Many of them were not too well pleased with the controls. If the minister were a superman and could act as controller himself it might be different, but he appoints the controllers, as and when and whom he wishes. He is not going to have much complaint over the control business from industry or the men employed in industry, because they know what happens when they find fault or any such thing as that. They are dependent for their livelihood and their profits on the contracts they receive from the Minister of Defence Production, or at his bidding.

Then again this is the same minister, with a different department, who probably had something to do with selling wheat and butter behind the iron curtain. I am told—I have nothing authentic on it—that at the present time a deal is being made for the sale of \$100 million worth of goods behind the iron curtain. If so, I am more or less in favour of it. We are a producing country. We have to sell in the markets where and when we can; but if we are going to sell behind the iron curtain we should be looking for cash; we should be careful about our credit, because this government has had an example of that in the Ming Sung ships. They lost the ships and they lost the credit.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but I want him to consider that what he is saying now is not relevant to the bill.

Mr. Hodgson: Mr. Speaker, I think I am just as relevant as the leader of the C.C.F. party was a few minutes ago.

[Mr. Hodgson.]

Mr. Speaker: Well, the leader of the C.C.F. party was speaking of the various suggestions that have been made with respect to reviewing this bill and other matters related to what he called terminating this debate. I think if the hon. member were referring to the various suggestions that had been made to terminate the debate the house would listen to him just as carefully as it listened to the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggan, the Minister of Defence Production or the Leader of the Opposition, who have spoken on the same matter. But as I understand it the hon. member chose to speak on the second reading of this bill, and now when he goes into the various deals that have been made I do not think that is relevant to the principle of the bill.

Mr. Hodgson: I always abide by your rulings, but I want to say that the leader of the C.C.F. got preference over me to speak.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member should not say that the leader of the C.C.F. got preference to speak.

Mr. Hodgson: I gave it to him.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member is always obliging and it was very good of him to do that. But he did it of his own volition and he should not complain now. The hon. member will get just as much latitude as was given to the leader of the C.C.F. party.

Mr. Hodgson: I always abide by your rulings.

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Hodgson: Some Liberals are worrying about the question. I feel highly honoured today because there are more Liberals in the house listening to me than there have been in the last few days of this debate. I am quite proud of it. The amendment moved by the hon. member for Royal reads:

That Bill No. 256, an act to amend the Defence Production Act, be not now read a second time, but that the subject matter thereof be referred to the standing committee on banking and commerce with instructions that they have power to examine and report upon the advisability of

(a) placing the Department of Defence Production on a permanent basis and conferring on the department such powers as ought to be of a continuing nature; and

(b) conferring for a period of one year, or until extended by parliament, such additional powers as may be strictly necessary in the light of the existing world conditions.

I cannot see anything wrong with that amendment. I cannot see why the Liberal government cannot accept it. Very few changes are being suggested; I think the most important one would be in the time limit. The leader of the C.C.F. referred us to the 1935 legislation and the time limitation in