

Supply—Justice

their heads in the days of the depression. This is not what the Canadian mounted police deserve. I think the situation demands an investigation by the minister with regard to the brutality which appears to be taking place. Our national police force should take no part in beating women, beating men who are down, taking their places in picket lines, taking their places as strikebreakers, escorting people through picket lines. These are not the duties of this force, and I am sure it would be to the advantage of all Canadians that this matter be cleared up and the good name of the R.C.M.P. restored to them.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Chairman, if I do not follow the last speaker in his allegations of brutality against the R.C.M.P., I hope this will not be interpreted as an indication that I agree in any way with what he has just said. The police, of course, cannot defend themselves in a discussion of this kind but no doubt the minister, who is their spokesman in this house will deal with the criticisms of brutality which have been made.

I wish to say a few words about the matter we were discussing previously, the contract with the attorney general of Newfoundland and the way in which that contract was carried out in connection with the events of last January, February and March. Perhaps I might not have found it necessary to intervene in this discussion had it not been for some of the statements which were made by the minister, with some of which I propose to deal. Before doing so I should like to put on record the views of the minister in regard to the role and the duty of the R.C.M.P. in carrying out their obligations under a contract with a province; the views of the minister at least before the Prime Minister decided not to send the reinforcements to Newfoundland which were requested in March.

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Chairman, I realize, of course, that I cannot dictate what the hon. gentleman is going to say, but I am sure he is too good a parliamentarian to continue to state that which is demonstrably in error. I have stated that the responsibility for the decision was mine and I have never sought to avoid it, and I can only leave it to the hon. gentleman to decide for himself if he is going to continue to say something which is not correct.

Mr. Pearson: The minister says the responsibility is his, and that he took that decision on his own responsibility. I made the statement I did with regard to this matter because of the statement made to the House of Commons by the Prime Minister on March 16 as reported on page 1959 of *Hansard* when,

speaking before the Minister of Justice intervened in the debate and speaking first for the government, the right hon. gentleman said this:

Under the circumstances we have concluded that it would be provocative and likely to cause further outbreaks of violence to authorize the sending of further members of the R.C.M.P. at this time.

Mr. Fulton: Does that mean the Prime Minister made the decision personally?

Mr. Pearson: It means that the Prime Minister, speaking first, announced the decision in the terms that he used, from which we are entitled to assume that he took primary responsibility for the announcement of this decision and therefore primary responsibility as the leader of the government for making the decision. Otherwise, why would not the Minister of Justice have been permitted to get up in the house and announce, before the Prime Minister spoke, that he had taken a decision, and the terms in which he took it?

Mr. Fulton: Did you ever try to take the floor ahead of your prime minister?

Mr. Pearson: Whenever I had any statutory obligation to make a decision I was always permitted by the prime minister of that day—in fact, I was instructed by the prime minister of that day—to get up and announce the decision in the House of Commons, and the prime minister did not intervene in a matter which was my responsibility.

Mr. Fulton: But the Prime Minister had an announcement to make the same day in connection with the same dispute and I would be much surprised if the hon. gentleman, in that situation, would have insisted on taking the floor ahead of his prime minister.

Mr. Pearson: The announcement which the Prime Minister made on March 16 before the Minister of Justice spoke was the announcement I have mentioned, that a decision had been taken not to send reinforcements.

Mr. Fulton: It related also to a royal commission and several other matters.

Mr. Pearson: That was mentioned subsequently as another subject. Anyway, the Prime Minister said: "We have concluded... not to send reinforcements."

When this matter came before the house the Minister of Justice emphasized—and the emphasis is worth repeating—that the R.C.M.P. under contracts of this kind were concerned with law enforcement only, and he assured the house that they would not in any event be used to break strikes—that was the expression which was used on one occasion. At page 909, he said:

The R.C.M.P., in matters of this kind, are acting entirely as a provincial force in accord with