

*Defence Production Act*

situation in this country, having in mind its future development. At the same time I was referring to and revealing what the minister had to say about this act in his speech on June 28. The minister said that this act had been in operation for 16 years, and that apparently it had operated very well; that industry, knowing the rules, had come into line. They had lived up to the rules; there were no complaints at all; things had worked very well. This would mean that industry in the last 16 years has been under a form of compulsion, a form of surveillance. Perhaps this may be a little extreme, but they have been under somewhat of a dictatorship. Naturally those concerns, who over the years have benefited and have been making munitions and various instruments of war for the government, were in this position. It would be very strange that one should want to bite the hand that feeds it; it would be very strange for them to make complaints. So far as I know, these same industries and these same people have made no complaint about our debating this matter, about debating the powers of this bill and the question of its termination.

One thing that comes to my mind is this. So far as our commercial and economic advancement are concerned, we in this country are greatly dependent on the industrial life and the development over a broad phase of the industrial life of this nation. I am just wondering how, over a period of 16 years, these contracts were let for the goods supplied. How have they been allotted to the various industries? I would take it from what the minister said that on the whole the government allots those contracts; they hand them out. If the contracts are not handled in the way required, the minister, under the powers that are conceded to him under the act, can step in and provide proper management. I am wondering how, over the period of years, these contracts have been allotted. How does industry obtain those contracts?

One might go a little farther and ask the question, have they been divided well over this country? Have industries from every part of the nation received a like number of orders? Have they been able to benefit? Have they been able to advance themselves by this type of work? Has there been any tendency to concentrate these contracts in very narrow channels, and perhaps concentrate them in a small number of industries? In fact, that is one thing I do not understand. I am wondering why my hon. friends to my left have not raised that very point, because after all they set themselves up as the champions of men working in industry, of labour and labour unions.

[Miss Bennett.]

I sometimes wonder how many millions have been made in this country over the 16 years by the contracts they have received from this government. I also wonder how many small businesses may have gone out of business, having been unable to operate, owing to the fact that they could not meet the competition coming from larger industries which are getting government contracts. I remember very well during the last election campaign talking to a very small manufacturer. I said to him: "This is a fine little industry you have here; it is a fine little manufacturing establishment that you are carrying on, and you are doing very well." He was employing around 12 men. He said to me: "Well, I have met with a great deal of misfortune. Up to a few months ago I had quite a thriving industry. I started in a very small way. We started with one man. I finally got up to where I was employing 25 men. You know what happened to me was this. I was making locks. I found I had no steel, and all of a sudden I was told that there was not enough steel." The controller of steel said: "You cannot use steel for making locks. We have to have this steel; we have to have it for something else. We have to have it for more important industries."

That is very right, Mr. Speaker. We understand it is required in an emergency in this country. But after all is said and done, we have to remember that this whole industrial and economic life that we have, the very fact that in this nation we enjoy the highest standards of living—I think we can say quite honestly that we have the highest standard of living of any country in the world—has come about through the years because we have had unfettered, untrammelled private enterprise through the last 50 years, men and women of initiative and of vision and of outlook. Men and women of enterprise and of courage have been able to go out in this country. There has been nothing to stop them. They have been able to go out into their little industries. They have been able to build those industries. They have competed together. In that way, the brain power, the ability and the personalities of this great nation have entered into the industrial life, and have produced an outstanding economic situation, the free and full life that we have today.

You know, Mr. Speaker, a very good example of this thing came about in the last war. I remember very well it being said that it was the free nations of the world, people like ourselves, who went out and in the fullness of this freedom, with the desire to protect the same, in thankfulness for what we had acquired for generations past in this nation, went into industries and manned