

29 April '69

Law & Order

1727

Mines Bill [S.]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Law and Order

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[Mr. O'Hanlon]

to act. They acted under pressure not just from our side of the House but from many other sources.

If we had been listened to over the past few months the situation which exists today would not have come about; the tension would have been taken out of it by removing what has been the greatest crux in this whole campaign since the start. We feel that by introducing one man, one vote a large amount of goodwill will be seen throughout the community not just towards the Government but towards the whole idea of better community relations.

Arising from this goodwill we may well find in the future a position where we can indeed co-operate for the betterment of the society in which we live because, after all, what is most important to all of us, irrespective of on which side of the House we sit, is the future prosperity of our country. If we can co-operate in the future, I feel that many of the problems which confront us today can be—

*It being Six o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.*

#### Message from the Senate

The Senate have passed the Mines Bill [S.] to which they desire the concurrence of this House.

#### Mines Bill [S.]

Read a First time and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed.

## ADJOURNMENT

### FORCES OF LAW AND ORDER

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—  
[Mr. William Kennedy.]

6.01 p.m.

Mr. Hume: I wish at this stage to raise what I regard as a very important matter particularly in the light of the present situation in the community. There is much talk in these tense days as to how the situation can be resolved. One of the major problems that has to be faced is the question of law and order and confidence in law and order. One of the major difficulties about the solution of our problems is the fact that a large section of the community has absolutely no confidence in the forces of law and order and allegations, which I believe to be justified, have been made about the partiality of the forces of law and order in the community.

This being so there are several outstanding matters to which I wish to draw the attention of the House. If the Government and the Minister are to give the community the assurance that they do not condone partial behaviour on the part of the police force these matters should have been dealt with long before now. The first matter I wish to raise is the question of the police inquiry into events in Bogside in Derry on the night of 4th January. We have still had no report of that.

It is the lingering and smouldering resentment over the events of that evening which still persist in Derry and are still responsible for quite a part of the present attitude towards the police. I would have expected that we would have had a report on this some time ago, but we have not.

The second matter, similarly showing that there is some suspicion that things are to some degree being covered up, is the failure to produce, as yet, a report on the incident in Armagh of 30th November involving the Panorama team of the B.B.C. and members of the R.U.C. At that time the then Minister promised a quick and thorough investigation and a report and he said he would

apologise if he found the complaint of the B.B.C. reporters was well founded. There were many witnesses and I am quite sure they have made statements, but, as yet, we have had no comment from the Minister of Home Affairs on the incident.

The third question is very important in the light of the present situation—the unrefuted information contained in an article by the Insight team in the *Sunday Times* last Sunday. It had rather disturbing evidence of apparent collusion between the police and people who were armed to prevent what was a legitimate procession through the Burntollet Bridge area. Clear evidence was presented in that article which has not yet been refuted.

That article also stated that 100 people involved in that ambush, as it has been called, were members of the B Special force and that 30 have already signed written statements to that effect. This is the evidence in that article which has still not been refuted by anyone. Has any effort been made to pursue the evidence contained in that article? In view of the evidence given of police partiality I would ask—and this is directed at the Attorney-General, who, I understand, has been away on Government business today and I would expect that he will reply when he has had time to look at the papers in question—that all charges arising out of and since the 5th October based on police evidence alone should be suspended until there has been a proper and full investigation of police behaviour.

I sat in a courthouse in Derry yesterday and listened to a lot of cases arising out of the incidents last weekend. In each individual case the only witness was a single police constable, whose evidence was totally uncorroborated. The result in most of these cases was pretty hefty and even savage fines—£50—were imposed, while one man was imprisoned for six months—on the uncorroborated evidence of a single police constable in each case. In the present situation in the community I would feel that to prosecute people and convict them on such uncorroborated evidence is hardly the sort of justice, or appearance of justice, that this com-

munity would expect, particularly in view of what has appeared in a very reputable newspaper through a reputable newspaper team of researchers, namely, that there is considerable evidence of police partiality.

I should also ask, arising from the police prosecutions because of events of the weekend in Derry, events which we all deplore, can the Minister or the Attorney-General tell me why to date summonses have all been on the one side? I want to know what has happened to the stone-throwers on the other side. There was stone-throwing and I was between two lines of fire attempting to stop them.

I raise these matters now because I am concerned, as are all the hon. Members on this side of the House, with the situation in the community, one of the root causes being the lack of confidence in the forces of law and order. Hon. Members on the opposite side of the House have not ceased to tell us that one man, one vote is no longer enough for us, that it would not satisfy the clamour on the streets. They are quite right, for the simple reason that people have completely lost confidence, rightly or wrongly, in the impartiality of the forces of law and order.

This is the problem that should concern every hon. Member if we wish to restore confidence in law and order, and I feel the Government have fallen down in their duties to reassure the community that it behaves impartially in these matters when reports outstanding over a long period of time on police behaviour have not been presented to the public.

6.08 p.m.

**Mr. Devlin:** I agree with the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) that the question of the impartiality of the police is one of the major problems to be solved. I am convinced that one man, one vote, the ombudsman and what have you, are still not as important in this context at this time as the issue on which we are speaking.

I wish to raise the question of police activity in Lurgan on Good Friday. I am sure that hon. Members can remember that it was an explosive situation.