

Emergency Powers Act

that parliament is a cross-section of the Canadian people; that anything that is attempted must have the approval, and the conscientious approval, of a large majority of the Canadian people; otherwise it will not work. Nothing that parliament found objectionable would be apt to work or to provide the benefits which those who promulgated it hoped would be derived from it.

If and when the resolution is adopted, the bill setting out the powers will be distributed. There will of course be ample opportunity—there is opportunity now—in view of the specific terms of the bill, to discuss it, to consider its sufficiency, whether or not it goes beyond what the situation requires at this time, whether or not the restrictions it contains are sufficient. The powers of parliament to review and deal with anything done under the bill are, in the opinion of hon. members, a sufficient guarantee that nothing will be foisted upon the Canadian people that is not acceptable to its elected representatives in this house.

I therefore submit the resolution, and I hope that hon. members will agree that something is required. The resolution merely makes way for the presentation of the specific terms of the bill, which I am sure will then be subject to careful and attentive scrutiny and possibly criticism by hon. members.

Mr. George A. Drew (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that there will be general agreement throughout the house with what has been said by the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) about the responsibility of parliament and the desirability of submitting to the elected representatives of the people any measure that is to have far-reaching effect upon the public life and economy of Canada.

The Prime Minister has referred to the emergency which has led to the motion now before us and which is the justification he presents for the introduction of the bill which will be before us with the adoption of this motion. He has indicated that the emergency is the increased menace in the Far East which demonstrates the full extent of the threat of communist imperialism. He has quoted from some words I used in the debate on the speech from the throne. I agree that those words were intended to convey my own belief that there is an emergency of the nature which he described.

I would point out, however, that this emergency is not new. I would point out that when another bill was introduced in this house last September we sought to emphasize that there was an emergency of this very

nature. True, the seriousness of the emergency is being recognized more generally, but the emergency that exists today was the emergency which existed in just as definite reality last September. I should like to recall some words that I used at the time we were discussing another measure before the house which had as its purpose the enactment of extensive government powers to deal with situations which might arise out of the events then calling for the attention of members of this house. I should like to quote from page 521 of *Hansard* of September 9, 1950, where I am reported as follows:

That is the issue; and we must gauge everything we do to the importance and to the scale of that issue. The issue is not the fight in Korea, but is one which stands before us, throughout the whole world. We have urged, and we urge again, that the government face that issue with a recognition of an emergency on a scale which has not been interpreted by the government. Having said that, let me add that no matter how much we recognize the emergency, and no matter how much we want it clearly defined, that should never be an excuse for supporting bills which disregard the basic principles of parliament, bills which disregard the responsibility of members, bills which in any way depart from the constitutional authority and responsibility of parliament.

Having said that on that occasion and at a time when we were seeking to point out the dangers of the indefinite and almost unlimited powers which were being sought at that time, I wish to indicate my own support for the proposition now placed before us that such emergency measures as are to be adopted shall be brought clearly before parliament and shall be the results of actual decisions of members of this house.

I am sure that this measure will be adopted without any opposition because it will be possible to discuss the bill itself only when we have it before us. However, there are certain points that have been raised by the Prime Minister which suggest the desirability of presenting certain views to this house as we proceed to deal with this legislation. The Prime Minister has said that in his opinion the emergency is of a nature which would justify the government from a constitutional point of view in invoking the provisions of the War Measures Act. He has said that he does not regard it as desirable that the War Measures Act should be invoked because it might convey the impression that war is inevitable.

Since the Prime Minister has referred to this may I point out that never at any time last September, before then or since then, have I suggested that we proceed under the wide powers of that act. When I referred last September to the existence of an emergency I was expressing my own opinion that if legislation is to be effective which bases