

*Defence Production Act*

continually on their minds and continually being brought to my attention. They brought it to my attention in no uncertain terms. I am sure that if I were to use the words of some of the residents with whom I had the privilege of talking—and they were not all Conservatives but were of different political viewpoints—I would be immediately called to order by the Speaker. On some occasions, the language was so strong that if I were to use it here I am sure I would be ushered from the chamber by the Sergeant-at-Arms. Perhaps that would not be a bad idea, because it would bring more forcibly to the attention of the citizens of this country just what is contained in this Defence Production Act.

I do not believe that any democratic government has the right to ask that such powers be placed on the statute books of Canada without a time limit. They should be subject to review by parliament at different times as the representatives of the people. I should like to quote the words of the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) from *Hansard* for July 4, page 5643:

I am sure he does not mean that after three years it would not be needed.

Mr. Ferguson: No.

Mr. St. Laurent: But rather that, after three years, it should be brought back to parliament in order to let parliament look at it again—

Mr. Ferguson: Put it at five.

Mr. St. Laurent: —and to see if the powers can be modified. Perhaps we will not be able to modify them. We hope that circumstances will be improved to such an extent that they can be modified. I am prepared to give the kind of undertaking that was accepted in 1950 and to say to this house that if at any time after the three years mentioned by the hon. member who has just taken his seat there is anyone in the house who feels that the time has come to have another look at these powers—and if we are not proposing it ourselves—let him introduce a bill to amend this act and we will undertake to provide an opportunity, on government time, for the consideration of that bill without any delay whatsoever.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am sure we all agree that the Prime Minister was sincere in those remarks. We must remember that no one has a lease on life. No one in this world knows what the next year or two, or even tomorrow, may bring. Hon. members on this side of the house realize that the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) is well preserved and looks healthy, and we wish him many years in his parliamentary career. Indeed, we hope he will remain in his parliamentary career long enough so that, perhaps in the not too distant future, he may exercise his tact as leader of the opposition.

I should like to give an illustration of what might happen to any of us. I have said that we have no idea of what lies ahead. In

[Mr. Stanton.]

this connection I would direct the attention of the house to an extract from "The Story of the Dominion". This is a short extract, but it will bring to the attention of hon. members the fact that we cannot be too sure of ourselves when giving an undertaking because, when the time comes to fulfil it, we do not know whether we will be here or will be capable of carrying out that promise. It says under the heading "Struggles for Responsible Government":

Neither the troubles of 1837 nor Lord Durham's famous report nor the union of the Canadas in 1841, nor the promising administration of Lord Sydenham, had brought into play or practice the real principles of responsible government—principles which involve a prime minister selected by the Queen's representative; a cabinet chosen by the premier and, together with him, responsible to the House of Commons; a series of organized departments of administration, each in charge of a responsible minister. Even the Liberal leaders and most advanced reformers had failed as yet to plan out such a complete program and, without every one of the conditions named and including a defined conception of the governor-general's relation to the Imperial government on the one hand and to the colonial parliament on the other, no system could hope to be satisfactory.

Lord Sydenham had the brains and the tact and natural statecraft to have worked out some result which might have averted years of turmoil and much dissatisfaction; but he was carried away by an accidental fall from his horse which ended in death on September 19, 1841. He was not supposed to be entirely in favour of the crude ideas of responsible government which were then in vogue but he would undoubtedly have found a conciliatory way out of the difficulties which developed later and reached such a height in the early days of Lord Elgin. His successor, as governor-general, was Sir Charles Bagot, a man of ability who had held the ministership to Washington in days when it was perhaps the most difficult diplomatic post in Her Majesty's service. He followed, somewhat tentatively, in the steps of Lord Sydenham and died in March 1843, without having had any serious friction with his advisers. Sir Charles Metcalfe, who came out in his place and under appointment by a Conservative ministry at home, was a very different man from either of his predecessors and proved to be the centre of one of the most stormy periods in Canadian politics.

Mr. Speaker, I have placed this on record to illustrate that while one may give an undertaking to parliament, he may not have the opportunity to carry it out. I am sure that if the governors general of those days had lived, and had been able to carry out their official duties, the tumult into which the Canadas were forced at that time would not have occurred.

It is not my purpose to discuss the Defence Production Act in detail. I shall refer to only two subsections. I would direct the attention of the house to section 2(e) and (f) where in paragraph (e) it says—

"Defence projects" means buildings, aerodromes, airports, dockyards, roads, defence fortifications