

Regina Riots—Mr. Woodsworth

extremely important point. Ostensibly the purpose was to arrest the men, but apparently no effort was made to arrest them prior to the meeting. They might have been arrested for days past, but they were not so arrested. It was just at that last minute, when the public meeting of the citizens had been called to make protest, and in an effort to collect money from the citizens that the arrests were to be effected. Most of the trekkers were not present at the meeting when the arrests were made. There was no attempt by Evans to escape. That statement was made at the trial. Further than that, no attempt was made to rescue Evans.

But with an excitable crowd, and under such circumstances, the inevitable happened and a riot was precipitated. Let me point out that at this very time negotiations were in progress between the provincial government and the men.

A meeting of the members of the government available was held at eight o'clock on the same evening and while the proposals were being considered Mr. Gardiner was notified by telephone that a riot was going on at market square.

It is quite unnecessary, and I believe would serve no useful purpose, if I were to give details with regard to what took place. Anyone who has seen how readily the passions of a crowd are aroused could have foretold there would be trouble. The evidence as to details was very conflicting. For example, the commission states that it is impossible to reconcile the evidence of Inspector Cooper with that of Inspector McDougall. Apparently the equipment of the city police was complete. They had revolvers and ammunition. The mounted police were not supposed to have ammunition, but they had a quantity of tear gas bombs, and wore steel helmets. Here are a few items that may give an idea of the situation:

Inspector McDougall of the Regina city police force at one stage ordered his men to draw their revolvers and fire over the heads of the advancing mob.

Apparently the Riot Act was not read. The commission states:

It is unlikely that more than one or two policemen fired at the strikers....

Again:

At another stage inspector McDougall went to telephone the police station requesting the despatch of another supply of ammunition.

The result was—without going into the details of a scene too horrible for contemplation—that:

Forty strikers and citizens were sent to the hospital for treatment, many of them seriously injured and seventeen of them suffering from bullet wounds.

[Mr. Woodsworth.]

Again:

One city policeman, Millar, had been killed; eight city policemen had been sent to hospital for treatment; many city police and Royal Canadian Mounted Police were injured. Of the latter force thirty-nine were sent to hospitals.

The commission reports:

In view of the rioting which took place on the advent of the police, the expediency of effecting the arrests on the market square may be questioned; the right of the police to effect the arrests on the market square, however, cannot be questioned. It is the duty of policemen in possession of warrants to execute them at once, using their best judgment as to the time and place of arrest.... It is clear that Colonel Wood and his associates underestimated the violent opposition that developed and did not foresee the rioting that followed.

Surely a very lenient judgment on the officials in charge. In view of that horrible bungling, all the commission says is that "the expediency of effecting the arrests on the market square may be questioned." I believe the public of Canada has already very decidedly questioned the "expediency." The commissioners indeed, seek to condone the action; they say, "the right of the police to effect the arrests on the market square cannot be questioned." Nobody questions the right of police to effect arrests. But surely the whole situation must be taken into account. For days and days these men might have been arrested. The warrants were not got out until about two hours previously, and apparently no effort had been made to serve them before the leaders came to address a public meeting in the market square. At the time of that public meeting the whole elaborate plan of mass attack on the public had been arranged, in which were involved not only the mounted police but the city police, and for which ammunition and all other equipment stood ready. Surely it is a question of "expediency," but in my judgment it is a great deal more than that.

At this place I should read, I think, a portion of the subsequent telegram of the present Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner) to the then Prime Minister (Mr. Bennett). It is dated July 2.

Mr. BENNETT: My hon. friend might read the answer.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: Well, I don't know. I shall look it up. I shall read from the telegram anyway:

Yesterday morning men indicated to your representative Mr. Burgess their willingness to disband the march and return to the points from which they came. They repeated this to Mr. Burgess and representatives of the police at 2.30. Your representative refused to have provincial representation at that meeting. The men met us at five o'clock stating that since