

Supply—Justice

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Chairman, I rise on a point of order. My hon. friend is touching on a matter which I must confess presents a number of problems to the force. But the fact of the matter is that the provisions of the liquor laws as they affect Indians are not the responsibility of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Their only responsibility is to enforce them. Nor does the Department of Justice have the direction of policy that should be incorporated in those laws. While I appreciate my hon. friend's interest and his desire to be helpful, may I suggest to him that he might be more helpful if he would direct his remarks to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration when the question of Indian affairs arises.

Mr. Howard: If I may I should like to make a comment on the point of order. It is not my intention to discuss the actual laws themselves, which involve both the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and the provincial governments. What I was seeking to do was to relate the enforcement of the law—whether it be provincial or federal is immaterial because the R.C.M.P. in certain circumstances enforce the laws within a province—and to develop the theme that by the enforcement of certain types of laws the Royal Canadian Mounted Police fall into disrepute and can have charges levelled against them.

That is the theme I was seeking to develop rather than the actual law itself, and perhaps I may be in order in that regard in pointing out that the force itself loses some of the stature it may have developed over the years, as police forces should develop such stature, because the laws they seek to enforce may be inequitable and may not be accepted by the citizens to whom they apply.

As to the question of alteration of the law, my friend the Minister of Justice is quite correct in saying that this question not only should be but has been discussed under the estimates of the Indian affairs branch, and I am sure will be gone into in more detail during the proceedings of the joint committee on Indian affairs which is currently meeting.

In that regard—and as I said I have spoken with members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police about this one specific phase of the enforcement of the law, the liquor laws, in so far as native Indians are concerned—I wonder whether at this stage I might pose a question which the minister might answer now or later. I would like to know whether the views of the R.C.M. Police, not the administrative or top officials at Ottawa or elsewhere but the ordinary rank and file members of the force, are ever ascertained or requests made for suggestions for the better use and operation of the force itself.

[Mr. Howard.]

This question of the R.C.M. Police falling into disrepute in the eyes of some people and the resulting verbal charges which have been made, such as charges that they were engaged as strikebreakers, results merely from the application and enforcement of the present laws applying to private property, obstruction of roads, and so on. In one sense of the word the people who level these charges of strikebreaking against the R.C.M.P. could be quite properly justified in so doing, not because of the fact that they are in the strict sense of the word strikebreakers, as they are commonly known, but merely because of their actual enforcement of the law itself. That is the theme of my remarks.

There is another problem which I think the minister could take under advisement. Perhaps he has done it already, but in any event it relates to the respect or degree of respect for the force itself which people in various parts of the country may have. I have noticed, though I do not know the percentages, that there are quite a number of young people in the R.C.M. Police. In fact in some instances I believe there are members of the force who are actually under the age of 21 and have difficulty in entering beer parlors in order to see that the law is maintained in those particular establishments because they are not old enough to go in themselves.

Because there are a number of young persons in the force I believe some difficulty arises in the actual enforcement of the law in certain parts of the country, where there may be a large number of young constables, because of the fact that they may be immature and may not have been in the force very long. As in the case my hon. friend from Athabasca mentioned yesterday, the constable concerned was only in the force a short while and had not even been supplied with a uniform, yet he was asked to go out and participate with other members of the force in some sort of engagement, and he wondered whether with his lack of experience he should be called on to do that sort of thing.

There is this attitude existing, and I think it is rather widespread among the population, especially those who may come into close contact with the R.C.M. Police; not people, say, in large metropolitan areas but people in outlying areas who have the opportunity to come into closer contact with the force and meet them personally in their activities as law enforcement officers. They find there is a lack of diplomacy on the part of certain younger members of the force which tends to aggravate the relationship between citizens of the nation and the force itself and I am sure if we can engage to a greater extent