

THE RAISING OF PIGS BY LIEUTENANT GOVERNORS

NORMAN WARD*

AN obscure but not unimportant point concerning the prerogatives of the Crown in the provinces as it relates to the raising of pigs has come to light in the course of an exploratory ramble through an early volume of the House of Commons debates. On May 16, 1883, a dramatic episode in the Canadian Parliament threw the outlines of the whole problem into sharp relief, and the discussion which ensued brought forth in sombre tones the full regional significance of pig-raising by lieutenant governors in a federal system.

The crisis had an innocent beginning. The government had proposed, as part of an incalculably dull budget, to spend \$70,000 on public buildings, in Manitoba. A sizable portion of this sum was to be spent on stables for the lieutenant governor. Since that individual already inhabited a Government House of generous proportions, Mr. Casgrain, member of parliament for L'Islet, took advantage of the item in the estimates to take—as he was entirely entitled to do—a strong stand against spending money on lieutenant governors. "I think," he said, "the expenses the Dominion is incurring on account of the Lieutenant-Governors of the provinces generally are rather high . . . I do not know whether the Lieutenant-Governor of the province of Manitoba desires, like the Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec, to have an extensive piggery. I think the attention of the Lieutenant-Governor might be directed to some more noble occupation." Then, recalling that his own constituency was largely rural, he added, "For though there is nothing degrading in raising pigs it is rather expensive for the Government to allow such a large sum for that object." There followed a brief dissertation on the relative costs of maintaining state governors in the United States, as compared with the amounts lavished on lieutenant governors in the Canadian provinces.

These reflections on the defenceless provincial representatives of the Crown were not allowed to pass unchallenged. Mr. Landry, another Quebec member, was the first to take up the cudgels. "In the name of the province of Québec,"

*Of the Department of Political Science, University of Saskatchewan.

he cried in French, "I offer my most sincere thanks to the honorary member from L'Islet . . . If the honorary member has any remarks to make in reference to the item now asked from this House, let him make them; but to come before this House, which makes no appropriations for items of this kind for the province of Quebec, pour out his bile against a man he does not like, seize this occasion to insult in the person of the Lieutenant-Governor the entire province of Quebec, the least we can do, even if we do it ironically, is to offer him our sincere thanks."

Mr. Valin, yet a third Quebec member, spoke in a similar vein. "Since he (Mr. Casgrain) has deemed it proper to attack the Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec, he ought to have informed us how it was that the ex-Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba, who is one of his friends, went into commercial operations in horses, lands, and other matters. I would like to know what is the difference between one who goes into the pork business, which is an agreeable thing to eat (*sic*), and one who goes into the horse business."

A deeper note was struck by Sir Charles Tupper. Professing to be astonished that any member of the House should think that a lieutenant governor who engaged in agricultural pursuits was degrading his office, the distinguished Nova Scotian cabinet minister said: "I hold, sir, that the cultivation of the soil and anything that relates to it, is as honorable an occupation and as honorable a calling as that which the Hon. gentleman himself follows . . . There is no branch of agriculture to which (the lieutenant governors) can devote any portion of their leisure time more profitably to the interests of Canada, than in the improvement of stock, whether of horses, horned cattle or pigs. The loss to the people of Canada, the loss to the agricultural interests of this country, by having poor and inferior breeds of cattle, is something enormous, and I am astonished that when a gentleman occupying the high position of Lieutenant-Governor has turned his attention to a matter so beneficial to the country, any hon. gentleman in the House should endeavour to represent that action as degrading to his office."

Mr. Casgrain, whose remarks had started this furious debate, interrupted to point out something that seems to have escaped everybody's notice. "I see nothing degrading in raising pigs," he said simply.

The chairman took advantage of the awkward pause which followed to remind the House of Commons that the budgetary item before the House said nothing about pigs. "The hon. gentleman will please confine his attention to the item," he added.

Mr. Casgrain defended the relevance of his observations although his memory of what he had said a few moments before was remarkably poor, if not non-existent. "I was speaking about the Lieutenant-Governor's stables, and I desired to know the object for which these stables are built. Are they for horses, or hens, or cocks, or pigs? . . . I do not see anything degrading in raising pigs," he concluded, anxious to drive this point home.

Mr. Valin re-entered the debate to aver that the vote was not for pigs, but for stables. Mr. Casgrain was then led to shift the basis of his argument. "There is nothing degrading in raising pigs," he said. "But I do not think it is the duty of this Government to build stables for the purpose. This House would like to know whether the Lieutenant Governor intends to raise pigs. That is information that I have a right to ask for and which the Government may properly give."

The Government, however, had nothing further to say on the topic. The item passed without more debate, so that the right of lieutenant governors to raise pigs—not merely in their leisure time, but at public expense—may be regarded as established by inference. Nor is it the sort of constitutional practice that may be expected to fall into desuetude by the passage of time or mere disuse.

There is one important corollary to the doctrine which is in effect a limitation on it. While the right of lieutenant governors to raise pigs is undisputed, they may be required to confine their activities to the province in which they hold office. This aspect of the theory was enunciated by Sir John A. Macdonald, the first prime minister, in a letter to the lieutenant governor of Manitoba about a year after the foregoing debate in the House of Commons. "I don't think," he wrote, "that Lieutenant-Governors should leave their provinces without permission of the Governor General . . . In ordinary cases there will be no difficulty on application by letter or telegraph to get leave of absence—but the form should be gone through."

This authoritative statement about the general activities of lieutenant governors makes it clear that pig-raising by these functionaries outside their own provinces cannot constitution-

ally be carried on without permission of the Governor General. Whether permission is granted or not will depend on whether such pig-raising at any particular time is regarded as an "ordinary case". While lieutenant governors are thus clearly competent to raise pigs in their own provinces, the right to refuse permission for the indiscriminate raising of pigs outside the province must be regarded as one of the surviving prerogatives of the Governor General of Canada.