

your representative had refused to consider this the provincial government take responsibility for disbanding men to their camps or homes and supply them with food in the interval. While we were considering this matter police raided public meeting to arrest leaders, precipitating a riot.

Let me pause to say that that is a pretty serious charge to come from the premier of one of our provinces.

Mr. BENNETT: And the commission found it was not warranted. Now, be fair about that.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: I say that this is a serious charge.

Mr. BENNETT: Yes. They found that charge not warranted.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: I read a few minutes ago what the commission found.

Mr. BENNETT: Yes. They found distinctly that the charge was not warranted.

Mr. McLEAN (Melfort): Order.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: Let me read this:

Men at present in buildings at fair grounds completely surrounded by police who permit no one to enter and men to leave only in twos. This will end in a worse riot than last night.

There follow some other statements, and I quote:

We would ask you to immediately withdraw orders issued affecting the liberty of individuals within this province and affecting the law and order of this province.

This was tendered and marked exhibit No. 49.

Mr. BENNETT: The reply is there.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: I think I have most of the report and the evidence before me, but I simply want to make this case: I have left out a great mass of evidence which would take hours to read. This is not a court, and we here cannot be tied to court procedure. I cannot hope to go through these matters in the detail that would be necessary in a court. I have simply tried to present the case in as brief a form as possible. The greater number of the statements that I have made have been taken word for word from the official evidence or from the commissioners' report.

The recent trials centred on the action of the men during the riot period. There was no trial of the police officials. I think any member can understand under what a disadvantage that circumstance places the men under trial. Further one cannot get a view or picture of the entire situation. These men who struck policemen were hauled up under

arrest and tried for their particular actions. I suppose a court cannot do anything else, but in that court no account was taken of the provocative actions of the police, and much more serious than that, no account was taken of the whole situation. Anybody who has been present at a football match knows that when a little fuss arises on the grounds there is sometimes almost immediately a big row, in which very often the spectators become involved. Anyone knows that at a fire or at any time of intense excitement people lose their heads and do the most absurd things. I am not suggesting that desperate, horrible things were not done by some of the trekkers at that time, but I say that from the evidence submitted and by the account of eye-witnesses horrible things were done by the police.

The more serious consideration is the fact that these men were driven into that position. They were refused permission to proceed on their way to Ottawa. I admit the commission states that such action was justifiable, but it also says that it is not for it to say whether or not it was legal. The riot was precipitated by the action of the police. Now the men have been tried and a number of them convicted. Further, it should be remembered that the arrests were made under section 98 of the criminal code. Those charges against the leaders were subsequently withdrawn. I assume that the attorney general's department found that there was not sufficient evidence on which to proceed. Let me point out that Assistant Commissioner Wood said there was no evidence upon which the men could be arrested. Trumped-up charges under section 98 of the criminal code were produced, and an attempt was made to arrest the men under those charges, all of which were subsequently withdrawn. So there was no ground for the arrests. But worse than anything else, the method of the arrests was objectionable, because the arrests were attempted on the market square in the presence of a big crowd, where, it seems to me, anybody should have recognized the danger of serious difficulty. In my judgment the dominion government clearly exceeded its powers and the commissioner of the mounted police, apparently with the backing of the dominion authorities, acted in a very arbitrary manner. It would seem as though the authorities were anxious to attack the trekkers rather than to effect peaceful disbandment.

The government of that day is no longer in office, but I appeal to the present government to make the most rigid inquiry into the re-