

Defence Production Act

And again at page 4288 Mr. Mackenzie King said:

Now, may I say this to him? So far as the opposition is concerned, we will be prepared to allow him to make any estimate he likes, so long as it is an estimate based on good judgment, and we will not question that estimate, we will allow him to have the amount he asks for. But we do assert, if it is only for the sake of maintaining what is the most fundamental of all obligations of the commons, namely, its control over expenditure, that he should not ask us to give him a blank cheque to borrow as much as he pleases to deal with this particular matter.

I can almost hear Mr. King speaking in a debate such as this where the powers granted are in no way limited as to time. How much more smartly would he have dealt with this particular bill than the bill which was then being debated by the House of Commons? The closing remarks by Mr. King at the resolution stage are found at page 4290 of *Hansard*:

But we cannot completely surrender the rights of this House of Commons and of parliament with respect to its control over expenditures for any purpose that may be named, and we cannot accord him our approval of the resolution in the form in which it has been brought down.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I should like to bring ourselves forward to the debate on second reading of that act, which commenced on July 31, 1931. Mr. King's remarks are found at page 4413 of *Hansard*:

It seems to me this bill disregards parliament altogether; it is a complete usurpation of the rights of parliament.

And further down the page:

I do not think it is possible to emphasize too strongly how serious is the departure which the government is making in asking this house, no matter what the reason may be, to give it unlimited powers of the kind.

This is exactly the same type of legislation which Mr. King condemned so strongly in 1931. Again, at page 4415 of *Hansard*, we find Mr. King saying:

If this measure were dealt with as it deserves to be, it would be the duty of this House of Commons to remain in session until the measure was withdrawn. That is the only way in which I believe a free parliament could in the circumstances be expected to maintain the rights of a free people.

I heartily endorse those words referring to the duty of this house to remain in session until either the measure is withdrawn or some more suitable measure is presented to us in line with the arguments we have presented.

Hon. Ernest Lapointe also entered that debate on second reading on July 31, 1931, and some of his remarks are most enlightening. I quote from page 4419 of *Hansard*:

I say that even then there were abuses, but in this measure there is no limitation as far as amounts of money are concerned—

Here I interject that in this case there is no limitation as far as time is concerned.

—there is no limitation as to the destination of those moneys or the use to which they may be put. I have been reading a book which my right hon. friend quoted many times when sitting on this side of the house but which he seems to have forgotten since he has been on the other side; I refer to that famous book written by Lord Hewart, chief justice of England, entitled *The New Despotism*. In that book Lord Hewart relates the story of an Anglo-Indian civil servant who returned to England on leave after an absence of many years. On arriving in London and while travelling between Victoria and Charing Cross stations he asked the man with him, "What are those buildings?" The man said, "Well, those are the parliament buildings; that is Westminster". The Anglo-Indian said, "What, does that rubbish still go on?" That was the attitude of mind of that gentleman, and if we agree to this bill in its present form I really believe we will be entering on a path fraught with grave danger. Surely someone will say, sometime, "Does this rubbish still go on at Ottawa, the parliament of Canada?"

Now I should like to refer to the speech made by the Minister of Defence Production on June 28, 1955, and in particular to one or two remarks he made. The first is at page 5376 of *Hansard*: "I feel that I am living in another world." When I read that remark I had visions of Alice in Wonderland, I had visions of Charlemagne, and I had visions of many other characters in ancient history. I could just imagine the right hon. minister charging into battle with his pike held high and saying, "What I want I will have." At page 5377 of *Hansard* the minister had this to say:

The departmental act, and the act of any department, sets out the duties and obligations of the department and the authority under which the department carries out those duties and obligations. To say that the Department of Defence Production can be made permanent without a permanent Defence Production Act is to say that the Department of Public Works can be a permanent department even though the Public Works Act is temporary in nature, or that the Department of National Revenue can be a permanent department if the Department of National Revenue Act is a temporary act, or that the post office can be a permanent department if the Post Office Act is a temporary act.

There is the typical case of a blind and wilful refusal to see the argument or to try to understand the argument which has been presented from this side of the house. The argument is simply this. The argument is that we want the Defence Production Act. Let us not hear any more of these foolish remarks coming from the other side of the house. We want this act, but we want this act either in a reduced form as to the scope of its powers or with a limitation placed on the life of those exceptional powers.