

*Supply—Justice*

the contract with the province to enforce specific provincial laws or to enforce law and order generally within the province. In their activities in this connection they come under the direction of and are responsible to the provincial attorney general from whom alone detailed reports on matters of this kind should be expected.

So I ask the minister before he came, after consultation with the government, to a decision in regard to the refusal to meet this request, and in the light of this statement which he made in the house on February 11, whether he consulted with the attorney general of Newfoundland? Did he take the initiative in getting into touch with the attorney general of Newfoundland and did he obtain from him the kind of detailed report with regard to this request for reinforcements which he said in his statement in the house on February 11 should come from, and could only come from, the attorney general of the province? That is one of the questions I have to ask, and perhaps the minister would reply to it later. Further, during those days when he was deciding what he should do, and when he was consulting with the government, what was the nature, if any, of his consultations with the attorney general of Newfoundland with regard to the request made by the commissioner of police for reinforcements, a request which was certainly supported and most strongly supported by the attorney general of Newfoundland. And then, on the same day, February 11, again on page 909 of *Hansard*, the minister was asked a question by a member of the C.C.F. party. This question reads as follows:

Would the minister say whether the R.C.M.P. acting under this type of contract are permitted to do things which the R.C.M.P. would not normally be permitted to do?

To which the minister replied:

The answer, of course, is no; and there is no evidence to support the suggestion implicit in the question asked by the hon. member.

And yet in this statement in the House of Commons on March 16 which was issued as a press release on that day he said that the request made for police reinforcements—and I am quoting—takes on the character of “a request for additional help made necessary in the course of the furtherance of a project to extinguish a union from the province”.

If this means anything at all it means that when the Attorney General of Canada is deciding whether he is to carry out the obligation of a contract made with the province for the supply of police to maintain law and order a criterion on which the decision is to be based is the policy of the provincial government. In other words, if the policy of the provincial government is such that it has labour or other implications which do not please the federal government or which do not please the Minister of Justice—if he is

worried in some way about the policy of the provincial government—that will decide, or that can decide, whether he will discharge the obligation inherent in the contract, however the contract may be interpreted. As my hon. friend from Bonavista-Twillingate pointed out, that surely, has a bearing on the responsibility of the provincial government for the maintenance of law and order. It is the responsibility of the provincial government to maintain law and order and to administer the law of the province. The contract has been made with the federal government for supplying police to help in the discharge of that obligation. The terms of that contract seem to be clear.

But the minister's position has been that if the request for additional help is made necessary because of certain policies adopted by the provincial government we then reserve the right not to send the reinforcements. As my hon. friend from Bonavista-Twillingate pointed out, however, there was no mention of a situation of that kind bearing on such a refusal when the minister spoke on March 11. Now he gives quite a contrary impression.

There is one other question I should like to raise. The minister said this afternoon—and I copied his words down; I hope they are accurate, I think they are; I am sure the paraphrase will be accurate—that he asked the commissioner of the R.C.M.P. in connection with this request for additional reinforcements whether these reinforcements were necessary for the safety or the security of the police. I believe he said the commissioner replied that that was not the consideration at issue; that he was asking for those reinforcements for the maintenance of law and order in the discharge of their duty in Newfoundland as a police force. This is, it seems to me, an astounding position for the minister to take; that if the commissioner—surely this is a humiliating position in which to put the commissioner—had said, “Yes, we need those reinforcements for the safety and security of the police”; if he had said that, would the minister have sent the reinforcements. That is the only possible inference one can draw from the minister's statement this afternoon. If the commissioner had said, “Yes, we need extra police for the security and safety of the R.C.M.P.” he would have got them. What a position in which to put the commissioner of the R.C.M.P. In any event, as we know, the commissioner was unable to accept the attitude, the policy and the decision of the government and he found it necessary to resign, a resignation which is regretted, I am sure, by every member of this house.

[Mr. Pearson.]