

Defence Production Act

the Prime Minister last night he had this to say, as reported at page 5643 of *Hansard*:

I want to say something that may make it a little bit more concrete and a little bit more precise, as was possible in 1950 when we were dealing with the emergency powers act of that time and when the hon. member for Eglinton (Mr. Fleming), the hon. member for Kamloops (Mr. Fulton), the Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson) and I put our heads together to draft the things that we would put into those regulations about which the hon. member for Eglinton said he was perfectly satisfied and after which the bill went through.

Mr. Speaker, the remarks of the Prime Minister last night were very misleading. In the first place, the occasion to which he refers was not 1950; it was March 1, 1951. The question did not concern the duration of the bill; the emergency powers bill when introduced already contained, in section 4, a limit of one year, to May 31, 1952. That limit was imposed upon the powers then conferred upon the governor in council. The incident to which the Prime Minister referred last night did not occur on second reading, but during the discussion in committee of the whole, after the bill had been given second reading without division. The circumstances are in no way parallel.

The hon. member for Kamloops and the hon. member for Eglinton had been attacking the powers conferred by the bill with respect to arrest, as well as other provisions of the bill. In committee the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice accepted the amendment to clause 2 of the bill to eliminate any question of the power of arrest. The full report of that will be found at page 820 of *Hansard* for March 1, 1951.

There were objections on our side to other sections of the bill, and several amendments put forward at that time from this side were voted down in committee, as will be found at pages 821 and 828 of *Hansard* for March 1, 1951. The discussion to which the Prime Minister referred was confined strictly to subsection 4 of section 2 of the bill. As originally framed, this clause provided for the tabling in the house of any orders in council passed under the provisions of the act. It was pointed out by the hon. member for Eglinton that it was insufficient only to have the orders in council tabled, and that everything in the nature of a regulation as broadly defined by the Regulations Act should be required to be tabled in the house. The government acceded to this proposal and the clause was amended to this effect.

The discussion then continued as to the provisions of clause 2 in regard to the tabling in the house and the discussion of the measures that were tabled. The Prime Minister's proposal, which was accepted by our party

at that time, was confined to one clause of the bill and one only. It would be completely misleading to leave any impression that the understanding at that time went to the root of the bill or had any relation to the principle thereof.

On that occasion the hon. member for Eglinton had already expressed himself very firmly in relation to clause 1 of the bill when it was in committee. I mention this, Mr. Speaker, because the Prime Minister gave the impression last night that he was making some concession. He made no concession whatever, none whatever.

Mr. St. Laurent: Will the hon. gentleman permit me? What I had in mind, and what was agreed, was that we would give an undertaking that when a challenge to an order was made an opportunity would be promptly provided to get a decision of the house upon that challenge; and I was giving an undertaking that if a bill were introduced to amend the Defence Production Act, there would be opportunity provided without delay for a decision by the house on that bill, though it might otherwise, because of the rules, be delayed in its progress.

Mr. Drew: No matter what the good intentions of the Prime Minister may be, this assurance is absolutely meaningless.

Mr. St. Laurent: It was accepted at that time.

Mr. Drew: No, it has no relationship to the proposal, to what was discussed at that other time. If the Prime Minister wants to put forward any proposal, let him state that he proposes in committee to move an amendment, and let us know what the amendment is. This assurance means literally nothing. All it means is that at some time in the future, if the Prime Minister still has responsibility for proceedings, he will be willing to let some measure come forward for discussion. Well, Mr. Speaker, that means nothing. The Prime Minister knows better than anyone here, in fact he has been the first to assert it, with all the political overtones, that he will assert his authority in this house on any occasion while he is Prime Minister. No; it means nothing whatever.

If the Prime Minister and the government did come to the conclusion three years from now or two years from now that there are changes they are prepared to accept, then presumably they will introduce the amendment. It is perfectly certain that if they are not prepared to introduce it, no bill put forward by the opposition would have any opportunity of success whatever. All it means is that the Prime Minister, to such