

*Supply—Justice*

that we should not debate that in the house. I was inadvertently embarking on that and I apologize to the minister for doing so. But there is another point, that even had there not been a contract it seems to me that there was an obligation, and again I am not going to discuss the nature of that obligation. However, the minister did make one comment which I do not think could be at issue in the case, although I will refrain from discussing it if the minister thinks it is.

I should like to quote the last two full paragraphs in the next column. This has to do with the situation there but it does not seem to me that this is at issue in this context, although it is at issue in another argument I did want to pursue. My argument is as to whether or not there was an invasion of provincial rights. I quote:

As I appreciate the situation, therefore, the request made by the government of Newfoundland for Royal Canadian Mounted Police reinforcements takes on the character not of a request to assist in the normal function and duty of the province in maintaining law and order, but of a request for additional help made necessary in the course of the furtherance of a project to extinguish a union from the province.

Now about that, I should like to contrast that with what the minister said on March 11, as recorded on page 1826 of *Hansard* for that date:

As I have stated, the actions of the police in this very difficult situation have been entirely preventive. Their actions have been limited to enforcing the provisions of the Criminal Code against assault, damage to property, acts of violence, obstruction of roads and other similar provisions.

Now if that was true at 2.40 in the afternoon concerning what the mounted police were doing, what happened to change what they were being called upon to do, according to the minister, on March 16? What happened between three o'clock in the afternoon and six to change the whole obligation in this matter? This is what it is difficult for any objective observer to understand. Then, returning to the minister's statement on March 16, we find this:

We have also had to bear in mind the possibility that under these circumstances to send additional Royal Canadian Mounted Police into Newfoundland, instead of ensuring that the situation is kept under control, might act only as provocation to further incidents of violence and defiance, so there is no certainty that the sending of them would not do more to inflame the situation than to control it.

Now I say that that statement by the Minister of Justice of this country is an arrogation to himself of the functions of another person, serving in another government, who had the responsibility to the electorate for this situation. It was the inescapable responsibility under our constitution of the attorney

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

general of Newfoundland to maintain law and order in the province. It was not the responsibility of the Minister of Justice to arrogate that function to himself. Indeed, I think it was very bad taste—perhaps I would not go farther than that—for him to express any view about it. If he had merely expressed a view about it, that would have been one thing, but to take action to prevent the duly constituted authority who is responsible under our constitution to the legislature and through the legislature to the people—to say, my knowledge is so much greater; I am so superior, and I know so much more that I am going to substitute myself for those who were elected by the people of the province to perform this function—it seems to me is the greatest act of centralization that we have ever seen attempted by a federal government in the whole history of Canada.

That is my submission. I am not going to argue as to whether or not the contract obligated the government. I say that the decision taken by the government not to act, to refrain from providing these reinforcements, was an intrusion into the constitutional concerns of the provincial authorities and that it should be censured for this.

**Mr. Stinson:** Tell us about this phony loggers' union.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** The hon. gentleman, who intervenes only rarely in our debates, is suggesting that I should deal with something that it would be quite out of order to discuss on the estimates of the Minister of Justice. I do not intend to break the rules of the house, even if the hon. member wishes to do so. I am going to continue to discuss the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and the minister's administration of them. I am going to discuss only that matter and nothing else.

I maintain that whatever the contractual obligation may have been there was grave violence done to the constitution by the action taken by the minister. I say there was something even worse, there was a very grave affront to the unity of the country. In order to illustrate that point I should like to read, and to make my own—with this I intend to conclude—the observations made about this incident on March 18 in the *News* of St. John's. I should like to say, in referring to this editorial, that I am referring to an editorial in a newspaper that consistently supported hon. gentlemen opposite and has not supported us until very recently. The editorial is entitled, "The Inadequacies of Mr. Diefenbaker". It was provoked by and relates to this situation and I feel it accurately reflects the views