

Supply—Justice

already there and I scrupulously refrained from doing so. That is the difference in the situation and that disposes of the suggestion of my hon. friend that I was somehow inconsistent in refusing to send in reinforcements whereas I had previously praised the way in which the Royal Canadian Mounted Police there had conducted themselves. Incidentally, Mr. Chairman, I think I should point out this fact, although I want to be careful now, as I have been throughout, not to interfere or to suggest interference with provincial responsibility. I should point out that the fact is that there were no further outbreaks of violence after March 10; and notwithstanding our refusal to send Royal Canadian Mounted Police reinforcements there have been no further outbreaks of violence but in fact relative calm has returned to Newfoundland.

Mr. Pickersgill: Would the minister permit a question?

Mr. Fulton: No, not at this point, if my hon. friend does not mind.

Mr. Pickersgill: The minister's statement is not correct.

Mr. Fulton: This is particularly important in the light of the fact that the suggestion has been made on some occasions and was repeated in the editorial which my hon. friend last read that we should have sent these reinforcements because they were necessary to preserve the lives and the safety of the police already there.

I want to make this matter clear—and I have not answered this point before—that in the discussion with the former commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police as to the advisability and the necessity of sending reinforcements, I questioned him most carefully as to whether, in his view, these reinforcements were necessary to protect the lives and safety of the men already there and whether he would say to me that without these reinforcements he feared that the lives and safety of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Newfoundland would be placed in danger. He was candid and straightforward about it and he said, that he did not put the question of reinforcements on that basis. He put it on the basis that the superintendent there had asked for reinforcements and in his view, he said, because of the uncertainty of being able to retain control of the situation, under those circumstances and under all the circumstances—including the fact that in his view the contract was clear—such reinforcements should be sent. I make that remark because I think it is important in the context that has been suggested in the editorial read by my hon. friend. I take it

[Mr. Fulton.]

that the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate adopted this editorial as his own and adopted the views expressed there as his own. Otherwise he would not have read it.

I want to point out also what the Prime Minister said on March 16, as reported at page 1959 of *Hansard*:

We feel that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police has performed its duty with fairness and efficiency. The situation in Newfoundland will be kept constantly under review and if the mounted police, in the proper discharge of their duties are subject to or encounter intimidation or threats by lawbreakers reconsideration will be given immediately to this decision.

That is the decision not to send reinforcements. The fact of the matter is, that as events proved the mounted police then in Newfoundland, with the assistance of the extra men sent in from the Newfoundland constabulary, were able not only to maintain the situation but to restore law and order and, as I have said, relative calm now exists in that province.

I now want to deal for a moment with the five day issue. My hon. friend attempted to make a point that here we were with conditions of grave import, a request for reinforcements and that we shilly-shallied around for five days while we were trying to make up our minds what to do. Also coupled with that suggestion he made the extraordinary and unfounded suggestion that the Prime Minister had arrogated to himself a responsibility which was not his and had over-ridden what was the proper constitutional position.

Mr. Chairman, the request for reinforcements on this occasion was received on the early morning of March 11. Early that morning the commissioner informed me that the renewed request had been received. It is important to remember that this was a renewed request. It was not the first time a request for reinforcements had been made and had not been met. It was a renewed request. The commissioner informed me of this request in the early morning and also informed me, as I have stated to the house in my statement appearing at pages 1959 to 1962 of *Hansard*, of the steps that he had taken to gather men in the maritime provinces and to have air transportation available to transport them to Newfoundland. Here is what I said about it at the time:

On receipt of this information from the commissioner on Wednesday morning, I approved his taking the steps necessary to gather the men in the maritimes who had been alerted, and to have air transportation arranged.

This, Mr. Chairman, it seems to me, is but a prudent step to take because we knew that there was a tense situation in Newfoundland, and it was to have reinforcements