

Invoking of War Measures Act

Last week, visits were paid by people who, apparently, are members of the FLQ. Besides, some of them have already been arrested. Indeed, some had been recently liberated, and the opportunity had not been missed to have them on the CBC television network so that they could give their impressions to the viewers. Those same persons were then visiting CEGEPs and universities, and intended to visit still more this week. Fortunately, an end has been put to those activities.

Last Thursday, one of my daughters, who attends the University of Montreal, was present at one of those meetings where there were political agitators inviting the students to hold public demonstrations. All the students of Quebec are invited to do just that, Mr. Speaker. I wonder what those agitators have to gain by having our students hold demonstrations. Is it planned that next week or later, all the students of Quebec will take to the streets? Are there special reasons to wish straight thinking students to act in that manner? Is there something to hide? Is it because some could not attend the lectures? Are some professors busy doing something else? Is it difficult to justify one's absence, at the university, either as a student or as a teacher?

In particular, I call upon those students within my constituency who are attending CEGEPs, high schools and universities to make it their duty to be present on time in their classrooms. Perhaps they will assist us in exposing some of the agitators who belong to their groups and encourage them to behave as they should so that there might be some success in restoring order in the province of Quebec.

This afternoon, the hon. member for Egmont (Mr. Macdonald) was expressing his concern about separation by the province of Quebec. He said he had the honour of spending five weeks in Quebec this year. So, after a stay of five weeks in Quebec, the hon. member suggests he knows about all the problems of the province of Quebec.

No hon. member of the Quebec region, of Montreal or of any other part of the country would think to tie in the parti québécois with the FLQ. I quite agree with the hon. member for South Western Nova (Mr. Comeau). However, the hon. member for Egmont should not lose any sleep because a government was democratically elected in Quebec on April 29 last. For the information of the hon. member, there were then 76 per cent of the electors who did in fact vote against separatism.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

• (10:50 p.m.)

[*English*]

Mr. Forrestall: He was out one per cent.

Mr. Portelance: Well, it is one per cent too much probably. But 76 per cent voted against separation. The majority of the people of Quebec do not agree with it, and I am one of them.

Mr. Forrestall: But do not be critical of them for trying.

[*Mr. Portelance.*]

Mr. Portelance: No.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, last night, the right hon. Prime Minister addressed the nation and today I had a chance to get in touch with several of my constituents. Moreover, I had to decline an invitation to a function which I really wanted to attend and it would have been an occasion for meeting many of them. But as the member for South Western Nova so eloquently said, I assure him that 99.9 per cent of all Canadians are supporting him. The others assuredly are neither Conservatives nor Liberals but I know that they still are conscious of the present situation. I am convinced that the people of the constituency of Gamelin have full confidence in the government of the day and again I would ask the students to help us save democracy in Canada and I pray all of those who will some day want to become part of the Canadian government to stick with our present system, for if ever they join the system which is being offered to them as a substitute, I cannot promise that they will ever have the honour of being elected as representatives of the Canadian people.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

[*English*]

Mr. J. P. Nowlan (Annapolis Valley): Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to contribute a few remarks to this debate. Certainly, in my experience in this House, it is an occasion of momentous import and one which I am sure all members of this House hope they do not have to experience again, certainly in peacetime, that is to be debating the War Measures Act and the proclamations under it. This is something I never thought I would see in this Parliament of Canada. Even though we have been debating this resolution for two days, because of the very nature of the proclamation under the War Measures Act, no one so far has mentioned that great parliamentary word "filibuster". Action has already been taken under this measure. Men are in jail. Women are in jail. Certain rights have been suspended and this Parliament, instead of legislating, as the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) said earlier, is really philosophizing and meditating on the steps the government took when certain information came to its attention. We are discussing whether the government should have taken more or less steps, whether it moved too fast or too far.

It has been a long day and I realize that other speakers wish to add their thoughts to this debate which is unprecedented in the parliamentary life of Canada. I quite agree with most speakers I have heard—and I have been here most of today and yesterday—that the great majority of Canadians do not really appreciate the complexity and seriousness of this debate. Although this has been a long day, I say to you, Mr. Speaker, it has been no longer than the dark cloud which has covered Canada since this debate on the War Measures Act commenced in this Parliament. This day has been no longer for anyone here than it has been for the families of those who have been kidnapped. We have heard some very fine expressions today, especially in the recent remarks of the hon. member for South Western Nova (Mr. Comeau) who