

Invoking of War Measures Act

But, from the moment when threats are carried out, then the danger increases. And by whom are they carried out? By two or three men with guns who have kidnapped one or two people? No, Mr. Speaker!

The situation is much more serious than that. Any person having knowledge of the FLQ organization in the province of Quebec at the present time cannot but be aware that the state of Quebec and the federal state are truly in danger in Canada.

Why? The most pessimistic say that the FLQ has some 3,000 members.

An hon. Member: More.

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): I do not know if that figure is accurate but I am aware that there are quite a few.

And I know something else; these people have infiltrated every strategic place in the province of Quebec, every place where important decisions are taken, and without giving complete details let us say that at the present time they are in a position to cause the Quebec and the federal governments, as well as the city of Montreal, irreparable harm, with the support of outside organizations which are not necessarily in agreement as to the measures taken because it is well organized.

Some say: Why have you not made it illegal? That is what we are doing under these regulations though it might not be the best solution. It is known that the FLQ is made up of cells of two or three persons each, cells that do not know each other, that do not necessarily work hand in hand and that are now in touch simply through coded messages broadcast free of charge by our radio stations. What you might think are only speeches are in fact coded messages which are sent here and there.

We are dealing therefore with a well-structured organization which is able, with the help of other organizations seeking the same objectives, to make life impossible, in the province of Quebec, for all those who do not share the ideal of the FLQ, whose primary aim is to destroy the country.

Had we failed to act today, and had separation taken place in a month or a year from now, I know quite well what would have been said in this House. Had Place Ville-Marie in Montreal been blown up someday, people would have said: "But what kind of government have we got? All that information was available to you, you could have used emergency powers and you did not do so? This is a government of incompetent men."

And when we try to do it, people say: "You over-reacted"! That's it: "You over-reacted"!

One thing is certain, Mr. Speaker—I don't know any more than the police, probably much less—there is an organization which has thousands of guns, rifles, machine guns, bombs and about 2,000 pounds of dynamite, more than enough to blow up the core of downtown Montreal.

Those are people ready for assassination, kidnapping. All that exists in the heart of our country, at a time when the situation is already difficult, and the government would say: First of all, we shall introduce a bill for democratic discussion in the House. During that time, the

[Mr. Marchand.]

culprits would get away and the police would be left in the lurch. At least this case would be treated in a democratic manner!

It is as democratic as Chamberlain's action when he went to meet Hitler in an effort to avoid the war.

An hon. Member: Come on, come on.

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Mr. Speaker, there was an emergency. We deemed it to be so. I do not say that we are gods. We deemed it was so, and we believed that was the thing to do at the time.

It has been claimed that the means resorted to might be out of proportion to the objectives. The Prime Minister told you himself this morning that he was the first to recognize that. It is not my intention to dispute the fact. It has been recognized.

If there are other means to achieve the same objectives, to protect the citizens of Quebec who are also citizens of Canada and want to remain such, we do not exclude the possibility of examining proposals submitted and it may be that within a very short time we are going to find a solution that will please everyone.

We take it for granted that no one in this House condones the current events in the province of Quebec, especially what is happening within the FLQ.

I am not making a superficial speech. I do not want to suggest that some members find this funny. No one is finding this funny, I am convinced of that.

Tonight, our problem is to determine what means we should use and, whatever they are, no doubt we will be criticized. We accept it in advance. But as a government, without pleasure and rather regretfully, we have decided to use the only means available to protect ourselves against this extremely serious danger threatening the lives of a number of citizens.

If the House considers that the situation was not urgent, that a notice should have been given, that a debate should have been called in the House or that we should have waited for 48 hours, I think that we must first worry about saving democracy. Democracy cannot work when the opponents do not accept to play under the rules of democracy.

The right hon. member for Prince Albert was talking about the exchange of ideas in Canada. I entirely agree with him on this point: there cannot be any restriction on the exchange of ideas, even if the right hon. member does not like them and even if there is a separatist faction in Quebec! We were never asked to declare it illegal. This faction intends to destroy the country and its members try to reach their objective through democratic means. This is normal. We do not have to intervene. But when people refuse to play the democratic game, a government anxious to safeguard democratic institutions cannot be paralysed in the name of democracy. In my opinion, democracy in this instance would be of the wrong kind.

Some people say that this action will be tantamount to building up a wall. Even if we did accept the suggestions of the hon. member for York South, even if he had

* without giving complete details -