

*Foreign Exchange Control*

were looking at it twelve months from now or eleven months from now we might have a substantially different situation.

I have one further point to make, namely, that I have been disappointed and other people have been disappointed—but I am not going into that—by the fact that the minister has felt it was necessary to have this bill with every “i” dotted and every “t” crossed. Some of us hoped that there might have been some alleviation, some lessening of rigidity. I suggest that from the point of view of those who will administer the act, the foreign exchange control board, psychologically it would be of the greatest advantage if they had facing them the fact that within a comparatively short time this thing has to be reviewed. I think that as things are we have to rely on them to some extent—it is a faint reliance—to come back and tell us that there is some way in which the matter can be handled, the rigidity can be lessened and some freedom restored. Therefore I suggest that from the point of view of those who are to administer this act—if we wish for relaxation ourselves—we should leave them with the onus of coming back next year and saying either that the situation is unchanged and that, therefore, we must extend this power for another year, or, in the alternative, that it can be relaxed in certain ways. Perhaps it is too much to hope that that might be done; perhaps it is too much to hope that they would recommend that. For this reason I put this forward.

If I remember correctly, in committee the minister gave as his reason for the view which he held that the bill should be left as it is—and I am hoping that he has changed in that regard—that he preferred to follow the British practice. I believe that was the statement.

Mr. ABBOTT: That was one of my reasons.

Mr. MACDONNELL (Muskoka-Ontario): The chief reason, as I recall it. I suggest that the British practice is not always uniform; that it does not really get us anywhere by saying it is the British practice, because there are cases where that is not the British practice. I have said that it is not the practice with the Militia Act.

I leave the matter with the minister now by suggesting that no harm can be done by limiting the time, if there is no change in the next year, as I believe we all hope, as I believe the minister hopes, there will be, which will enable us to take a different view. If those changes do occur, then it is of manifest importance that we do not send this out with no time limit on it, but that we have one. Conversely, if we come here next year and we say regretfully that there is still an

emergency and we cannot do much about the matter, no harm will have been done except that we shall have spent a little time considering the matter. At that time we would regretfully say—and I am sure the minister will agree with it; in fact he has already said it—that we would again abandon what we regard as the usually normal processes and take up and accept emergency measures to meet with an emergency. I earnestly plead with the minister to grant this last request.

Mr. HACKETT: I listened to the plea of the hon. gentleman who has just taken his seat. I fear that his plea, eloquent though it was, has fallen on deaf ears. I have heard that plea made in the house on a number of occasions, but at no time has there been any indication that the government was willing by one iota to depart from the position that it had taken.

The war is at an end for well over a year. Controls still persist and the means of enforcing them have been reenacted. Much as I should like to see some indication on the part of the government of a return to free enterprise, I am bound to inform you, Mr. Chairman, that the trend is the other way. The trend is directly toward centralization, socialization and perpetuating that system which we took on for the period of the war. There is no intimation, no suggestion of any relaxation, and I say regretfully that, in my view, the plea of the last speaker has fallen upon deaf ears.

Mr. ABBOTT: May I say just one word in reply, more particularly to the hon. member for Muskoka-Ontario. Let me assure him that I did give the most earnest and careful consideration to the desirability and the advisability of putting some time limit on the duration of this bill. After giving it that consideration, for a number of reasons I came to the conclusion that it was not desirable to do so. In substance I gave those reasons to the committee, and I do not know that there is any particular need for my elaborating them here. Under the British parliamentary system it is the general practice not to put a time limit on the duration of a statute unless it is of a special kind. That contrasts with the practice in other jurisdictions where the executive branch of government is separate from the legislative branch; but where the executive branch of government is responsible to the legislative branch, the usual practice is to impose upon the government the responsibility of deciding whether a measure should or should not be repealed, and of course parliament really has that responsibility. There is no indication that conditions in international

[Mr. Macdonnell.]