

*Defence Production Act*

them. It has been said that there is no reason for the opposition to worry about them, for they will never be applied.

Well, as I say, if those powers are so unpopular that it was not considered advisable to use them during the Korean crisis, and even when the situation was deteriorating in southern Asia, for fear of arousing public opinion, why not let them go when the opposition objects to them? All they had to do was to leave the act in its present form. There was no reason whatsoever to introduce this bill. But no, tremendous powers are being asked for this year, though they have been granted to the minister until 1956.

I was just saying that these powers were unparliamentary and undemocratic. At such statements, my friends opposite chuckle, and jest about the matter. It should, however, be borne in mind that according to history, the same proceedings and the same march of events have prevailed under every dictatorship that appeared in the twentieth century.

At first, the defenders of democracy, the elected representatives of the people, began to lose interest, to surrender this and that principle to allow the government to do this and that; and the words democracy, or parliamentary system, were more often than not laughed at. Soon public opinion requested a strong man to take over the situation and administer industry with an iron hand, so much so that, at the end of a few months, people awakened and found that their strong man had become a dictator and that to get rid of him world wars or revolutions were necessary.

I do not say that such a thing could happen in Canada next year, if the present bill were carried. Surely not. Yet I believe that the Conservative opposition which is staging the fight in this debate is playing the part of an active and determined opposition party, which understands fully the great principles of Canadian democracy and the value of our parliamentary system.

We must not forget that the powers which we are asked to incorporate permanently in the statutes of Canada are not just ordinary powers. The hon. Leader of the Opposition and several other speakers have explained to what extent those powers disregard the rights of parliament. But what worries me still more, as a member from the province of Quebec, is to find that those powers practically do away with the main safeguards of our constitution. I know that this matter will not cause too much worry to my hon. friends opposite, because they are rather broadminded when it comes to the rights of the provinces and the prerogatives of provin-

cial governments. My hon. friends opposite are quite happy to sit there and watch the government whittle away, little by little, the rights of the provinces and attempt to scuttle the constitution. Surely it is not among the people opposite that we will hear strong protests in that connection. It is true that, in the last few months, we have not heard speeches similar to those that have been made on the *Saxonia* or at the Reform Club. I do not know what brought our friends opposite to take steps to improve the situation, but at least we no longer hear them indulge in such talk. However, as a member from the province of Quebec, elected by voters of Quebec, where provincial autonomy is taken to heart and where the very spirit of the Canadian confederation is respected, I insist on protesting against the inclusion in our statutes, on a perpetual basis, of a section such as section 28 of the Defence Production Act.

One must not be unmindful that this section 28 provides for such sweeping powers that I do not believe that the government would dare challenge public opinion by exercising them, at least in the course of this year. However, I think that, by incorporating such a section into the statutes of this country, we would defeat the purpose of the constitution and sabotage the British North America Act, for one has but to take a few instances of the powers provided by section 28 to grasp their import.

That section enables the governor in council to take control over any natural resource in any province, if the Minister of Defence Production decides that it is in the interest of his department.

One can see to what abuses such extraordinary powers could lead. Let us take for instance the paper industry, and let us suppose for a moment that the Minister of Defence Production decides that the government requires part of the paper production for the use of the armed forces. Well, section 28 enables him to issue an order in council which would give him control over the entire pulp and paper industry in Canada, and even exempt certain lumber companies from the payment of stumpage to the provincial governments. Nowhere is it said in section 28 that the Minister of Defence Production has to ask permission to do anything of the kind.

Let us imagine, for instance, that the Minister of Defence Production requires large scale transport to be undertaken. Well, he can take over all the trucking system of a province, our whole bus transport system, under the authority granted to him by a government order issued at his suggestion. Even then, he would not need the permission of the provincial governments.