

*Supply—Mounted Police*

Mr. LAPOINTE: They have honorary rank.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: May I ask the Minister of Justice why it is that we need to have men, who were organized first of all for work on the frontiers, doing duty here around the capital of an altogether different character, duty which originally, I understand, was performed by the Dominion police force? It seems very strange that stationed around the doors of government buildings and in the art galleries and other public places we have members of the mounted police. In the art galleries I have visited in Europe I usually found some old pensioners on guard or perhaps pointing out to tourists the paintings and other interesting objects, and doing subordinate work of this character very well indeed. Here we have the "riders of the plains" performing these duties. Why is it necessary?

Mr. LAPOINTE: The conditions my hon. friend describes have arisen since the union of the mounted police and the Dominion police in 1920. If he thinks the statute should be changed he will have to move accordingly by way of act of parliament. I think the present system is preferable to that which obtained prior to 1920.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: I should like to inquire further with regard to the activities of the mounted police in industrial areas. I have very good reason to believe that there in more or less a steady surveillance maintained over labour organizations—that mounted policemen, either in uniform or in plain clothes, make it a point of being present at labour meetings. It seems to me to be quite unnecessary, at least in times of industrial peace, that one particular group of the community should be subject to an indignity of this character.

Mr. LAPOINTE: My hon. friend is wrong. The instructions issued to the mounted police are not to interfere with any legitimate labour activities. Labour is on exactly the same basis, so far as the mounted police are concerned, as any other class of the community. Of course, it is part of their duty to see that the federal statutes are enforced and that order prevails. I think there have been industrial conflicts of late of a very difficult nature, but I have not heard a word of complaint about any interference by the mounted police. If there had been, I know my hon. friend would have taken good care to warn us.

[Mr. Woodsworth.]

Mr. WOODSWORTH: I do know, however, that Royal Canadian Mounted Policemen are present at labour meetings.

Mr. LAPOINTE: They are present probably at labour and other meetings. The mere fact that they are men of the mounted police does not preclude them from going where other citizens have a right to go.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: No, but they go to these meetings and afterwards present their reports to their superior officers, and so, as I say, maintain a certain surveillance over labour organizations, which fact is resented by the labour people.

Mr. MURDOCK: As a member of a labour organization for more than thirty years, I can assure my hon. friend that I have kept closely in touch with the point he raises, and I may state that during the past three or four years no espionage has been maintained over reputable and responsible labour organizations. I realize that my hon. friend may regard as labour meetings gatherings of men who are first, last and all the time advocating the overthrow of constitutional government. If he argues that espionage is maintained in such cases, he is right, and I say that it is proper that it should be maintained, because I do not believe we want such men, under the guise of labour, gathered together for the purpose of plotting the overthrow of constitutional government and doing away with certain conditions that Canadians love and respect and are ready to fight for. There has been no action taken by the police in any of these cases that I am not heartily in accord with, and I am ready to go into any body of organized labour, properly constituted, and defend the action thus taken. I could give my hon. friend some very interesting information about the attitude and actions of some gentlemen who pretend they are representing labour. They are doing no such thing when they are undertaking to undermine the constitution and thwart the laws of the country.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: The Minister of Labour says he wants to be protected against the actions of certain classes of gentlemen, unnamed. I have had the experience myself of having mounted police present at meetings which I have been addressing, publicly called meetings, at which I have been trying to say some of the things that I have been saying on the floor of this House, and I have had an officer of the mounted police attempt to trap me into saying something that he thought might possibly lead to trouble. Now, Mr.