

*Defence Production Act*

He could even decree that all those who have contracts with the Department of Defence Production are under no obligation to pay provincial taxes. In this case, also, he would not even need to ask the provincial government for their permission.

One could say no doubt that I exaggerate and that I go too far, but after all, the powers are there, in black and white. And the only excuse that can be offered is that they have never been put in force and probably never will be.

Well, if they have never been used or if the government does not intend to use them, let them be removed, without parliament being asked not only to extend them until 1956 but to add them forever to the statutes of the Canadian parliament.

I said a moment ago that it might not be necessary to ask any permission from the provincial governments. This government has shown that it did not scruple too much about trying to get as many concessions as possible from the provincial governments. During the last war, when the government saw fit to take over some provincial fields of taxation, well, it had at least the decency to ask permission, but now, with section 23, it does not even take the trouble of paying this small act of courtesy.

During this debate, the government's spokesmen and their allies on the left have always endeavoured to explain that the minister needed these tremendous powers to cope with the state of emergency existing at the present time, or which might occur.

Well, let us have a look at the international situation. Without doubt, Russia is still waging her cold war. Since the war of 1939-45 ended, we have never enjoyed a full peace; the world has been disillusioned by the kind of peace which followed this dreadful conflict.

Russia has continued her campaign against the western nations; she never relented in her vicious aggression which might be called a cold war.

Nevertheless, at the present time, we are far removed from the emergency of the Korean war, when our soldiers were fighting on the Korean battlefields, when our young men were being killed and when we had to provide our troops with the equipment necessary to enable them successfully to defend democracy which was then threatened by North Korea, communist China and Russia.

The situation is now much less serious than it was when the sad events with which we are all familiar took place in southeast Asia. At that time, the French army had to retreat. France has removed all her troops from Indo-China, thus forcing western nations

to make concessions to the leaders of North Indo-China.

Since then, the situation has improved. Russia, at least in words, seems to be offering her hand in a gesture of peace. Austria has been freed. Western Germany is discussing with Russia the ways of bringing about an agreement on the unification of Germany, guaranteed by the western nations. Finally, the great powers will meet later this month at Geneva. All that tends to create some sort of hope for peace.

However, we must not close our eyes and allow ourselves to be lulled into complacency. We must be realists. We must remember that we waged war to save democracy. We must not resort to bogeys like the imminent danger of a world crisis or the possibility of a world war to compel the Canadian parliament to grant extraordinary powers like these contained in the present bill, which we are asked to incorporate permanently in the statutes of Canada.

This morning, the right hon. Prime Minister was loudly cheered when he stated that he did not believe, nor did the government expect, that there would be a world war this year. All hon. members opposite and even members of the opposition cheered him. Since I have been sitting in this house, I often noted the optimism of the right hon. Prime Minister, who never misses an occasion of stating that he is confident that there will not be another world war in the near future.

Well, if the situation has improved to that extent, if there is not at this time any urgency or threat of a crisis, the arguments put forth by our hon. friends opposite are groundless. They do not stand up and they are in fact surprising. I am astonished to hear such arguments in the Canadian parliament.

We are truly wondering why the government could not accept the amendment moved by the Conservative opposition. After all, by this amendment we agree that the Department of Defence Production should carry on its work; we are prepared to give it all powers that it may need to carry through all its undertakings but we are requesting that the duration of such powers, which even our friends opposite find exceptional, which they themselves agree should not be made permanent and which they would never dare apply knowing them to be so unpopular, be limited. Why then refuse to accept this amendment? Is it because the minister, when retiring at night, finds it comforting to say to himself that he is the most powerful man in Canada? Very well! We consent to his being the most powerful man in this country, but we cannot admit that the powers contained in this bill