

Supply—Justice

dated March 11, 1959 is addressed to the Right Hon. John G. Diefenbaker and reads:

The Attorney General of Newfoundland informs me that the Minister of Justice of Canada has cancelled temporarily the dispatch of 50 additional officers of the R.C.M.P. for duty in the present emergency in central Newfoundland. Newfoundland has a solemn contract with your government couched in terms identical with the contracts signed by Canada with seven other provinces. Under this solemn contract Canada upon request of the provincial attorney general covenants to provide additional R.C.M.P. officers to deal with emergency conditions such as presently exist in central Newfoundland. The R.C.M.P. in Newfoundland informed our attorney general that at least 50 additional men were needed at once and the commissioner in Ottawa was so informed. He agreed to supply the men and so informed us. An aircraft was chartered by the R.C.M.P. to bring the men to Newfoundland to arrive at 9.30 tonight. This disposes of the question of the availability of the men. We are astonished to learn that their departure has been stopped for a cabinet meeting in Ottawa notwithstanding the fact that the contract gives the Canadian attorney general the right to refuse additional men in an emergency only if they are not available. The commissioner has already made them available so that this is no reason. I now ask you to supply us with the additional R.C.M.P. men to enable us to maintain law and order in this emergency according to the contract that exists between us. If you cannot or will not do so will you undertake to have the government of Canada take over the task of maintaining law and order in central Newfoundland. If you will not give us the police to do it as the contract requires you to do then will you take on the responsibility yourselves of maintaining law and order in this emergency.

We were also informed that no immediate reply was sent by the Prime Minister to that message. I say that in my experience the fact that no reply was sent to that message was an almost unprecedented act by a Prime Minister of Canada, and I am not going to waste my time or the time of the committee by characterizing the way that I and practically everyone in Newfoundland felt about it. But I may say the Prime Minister's predecessor would not have treated the premier of any province in the way the premier of Newfoundland was treated in this particular situation by the Prime Minister of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Oh.

Mr. Pickersgill: I had experience for over 20 years as a close associate of two prime ministers, one of whom had a very bitter controversy, as everyone knows, with one of the provincial premiers, and never once in that time did Mr. Mackenzie King fail in ordinary courtesy to that premier.

An hon. Member: Not a five cent piece.

Some hon. Members: Not another nickel.

The Chairman: I regret to interrupt hon. members but I must remind the committee [Mr. Pickersgill.]

that the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate has the floor. There are far too many speakers at the present moment.

Mr. Pickersgill: I may say that the following morning the newspapers contained the story that these police reinforcements had not been sent to Newfoundland. One of my friends, commenting to me about this situation where there was an emergency, where action was required and where action was not taken and where we were told that the government had not been able to make up its mind, said: this is not like a government; this is like a school girl who cannot make up her mind whether or not to accept a date.

On March 12 I asked the Minister of Justice several questions in the house as reported on page 1864 of *Hansard*, and I want to remind the committee of those questions. I asked the hon. gentleman:

I wonder if I could ask the Minister of Justice if, as reported in the press, he stopped the transfer to Newfoundland of additional members of the R.C.M.P. requested by the attorney general of the province under section 13 of the intergovernmental agreement; and if so, on what grounds?

And the answer was:

Mr. Speaker, the answer to the hon. member's question is that the authority of the attorney general of Canada is required before any reinforcements are sent to any province, and the authority has not yet been given.

I do not want to read all this. I would just as soon merely read the minister's answers. The minister's answer to my second question was:

The matter is still under consideration,—

People's lives were in danger, and the matter was still under consideration. The minister went on:

—and I am not able to answer the hon. gentleman's question at this time.

I then asked whether the men had been assembled, and the Speaker suggested I was seeking to engage in a debate. I raised a point of order and was permitted to ask a further question to which I got from the minister a reply. The courteous reply I got from the minister was:

The Minister of Justice requires no lecture from the hon. gentleman as to solemn obligations. The matter is under consideration, as I have already stated.

I then asked the minister whether he had received any communication from the attorney general of the province and he said:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have, and I was in communication with him last night.

Then I asked the Prime Minister whether he had received a communication from the premier and the reply I received from the