

the minister if that conversation—I refer to *Hansard* of March 12, page 1864, which reads as follows:

Could I ask the minister if he has received any communication from the attorney general of the province?

Mr. Fulton: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have, and I was in communication with him last night.

This was the crucial date, March 11, and could the minister tell us whether he initiated the conversation with the attorney general of Newfoundland, whether he gave him any intimation before he reached his decision not to permit the reinforcements to go or whether the conversation was initiated by the attorney general of Newfoundland after the decision?

Mr. Fulton: Yes; there were two conversations. The one I referred to a moment ago was an earlier conversation not related specifically to sending R.C.M.P. reinforcements because my recollection is that the request had not yet been made at the time of that conversation. The second conversation referred to in the answer given on March 12, and just read by the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate, was a conversation initiated by the attorney general of Newfoundland with regard to the request for reinforcements.

Mr. Pickersgill: In other words, the minister thinks there had been no previous discussion about sending reinforcements; that is what the minister is stating?

Mr. Fulton: No, that is not quite what I said. It is not quite accurate. I referred also to my statement in which a telegram of March 8 asking for reinforcements was received, and resolved at that time by making other arrangements.

Mr. Pickersgill: I am talking about conversations; my understanding is there was no conversation about the police until the conversation to which the minister referred on March 12?

Mr. Fulton: No conversation about the police; I think that would be correct. They may have been referred to in passing in the conversation a week earlier, but that conversation certainly did not deal specifically with the request for reinforcements.

Mr. Pickersgill: In other words, this decision of this government to deprive the government of a province, the duly constituted and democratically elected government of a province with what they considered necessary for the maintenance of law and order, that decision was taken without any intimation being given by the minister, without any consultation with the government; it was a completely unilateral decision?

Mr. Fulton: As I pointed out and as the answers make clear on March 11, reinforcements would not be dispatched at that time. It was after that news became available that the attorney general of Newfoundland called me and told me he could not understand why they could not be sent at once. I explained to him the considerations we had in mind, briefly, and the matter was left there. The decision not to send them was announced on March 16 in the course of discussion in the house.

I was going to deal for a moment with the statement made by the hon. member for Timiskaming with regard to the activities of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Newfoundland and the suggestion that there should be some kind of commission of inquiry to look into this matter. I have indicated to those who have inquired of me about this matter previously that if at any time, as a result of my inquiries and studies of the matter, I came to the conclusion that there was something requiring an outside investigation, I would immediately order one. But so far I have not yet, as a result of those studies, had any occasion to think that there is any substance in fact to the sort of newspaper report that appeared in the press and from which my hon. friend read. That being my position, I do not think it would be in the least appropriate for me—in fact, I think it would be absolutely inappropriate—to order a commission or any other form of formal inquiry into the allegations which appear to be so baseless as those to which my hon. friend has referred.

I indicated in the house on March 11 and I believe in one or two other statements that I had made full inquiries as to the part of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police on the occasion of every incident that was referred to and that, as I said in that full statement on March 11, where tempers are running high and the feeling is tense, as it always unfortunately is in a situation of that kind where large scale industrial disputes are involved, then the very nature of the responsibility of the police, which is to enforce those provisions of the Criminal Code which say that picketing shall be peaceful and that roads shall not be obstructed, this responsibility unfortunately is bound to bring the police on occasion into conflict with those engaged in the industrial dispute whose tempers, as I say, are running high. But that is a responsibility which the police cannot and should not seek to evade.

Unfortunately on occasion, because tempers are running high, violence breaks out. If violence is used, then force must be used to resist violence. Then what do we find? We