

Supply—Justice

Newfoundland is a peaceful country and the people of Newfoundland are well known for their friendliness and exceptional hospitality . . . The situation in Grand Falls as it has been and still exists is much too complicated for a mere housewife to try to explain, but that statements made by the R.C.M.P. should ever be doubted and questioned is almost unbelievable. Nevertheless when a request was made for additional help it was refused. Never have the government of Newfoundland with its people and churches stood together as they do now, yet people from the outside know nothing of the true facts because instead of accepting the views of decent people they choose to believe a bunch of liars.

And now I should like to read a telegram sent to the Prime Minister by the Rev. Allan Old, minister of St. Andrews Presbyterian church at St. John's:

Highly commend police department here. Consider reinforcements urgently necessary to protect neutral life and property in central Newfoundland.

And, finally, the following from the president of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland, Pastor Eugene Vaters:

I must register my sense of shock and horror and depressed feelings for the future over the hesitancy and the final refusal of the federal government to send to Newfoundland the police force as thought necessary by the Newfoundland house of assembly and requested by the attorney general. This is most disturbing as it shows to us that the upholding of law and order and good government in Newfoundland is contingent upon the vagaries of interested pressure groups and party politics converging at Ottawa. To many of us the tradition for prompt and efficient upholding of law and order and good government we have ever associated with Canada lies before us, bismirked. This is the more to be lamented in the face of forces known and declared to be evil and noxious highly organized and spreading which threaten by means legal and illegal to engulf Canada from end to end and the rest of what is left of freedom integrity and good will in the world, as well.

Mr. Chairman, I do not think I need read more. These statements are representative of the feelings of the people of Newfoundland. I should say they might be considered mild compared with the strong and definite feelings of most Newfoundlanders.

The R.C.M.P. remains today a proud and courageous body with an enviable reputation for loyalty and devotion to duty. I am sorry that the same cannot be said of the government which failed to come to their aid, and to ours, in the hour of need.

Mr. Bigg: Mr. Chairman, I shall confine myself within the limits of this debate and not enter into wide fields of discussion which are more capably handled by the Minister of Justice. But I can speak with some authority, I think, on the feelings of the rank and file of the R.C.M.P. because I had the extreme honour of serving in that body off and on for some 23 years. It is a great honour to

stand here and be able to speak on their behalf because as hon. members know they must at all times be divorced from politics.

Speaking on behalf of the rank and file of the mounted police, I believe there is a problem here which no hon. member during this debate, no writer in the press and apparently nobody in Canada has taken into account, and that is: what are the duties of an ordinary member of the R.C.M.P.? Apparently when civil war is threatened we are expected to put it down. We are expected to put it down not by force but by prestige. I think this is a heavy onus, and I do not see how we can blame this government or, perhaps, any government for the vague position in which the ordinary uniformed member finds himself. Is he expected to maintain law and order under all circumstances? I just want to give the committee three simple situations and ask them, and I hope the citizens of our great country, to decide fairly and squarely what attitude they take to them.

If a uniformed member finds a sailor coming ashore drunk and attacking a woman on the street, his duty is plain—he arrests that person and brings him before the proper civil authority. However, if a mounted policeman travelling on his motorcycle along the rocky coast of, say, Cape Breton sees a submarine and foreign troops being disgorged on the shore, he does not rush with bare bosom upon the spear; he goes to the military, using his commonsense as a good member of the R.C.M.P. should. In between those two examples there is the situation which has been described in excerpts from papers and letters read to this committee, a situation of threatened civil war. If the horrors outlined in Newfoundland were such that, in fact, 1,500 irate strikers armed with clubs were ready to batter the mounted police into the ground, that is not a job for mounted policemen, singly or in large groups, and I, for one, as a member who stood and did my duty for 23 years, never envisaged myself as voluntarily undertaking such an obligation. It is true that in an emergency we do this sort of thing but it is not part of our contract with the government. It is not the sort of thing which we think our officers can order us to do. We do it as a duty to our country in an emergency, and where those emergencies can be handled by constituted authority they should be so handled.

I do not want to go any further into the interpretation of contracts. I want hon. members to think this thing over and to decide whether or not there have been emotions dragged into this thing which have no real weight or significance. I think this argument about the role of the mounted police has been used in a political sense perhaps on