

*Defence Production Act*

not told all the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth about this bill. There must be other reasons behind his insistence, the stubbornness on the part of the minister.

I remember that when during the war years the former minister for air, who sits over in the corner, had his estimates before the house, item after item after item passed just as smoothly as one could wish. A question would be asked of the minister. If he knew the answer he gave it at once. If a question was asked and he was not sure of the answer he told us he was not sure of it but that he would find out. In the course of the debate on the estimates a question came up. I thought the minister had made a mistake. The minister replied and said that he had made a mistake.

Shortly after his estimates were passed the estimates of another minister came up, and we were stuck on the first item hour after hour after hour. Eventually the minister, who was then sitting in a front seat, turned around to the minister for air and said—this was supposed to be in a whisper—“How is it that you can get your estimates through the way you do and I am still on the first item after nearly five hours?” The minister for air said—this was also supposed to be in a whisper, but I heard it in my section of the house and I am quite sure the Speaker heard it—“If you tell them the truth as I did you will get through.” Within a very few hours that minister's estimates went through because he followed the advice of the minister for air.

I used to be the representative of an American brick and terra-cotta company. I remember a little printed card that the president had over his desk. I imagine you would call it a motto, and it read something like this. The minister reminds me of it; that is why I mention it. “Ask me no more. The moon may draw the sea; the pickle may be fished out with a fork, but four small words are all you get from me. Ask me no more”. That is the attitude the minister has taken in this debate. He will not tell us the other reasons why he wants this bill passed. I am afraid the minister may have one of these mottoes in his pocket at the present time and he is trying to follow it out.

The other day the hon. member for Brantford (Mr. Brown) gave a reason why the minister wanted to have this bill passed. I will not read *Hansard*. I believe his words ran something like this. He said he believed the real reason was the security of the senior officers of the Department of Defence Production. Perhaps if some other Liberal members rise to their feet and speak they may tell us other reasons why this bill should be passed.

[Mr. Fraser (Peterborough).]

I can assure you, sir, that this party is in favour of the security of not only the senior officers of the Department of Defence Production but also of all employees of that department. If that department were made permanent they would have security, and by all means they should have security equal to that of any other civil servant employed by this government.

We are not in favour of all the powers this bill gives to the minister, because some of them are too great. Under the administration of the present minister they might be all right, but who knows who the next minister will be? On top of that, the present act gives more administrative authority to one minister than has ever been given to any minister of the crown in peacetime.

This bill gives for all time almost complete control over industry in Canada, and industry in Canada has done a wonderful job, not only during the war but since. Industry in Canada is trusted, industry in Canada has to be trusted, and industry in Canada if trusted will do a real job. Mention was made that some of these industries had got out of line, but those who would get out of line would be certainly few and far between. They would be like hen's teeth, or to use the slang expression, “there ain't any”.

I believe, and it is the belief of many people in Canada and throughout the world, that until the end of time defence must be a permanent feature not only here in Canada and in the United States but in all democratic countries. Our different industries, especially our new industries, should be ready at all times not only to look after peace needs but also to turn to defence needs as quickly as may be necessary. Industry must feel free at all times, otherwise expansion and new ideas will not be forthcoming. Industry will be crippled and not able to meet foreign competition. On June 28, as reported on page 5377 of *Hansard*, the Minister of Defence Production said:

There is nothing very new about the Defence Production Act. It has been in force now for 16 years in this country, with the exception of a little less than a year after the munitions and supply act was repealed by this government, and I may say repealed by this government with no prompting from the Conservative party. It was repealed because it was felt that that particular act was no longer needed.

Why is the minister insisting that an act which is absolutely the same be passed at this time? The minister went on:

Hon. members may say that the Defence Production Act is not the munitions and supply act. However, there is nothing in the Defence Production Act that was not in the munitions and supply act, although the powers granted the department in the munitions and supply act were much more extensive than those in the act now under discussion.