

governments when they were notified that they would have to make provision for the maintenance of law and order in their respective provinces. They were compelled to enlist other able-bodied men, suitable for work in civil life—or, indeed, suitable for service at the front—in order to carry out the duties from which mounted police were withdrawn. The transaction seems to me to be as indescribable as it is unaccountable—that the provinces and the country should have an additional burden imposed upon them by the withdrawal of an efficient, able-bodied and ample force from their previous duties and assigned to other duties, or not assigned to any duties at all.

I have not any information in regard to the circumstances or reports the Prime Minister has suggested to the House he had received as to the need of withdrawing these men from the performance of the duties in which they were engaged—that is, that there was a certain possibility of danger. The change of status of the force has not reduced their numbers; nor did it increase their efficiency in any way that I can see. They were there before, and they are there yet. They cost the country more now than they did before. The only difference is they are not now performing the duties they performed formerly, and other men have to be hired and paid for this work. The suggestion that there was a possibility of difficulty coming from the United States is, to my mind, absurd on the face of it—and I say this with all due respect to all parties concerned. If there was any danger at any time, it was when the war broke out, and during the succeeding months there may have been very good reason for strengthening the forces in 1914 and 1915; but when the position of the United States having become settled, I cannot admit there was any reason, or any evidence of any reason, or any foundation for any reason, for doing so in the latter end of 1916. I cannot admit that such a condition of affairs existed as would warrant the withdrawal of these men from the useful work they were performing and the assigning of them to positions in which they did not have useful work to perform, thereby requiring the province to hire other men to perform that useful work. The hon. member for Calgary has spoken of the undesirability of this force being called upon to enforce the Liquor Act. They did not, as a matter of fact, take the responsibility on themselves of enforcing the Liquor Act. There was nothing to gain or lose in that. There was no difference in the arrange-

ment. They had not enforced the Liquor Acts that were in vogue up to 1916 and they were not called upon to enforce those that were in vogue in 1917. If there is any question about that I might say that I was a resident of the Northwest Territories almost from the advent of the Mounted Police, and during the years when the great business of the police was the enforcement of the then drastic liquor law, and there never was a time in the brilliant history of the force when they stood as high in public esteem as they did then.

Mr. R. B. BENNETT: There was no provincial organization or authority then. It was a federal liquor Act that they were enforcing.

Mr. OLIVER: It was a federal liquor Act, but the administration of the law did not in any way derogate from the authority or prestige of the force at that time. So that, any ground of that kind that is brought forward in support of the action taken by the Government in regard to this force is without justification from any point of view. I repeat what I said in the beginning, that it is the sentimental side that strikes the people of the Northwest even more than the practical side, something that hon. members of this House may not be aware of. But, dealing only with the practical side, I have been unable to find any reason for the action that has been taken and I am here to take the responsibility of absolutely condemning that action.

Sir ROBERT BORDEN: I may say that if this course had not been taken, and if any such event as was apprehended in the West had occurred, there would have been no one louder in his denunciation of the Government for its lack of foresight and precaution than the hon. gentleman who has just taken his seat. The course which I took was taken upon the recommendation of the commissioner and after very careful consideration with him and the military authorities. More than that, I submitted the reports which I had received to my right hon. friend the leader of the Opposition (Sir Wilfrid Laurier), both because he was the leader of the Opposition and more particularly because he had for fifteen years been the head of the force which is now under my direction. He concurred entirely in the course which I proposed to adopt, and I took that course accordingly. Therefore, when my hon. friend suggests that there was not a shadow or a tittle of reason for taking it, he is condemning not only