

*Emergency Powers Act*

its validity upon the existence of an emergency so that it may give to the government of Canada powers ordinarily within the jurisdiction of the provinces, it is desirable to declare that there is in fact an emergency. I find that the suggestion has been made that on that occasion I was urging that the War Measures Act be invoked. I was not, and I am not now.

I very much prefer that there should be presented to this house legislation which will make it clear what powers are being assumed by the government. I shall go further and say that it is of the utmost importance that such powers as the government seeks and as this parliament is asked to approve should be defined with the utmost clarity so that the public is not left in doubt as to what those powers are. Also, the area of our economy within which legislation of this kind is to operate should be stated clearly so that those who are likely to be affected by legislation of this nature are not going to be in doubt as to whether they will be affected or not, and by that very fact possibly contribute substantially to the inflation which has disturbed this country so much today.

I most heartily endorse the suggestion by the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) that whatever we say and do here should seek to convey to the people of Canada the thought that a general war is not inevitable. I think that is of immense importance. The spirit in which our people accept whatever deprivations may be necessary as a result of the heavily increased burden of defence will be largely measured by the degree of hope they have in their minds that what is being done now may preserve that peace which every sensible person in the world desires so much today.

I think it is important that here in Canada and in the other free nations continuing emphasis should be placed upon the hope of peace because our people will then accept the burdens and responsibilities which are going to be imposed on them with the hope that by that effort peace may be preserved. Otherwise the things that we do will be carried on in a spirit of fatalism, and, in those homes where there has already so recently been tragedy, perhaps almost in an atmosphere of despair. It is a part of the struggle in which we are engaged to convince our people that there is still great hope of peace as long as the full energy of the free nations is put into this effort at the earliest possible moment and in the most effective way.

Certainly I agree, as I have already indicated, that there should be very clear and definite indications of the extent of the

authority that the government will have, and also of the extent of the authority that the government will assume. I must take issue with the Prime Minister with respect to one point in his remarks. He indicated that powers would be sought which might constitute a warning, that they were to be standby powers. I think it is very much better that we know as far as possible exactly what powers are going to be invoked because we have already seen many of the results of the very dangers we suggested last September at the time that the Essential Materials (Defence) Act was before the house.

At that time different speakers, not confined alone to the party to which I belong, indicated that the very generality of the terms employed would in itself create an atmosphere of uncertainty that was likely to invite inflationary action without effective restraint being imposed upon the results of that uncertainty. It seemed to me that we were in little doubt as to the extent of the powers that were being sought last September because at that time the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe) indicated his own belief as to what would be done by the bill then being introduced. When it was brought in last September the Minister of Trade and Commerce said on September 8, 1950, as reported at page 446 of *Hansard*:

There is, finally, the need to avoid runaway inflation, with its distortions of the wage and price structure and the unrest it brings in its wake. Common sense and self-discipline on the part of all Canadians can go far to avoid excesses which are completely unnecessary. As I explained earlier, we have never been more prosperous. We have never had a larger supply of goods and services and a greater capacity to produce more of these goods and services. Those who are hoarding, those who are raising prices in anticipation of a controlled economy, are doing a disservice to themselves and to the communities in which they live. In fact, by doing so they are directly contributing to a situation which may make it necessary to introduce controls that could otherwise be avoided.

I suggest that the very thing the Minister of Trade and Commerce referred to last September in the words I have quoted took place. He was referring to the fact that it had taken place in his remarks just over a week ago when he said that those who would be most affected by controls had made appropriate adjustments, and he added words which, as I indicated before, did not appear in *Hansard*—"they are all set." These things did occur, and yet in spite of the fact that an assurance had been given that the bill then before the house, if it became law, would be invoked to deal with that situation nothing has been done thereunder. Three orders have been made, and they all deal with certain aspects of the control of steel. On February