

to adopt the principles that we should abandon elections, abandon responsible government, and abandon the system we follow of allowing people to make up their minds and express their views as to the manner in which they should be governed—unless, as I say, we are prepared to change our principles, then when we come to this House of Commons it is our duty to tell ministers, whether they have been here for six years or sixteen years, whether we think they are administering the affairs of the country in the best possible way. It is not in keeping with the traditions—may I put it in that way?—which have given this country democratic government in the past, for ministers to indicate that others' opinions, honestly held, are of no value, that in any event they will not be regarded, and that they should not be expressed.

I use those words because I think the following expression of the minister last night indicated what he had in mind. He went on to say:

Therefore I would urge that this session be not prolonged by debate that can have no real effect on the situation.

Surely that indicates only one thing, that the government has come to the house with its mind made up, with a closed mind, and is in the mental attitude where it will refuse to accept any suggestion, however much thought has been given to it, or however much real value it may have.

Mr. MUTCH: That is ridiculous.

Mr. FULTON: If my hon. friend can put any other construction upon it he will have an opportunity to do so. During the course of the debate I should like to hear what his construction is.

Mr. HOWE: May I ask the hon. member a question? After six weeks of debate on this particular bill, what effect has the debate had, to date?

Mr. JACKMAN: It took off a lot of controls yesterday.

Mr. FULTON: I would mention the categories of goods which were removed from controls yesterday. There is, of course, a good deal of force to the argument which has been put forward by members on this side of the house, that it is difficult to deal with this bill because there are fifty-seven measures involved. We would like to have that changed. Then in committee we may make more suggestions with regard to these fifty-seven measures. It seems to me immaterial, in a sense, whether we have to sit here until next

[Mr. Fulton.]

December before we finish the bill if, when we get through with it, even in only one respect it is a better bill than it was when it first came before the house. That will be the object of the opposition.

Mr. HOWE: That is a high price to pay.

Mr. FULTON: We have only a few minutes left for discussion this afternoon, and I should like to bring up one other matter before moving the adjournment of the debate.

We have heard a good deal about bureaucrats. The hon. member for Muskoka-Ontario referred to the functioning of government officials—he did not use the word “bureaucrats”—the way in which these controls involve supervision and constant snooping. We have heard statements as to the number of these officials required, if there is to be a thorough-going system of controls. All these things open the way for great abuses. And, as was suggested by the hon. member for Muskoka-Ontario, not only do they have a tendency to make criminals of those citizens affected—because we all resent controls—but we have in the act a type of provision which has the effect of depriving a man of the benefit of that doubt which, under our criminal law, results in an accused person's being presumed innocent until he is proven guilty.

We also find it necessary to protect controllers against what would otherwise be the legal consequences of their acts. For instance, we find this in section 15 of the order in council setting up the wartime prices and trade board:

No member of the board and no administrator or other person employed or appointed by the board or acting on behalf of or under authority of the board shall be or become liable to any person for or in respect of any act or omission of himself or any other person in the exercise or purported exercise of any power, discretion or authority or in the performance or purported performance of any duty conferred or imposed by or under these regulations.

And so on. So that those people have complete protection for their otherwise wrongful acts.

That brings to mind a case which has arisen this afternoon. I would ask the Minister of Justice (Mr. Ilsley) or the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott), or perhaps both of them, if they would care to throw light on this particular case, one which concerns the activities of some of the officials of the wartime prices and trade board. It is a case which shows that not only do these controls tend to make criminals of citizens affected, but they tend sometimes to make criminals of those who find these unusual opportunities for abuse placed