

LAW OR LAWLESSNESS?

The citizens of Winnipeg are to-day confronted with a grave situation. Either law and order must be maintained or the rights of the humblest citizen as well as those of the most prominent will be abrogated. It is the plain duty of every citizen, be he civilian or returned soldier, worker or employer, professional man or business man, irrespective of political opinions or economic theories, to stand behind the civic authorities in preserving from injury the persons and property of law-abiding fellow-citizens.

The duty of preserving order falls primarily upon the Police Commission. If there is any doubt as to the legality of proposed meetings or as to the advisability of permitting assemblies which are likely to result in breaches of the peace, the decision must be referred to that Commission. But it must not be forgotten that citizens of all shades of opinion have the right to express them, provided that they express them legally and without deliberate offensiveness. No citizen or body of citizens may take the law into its own hands or encourage lawlessness.

It is the duty of the police to preserve the public peace. And it is equally the duty of the individual citizen to assist in the preservation of order and to protect the rights of his fellows by refraining from inflammatory acts and language and by aiding the police, when called upon to do so.

In the disturbances which have recently occurred there would appear to have been at least a partial failure of the authorities to take preventive measures. Once passions have become inflamed and controversy has been excited the difficulties of the situation increase with great rapidity. But above all it must be impressed upon all sections of the community that anarchy cannot be permitted to prevail, that terrorism cannot be tolerated and that all proper steps will be taken promptly and effectively to suppress disorder.

No class of citizen and least of all the returned soldier, who has fought and suffered for the principles which the law exists to vindicate, will refuse to co-operate with the authorities to the extent that grievances shall be submitted for reasonable solution and that differences of opinion shall not be made the excuse for lawlessness. With seditious language and provocative conduct on the part of agitators the authorities should deal promptly. To resort to terrorism is to deny the existence of the liberty which has been at stake in the great struggle overseas and for which many thousands of Canadians have laid down their lives.