

plaint about what we did under the War Measures Act, even though it did invade the field which normally was within the jurisdiction of the government of which he was the head.

Since the war ceased, we have been trying to get out of the fields we had thus entered, and we have been doing it at a rate which not so long ago a great many members in this house were charging had been too rapid. At the present time we have a few small controls which it appears necessary to maintain, unless they are exercised by some other authority.

There is steel control. Steel control, in my view, does not require the existence of a war emergency for its justification in the hands of the federal authority, if in fact steel is a material in short supply. The defence of Canada is a matter of federal jurisdiction at all times; the defence of Canada requires watchfulness and preparation at all times. Steel is an indispensable material for the proper organization and maintenance of those forces which it is the responsibility of the central government to keep in existence. Anything that is necessary incidentally to the exercise of federal jurisdiction can be done by federal authority; and if it is necessarily incidental to the proper equipping of our armed forces to have a certain proportion of the steel in short supply in Canada, then from my reading of the constitution and my reading of the decisions under the constitution we are, I believe, justified in maintaining that control.

We do not like to maintain any kind of control any longer than it appears to us to be absolutely indispensable. At the same time we come before parliament asking parliament to continue the legislation under which we can exercise this control over steel. We come to the Canadian parliament and say, "Authorize us to make an agreement with the producers of steel to increase their productive capacity so that this short supply situation which justifies the existence of the control may be done away with."

There have been charges about the centralizing tendencies of this government, but I would invite hon. members of any opposition to cite a single instance, since the end of the war, where the central authority has attempted to go beyond the limits prescribed by the constitution. It is all very well to make broad assertions, but the whole tendency of this government since the cessation of active fighting has been to withdraw from those fields where during the war it had to invade the ordinary jurisdiction of the provinces.

With respect to the control of domestic rental housing, in October last the federal government wrote to every provincial premier

*The Address—Mr. St. Laurent*

saying we felt that we would have to ask parliament to continue for a further period the legislative authority to exercise this control, but that if they chose to resume their jurisdiction, whether they maintained the controls or not, which was their own business, we would immediately withdraw.

What has been the situation with regard to that? I fear that if controls over domestic rentals were withdrawn at this time it would create a pretty chaotic situation in a great many large industrial centres of Canada. We have been building a lot of housing. Since the end of the war, I believe, 278,000 units have been erected. There were more erected last year than in any previous year in the history of Canada. But our economic prosperity, whether there be any inflationary elements in it or not, is increasing the demand for housing a lot faster than materials and manpower can provide the houses.

Although very large numbers are built each year, the net increase in family units in Canada keeps just a little bit ahead of the central mortgage and housing corporation and the others who are engaged in providing housing units. The result is that at the present time rental housing is still at a premium. Human nature being what it is, I fear that if there were no control, or if the control were immediately lifted, a great many Canadians would be exploited as a consequence of the shortage of housing. It is clearly something which is normally within provincial jurisdiction. But we put on the controls and I do not think we would be discharging our duty as humanitarian Canadians to the Canadian public if we took them off without those who normally have jurisdiction assuming the responsibility of either maintaining them or removing them in their respective localities.

What has been the result? The administration of controls is not a comfortable or easy thing. It does not bring in any revenue and it does not bring in very much glory. Those who have had to do with it have not had very much satisfaction in that respect. The premiers of the provinces realize what the situation is. They realize that we have caught hold of a lion's tail and we do not want to let go until somebody else grabs it. They say that they are not going to grab it.

Therefore it happens that we are going to have to ask parliament to extend for a further period our right, our privilege, of exercising this control over the rental of domestic housing.

On motion of Mr. St. Laurent the debate was adjourned.

At eleven o'clock the house adjourned, without question put, pursuant to standing order.