

*Invoking of War Measures Act*

**Mr. Mackasey:** Can anyone here think that a man with his record in the field of civil liberties, a man who fought against the infamous padlock law, against a law not designed to put down insurrection but designed to prevent amongst other things freedom of religion and religious expression, a man that fought for the Jehovah's Witnesses along with Frank Scott right through to the Supreme Court of this country, would treat this situation lightly? I refer of course to the Prime Minister of this country. Who else went side by side with the present Minister of Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand) and the Secretary of State, whom the opposition laughs at periodically, to stand up for the oppressed workers of Quebec against Duplessis and his infamous bill? Do you think that these people arrived at this decision lightly? With their background they know what they are doing.

**Mr. Nowlan:** Can I ask the minister a question? I have a question for the minister.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I heard the hon. member the first time. He does not have the floor. The minister has the floor.

**Mr. Mackasey:** I also heard the hon. member. Knowing the tenor of his questions, I am not prepared to answer them right now because I have a vein of thought I want to pursue. I might also say I am proud of the present Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner). Although he now represents an Ottawa riding, he spent most of his formative years in the province of Quebec, in the heart of French Canada.

Do hon. members opposite really think that we take civil liberties and the rights of individuals so lightly that we would bring in this particular Act without agonizing soul-searching based on facts we have which cannot be revealed? What other reason do we have? How many people have even bothered to read between the lines of the letters appended to yesterday's *Hansard*? How many people have bothered to read the emotional but factual speech made by the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion yesterday?

The hon. member for Egmont cannot have it out of both sides of his mouth. If the democracy he is talking about is something that should be preserved, then we have to do everything to preserve it, even temporarily invoking laws such as the War Measures Act to ensure that democracy remains in this country.

**Mr. MacDonald (Egmont):** You want to destroy freedom.

**Mr. Mackasey:** The hon. member asked us to remain quiet when he was speaking. Why does he not practise what he preaches?

• (12 noon)

There is a letter printed in the back of *Hansard* signed by the Mayor of Montreal and the Chairman of the Executive Committee. It begins:

[Mr. Mackasey.]

The chief of the Montreal Police Service has informed us that the means available to him are proving inadequate and that the assistance of higher levels of government has become essential for the protection of society against the seditious plot and the apprehended insurrection in which the recent kidnappings were the first step.

But it is like using vaccine against the flu. If the steps we have taken prove successful, then certain events do not take place. We are then in the embarrassing position, of course, of being accused of over-reacting. People may say there was no plot really; nothing happened; Place Ville Marie was not bombed out of existence or razed to the ground. In a few years we could be accused of having over-reacted because certain things did not take place. But if we waited until they had happened, what would we be accused of? What do you think might be happening in Quebec while we dawdled over the possible passage of special legislation, having made a start on it in yesterday morning's debate without first having used the powers under the War Measures Act.

I am prepared to listen to another man who is well known for his views on the rights of individuals in this country, Mr. Eugene Forsey—I do not think he loses any of his credentials because he is now a member of the other House. When he spoke last night on television—and I suppose his answer surprised a lot of people—he said he thought the government had acted wisely; he could not understand the excitement. When he was asked to analyse the word “forthwith”, he said: “Any time within the next ten days.” He expressed the opinion that it could be even more tragic for democracy if a hastily designed emergency bill drawn up so as to pass through the House of Commons and the other place in the space of 24 hours had been adopted. Eugene Forsey thinks such a bill is essential. The Prime Minister thinks it is essential. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) thinks this is essential—

**Mr. McGrath:** Well, where is it then?

**As hon. Member:** Bring it in.

**Mr. Mackasey:** There you go. As Eugene Forsey said, such a bill should be well thought out. It should reflect the best advice of members of this House and of the other House. Above all, it should be proceeded with in a deliberate fashion. If we had followed this procedure rather than the procedure we have adopted under the War Measures Act, tell me how many people we would have apprehended among those it was necessary to apprehend? Who knows where they would have been while this debate was going on? They would have been laughing at us from other lands and, again, we would have been accused of bungling and failing to protect the democracy about which everyone is concerned. The way the hon. member for Egmont talks about civil liberty, one would think he had a monopoly of feeling on this subject. We all share those sentiments. This is what made our decision an agonizing one. But certainly, if the Prime Minister goes on television and says he will bring in such a bill, he is the Prime Minister of this country and I am satisfied with what he says.