

which is a warning of what will happen to them if they transgress against it. They could not have been dealt with adequately under the former provision of the Code. When organized labour through its representatives intimates that its associations have been oppressed by this law—not merely by a barren threat, but by the actual operation of the law—then we shall have time to consider the complaint and determine what should be our attitude towards a Bill of this kind. Therefore I cannot support the motion for the second reading of this Bill, and I intend to vote against it.

Right Hon. Mr. GRAHAM: Honourable gentlemen, I cannot, of course, pretend to indulge in any legal argument on this measure.

Hon. Mr. WILLOUGHBY: Pardon me. I presume the right honourable gentleman is not closing the debate. There are others who wish to speak.

Right Hon. Mr. GRAHAM: They may, as well speak now.

Hon. Mr. ROBERTSON: Honourable gentlemen, on the subject under discussion, which has been before us a number of times previously, I desire to say a few words because the Minister of Justice, when introducing the Bill this year in another place, stated that it was presented at the request of labour organizations in Canada. I do not suggest that that statement is not true; I do suggest, however, that it is only partially true, and that there are labour organizations in Canada that do not desire to see the law amended in this regard.

The Minister who introduced the Bill stated clearly that its purpose was to put the Criminal Code, so far as seditious utterances and acts are concerned, in exactly the position that it occupied prior to 1919. Honourable gentlemen will remember the serious trouble that arose in 1919, when that sympathetic strike occurred which everybody in Western Canada knew was a revolutionary move. The old law permitted such things to be done, for under the law as it stood then men could not be brought to justice for committing offences which were recognized to be seditious. Now it is proposed to restore that law. It was amended in 1919 because of the experience of this country in that year. Ten years have passed since the amendment was made, and no person in Canada, be he citizen or not, has suffered any inconvenience, embarrassment or oppression as a result of that legislation. Surely, then, there ought to be some good reason for changing the law at the present time.

I ask honourable gentlemen to look into their morning papers of to-day and see what is happening throughout the world as a result of the propaganda that is being carried on by the very element that caused this law to be brought into existence in 1919. See what is going on in India to-day; the massacres that have occurred in China within the last three days; the arrest of thirty-one officials in Russia itself, under the oppressive laws that are in force there. Yet those people complain against this law, which has maintained order in this country for the last ten years. The class who are protesting against our law are the very ones that are oppressing their own people to-day.

Hon. Mr. HAYDON: Would the honourable gentleman compare those experiences with ours?

Hon. Mr. ROBERTSON: My honourable friend may make his remarks later. Now, I submit that thus far no good reason has been advanced to prove the necessity for any change of the law at this time, or to show the wisdom of such a change. I have been for nearly thirty years associated with one of the recognized standard labour organizations in Canada. For nearly twenty years I have been at the head of it in this country, and as directly representing more than 8,000 men in Canada now I say that there is in that organization no such sentiment as would justify the statement that a change in this law is desired. On the other hand, the law as it stands is a protection to the honest, bona fide trade unions in Canada. It oppresses no man; it allows full liberty to everyone. Just as the law against murder deters many persons from committing that crime, so this law, as long as it stands on the statute book, will cause many to refrain from seditious utterances and acts in which they would undoubtedly indulge if the law were not in force.

As one who is perhaps as closely associated with organized labour in Canada as any honourable gentleman in this House, I would not advocate or support the enactment or retention of any legislation that was inimical to the best interests of labour. I sincerely believe that in the interest of the trades unions in Canada, and in the interest of the liberty of our citizens, there should be reasonable restriction of those who are too enthusiastic in the expression of their views and who are given to the support of the Communist propaganda in Canada which brought this law into existence. I therefore submit that we ought to agree to retain this law until such time as the efforts and in-