

Supply—Justice

Prime Minister I think ought to go on the record. The Prime Minister's reply was:

Mr. Speaker, the close relationship between the government of Newfoundland and the hon. gentleman would no doubt provide an answer to his question.

It seems to me that that, too, is a sample of a the kind of arrogant attitude that we get from this government at all times when serious matters are under consideration, and I leave it to speak for itself. But what went on? From Wednesday until the following Monday this crisis went on and this government could not make up its mind; I say "this government", I say this minister could not make up his mind because it was the minister who had the duty to make up his mind. I say that it should not have taken the minister five days before he had the fortitude to come to grips with that matter.

Mr. Pearson: The courage.

Mr. Pickersgill: The fortitude to come to grips with it, and I have no admiration and I do not think the country has for this shrinking violet approach. I think the public were not impressed by the minister fiddling about with this matter and mincing up to it and then backing away from it in a most extraordinary manner.

Mr. Fraser: We had a Liberal government for 22 years and they were mincing and fiddling.

Mr. Pickersgill: And his failure to do what, his lack of fortitude to do what as a member of the government accepting his responsibility he should have done.

Mr. Morton: What page are you reading from now?

Mr. Pickersgill: I am reading, as the hon. member no doubt knows, from the Minister of Justice's remarks.

Mr. Fulton: In another debate.

Mr. Pickersgill: In another debate, and if the Minister of Justice objects to my reading from another debate I will desist. I said we had an extraordinary spectacle the other day of this minister who took five days, when men's lives were in danger, to decide whether he should or should not act, talking about someone else's courage and that was some spectacle, sir.

Mr. Morton: The record speaks for itself.

Mr. Pickersgill: I come now to what happened when after five days—

Mr. Walker: Five days?

Mr. Pickersgill: I observe the hon. member for Rosedale is now intervening in the debate. When I have concluded what I have to say

I hope the hon. member for Rosedale will get up and make a defence, if he can make a defence, of the indefensible conduct of the minister. I do not think he will.

Mr. Horner (Acadia): That is your opinion.

Mr. Pickersgill: That is my opinion, yes, and we shall soon see. And now, sir, what happened on March 16 when, finally, after five days, this government at last had reached a conclusion about this matter?

Some hon. Members: Five days.

Mr. Pickersgill: What did we have after five days. We had a very extraordinary situation arise. We had the Prime Minister come in here and make a statement about a matter that was not the responsibility of the government but was the exclusive responsibility, under an agreement, of one minister.

We dealt with the legislation only yesterday that gives to the minister this power, and I raised some questions at that time about giving that power to the minister but the power was in the minister, the obligation was on the minister, and yet what did we have? We had the Prime Minister come in here and make this statement. I read from page 1959 of *Hansard* of March 16. The Prime Minister began:

I think the house would wish to know that late last week I received two telegrams from the premier of Newfoundland, the first regarding a request that 50 additional Royal Canadian Mounted Police constables be sent to that province, and the second requesting the setting up of a judicial inquiry into the troubles that have occurred there.

While this government has no intention of infringing on matters under provincial jurisdiction, I feel impelled to say that the premier of Newfoundland has greatly aggravated the present situation in that province by intervening in a labour dispute in a way which apparently goes beyond the usual role of government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pickersgill: I do not imagine that any member from the province of Quebec has said, "Hear, hear". In all the experience I have ever had this is the most flagrant intervention by any Prime Minister of Canada in the provincial affairs of any province. The Prime Minister continued:

The result, as might have been anticipated, has been a violent reaction on the part of the workers concerned.

I do not know how the Prime Minister knew that, and I am not going to discuss that point, but here is what the Prime Minister said next, and this point I do want to underline and emphasize:

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.