

The Status of the Public Order Act

[As of the Press Deadline of This Publication]

On November 2, 1970 Justice Minister John N. Turner introduced in the House of Commons a Public Order (Temporary Measures) Act, 1970 to replace the War Measures Act. Parliament passed it on December 3.

While not directed at any geographic area of Canada, the provisions of the Act are restricted to controlling the activities of the Front de Libération du Québec or any other organization that advocates use of force or the commission of crime to bring about governmental change within Canada with respect to the Province of Quebec or its relationship to Canada. It expires on April 30, 1971, though it could be terminated by proclamation earlier than that.

On January 4, 1971, Prime Minister Trudeau met with eight prominent Quebecers seeking repeal of the act. Following that meeting he told the press there would be no repeal without a request from Quebec. He said he and Quebec Premier Bourassa had discussed repeal before Christmas and again that very morning (January 4) "at great length."

"The dilemma," the Prime Minister added, "is that if we were to repeal the Temporary Measures Act, say next week, and if some new crisis arose

in Quebec next month, we would still have nothing to deal with it."

On January 6 the Quebec Government formally decided not to request repeal of the Public Order Act. Premier Bourassa, following the Cabinet meeting, said the act would remain; but enforcement would be relaxed:

"The risk . . . is too great for us to ask immediate repeal of the law. Instead, the government will recommend to the police that they return to the use of normal procedures except in exceptional cases."

On January 11 Acting Prime Minister Mitchell Sharp told the House of Commons that the government does not intend to withdraw the Public Order Act at present. He said that the matter of more permanent

ways to deal with civil emergencies will be brought before parliament in the near future, echoing the Prime Minister who earlier said:

". . . we are committed to bring before parliament this subject of an intermediary measure between the War Measures Act and the Criminal Code. Certainly well before April we will have seized parliament of that problem and hopefully found the solution."



CANADA

Today/D' Aujourd'hui

*The Canadian Embassy
Office of Information
1771 N Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036
202: 332-1011*

Return Requested



DIPLOMATIC MAIL

FREE



Departmental Library
Department of External
Affairs
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada