

"OLD MYTHS DIE HARD":
THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE
MOUNTED POLICE IN
ALBERTA AND SASKATCHEWAN.
1914-1939

A dissertation submitted to the College of
Graduate Studies and Research in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of History
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon

By Steven Roy Hewitt

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SUMMARY OF DISSERTATION

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of the requirements for the

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by

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"OLD MYTHS DIE HARD": THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE MOUNTED POLICE IN ALBERTA AND SASKATCHEWAN, 1914-1939

This study is about change. Not change to an ordinary institution, but rather the transformation of the world's most famous police force, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). The force, formed in 1873, found its very existence threatened at the end of the First World War. The Mounties, however, had already begun the process of transforming themselves. During the war, the Mounted Police began security intelligence operations in Alberta and Saskatchewan. By the start of the Second World War, the RCMP's powerful post as Canada's national police and security force was without challengers.

The survival and entrenchment of the men in scarlet was not simply accomplished by what they did. Even more important was who they were and who they worked against. The Mounties symbolized all that was important and powerful in the Canada of the period. They were Anglo-Canadian males who belonged to an organization with important connections to the strong British values of the Canadian elite. Their operations were directed at those reviled in the Anglo-Canada of the inter-war period: non-British minorities, left-wing radicals, and elements of the working class. In doing so, Mounted Policemen made themselves indispensable to the Canadian state, ensuring the force's survival and turning it into an extremely powerful state institution.

All of these developments have serious implications for the both the history of the RCMP and the history of Canada. In the 1970s the force, specifically its security service, found itself surrounded by controversy because of illegal activities in Quebec. The federal government eventually appointed a Royal Commission to investigate the breaking of laws by

law enforcers. Based on the Commission's recommendations, the federal government stripped the force of its security/intelligence role, creating the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) as a replacement. The connection between the events of the 1970s and those of the era covered in the dissertation is a direct one: the roots of the illegalities that led to the eventual death of the security service lie between 1914 to 1939.

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ABSTRACT

"Old myths Die Hard": The Transformation of the Mounted Police in Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1914-1939" is about change. Not change to an ordinary institution, but rather the transformation of the world's most famous police force, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). The force, formed in 1873, quickly gained mythic qualities. Lone Mounties on horseback, courageously and forthrightly battling smugglers and thieves with only the lonely prairie as a constant companion became a dominant images in book after book; the Mounties were tough but fair and their policing activities were there for all to see. This mythic view of the Mounted Police would survive into the 1970s.

Reality, however, was another matter. Times changed and so did the Mounted Police. The impetus for change was the First World War, at the end of which the force found its very existence threatened. A Mountie unit had been dispatched to Europe to fight in the war. In order to gain enough strength for such an undertaking, Mounted Policemen gave up their regular policing duties in Alberta and Saskatchewan, the only provinces where they served in such a capacity. Suddenly, Alberta and Saskatchewan discovered that they could survive without the scarlet-clad policemen. Just as quickly, the Mounties found themselves without any firm role to play in Canada's future, a future very different from the era that the Mounted Police had been created in.

The force, however, had already begun the process of transforming itself. During the war, the Mounted Police began extensive security intelligence operations in Alberta and Saskatchewan as Mounties, among other security duties, dropped the uniform and went

undercover. By the end of the conflict, the Mounted Police controlled security operations in western Canada. In 1920, the force absorbed its security rival, the Dominion Police, and the RCMP came into being. After surviving additional challenges to their existence in the early 1920s, the Mounties strengthened their position throughout the decade. In 1927, the force replaced the Saskatchewan Provincial Police. In 1932, it similarly displaced the Alberta Provincial Police. By the start of the Second World War, the RCMP's powerful post as Canada's national police and security force was without challenge.

The survival and entrenchment of the RCMP was not simply accomplished by what they did. Even more significant was who they were and against whom they worked. The Mounties symbolized all that was important and powerful in the Canada of the period. They were Anglo-Canadian males who belonged to an organization with strong connections to the dominant British values of the Canadian elite. Between 1914 and 1939, these mighty men in scarlet increasingly directed both their regular policing operations and security activities against those who somehow represented a challenge to the status quo in Canada. Non-Anglo-Canadian minorities in Alberta and Saskatchewan, including those of Ukrainian and Chinese background, received a great deal of overt and covert Mountie attention in the interwar period. The state linked east and central Europeans to the tremendous disorder that erupted in Canada in the concluding months of the war and in its immediate aftermath. Labour unrest was blamed on "foreigners." In the 1920s, the appearance and activities of the RCMP's biggest foe, the Communist Party of Canada, were also connected to non-Britishers. Throughout the period, the Mounties in Alberta and Saskatchewan increasingly focused their resources upon those outside the middle-class and ethnic mainstream: left-wing radicals who

challenged the status quo, ethnic groups who refused to assimilate to the Anglo-Canadian ideal, other minorities who practiced activities deemed immoral by the Canadian majority, and workers of the employed and unemployed variety who protested against economic inequality. In doing so, Mounted Policemen made themselves indispensable to the Canadian state, ensuring the force's survival and turning it into one of the world's most powerful police forces.

All of these developments have serious implications for both the history of the RCMP and the history of Canada. In the 1970s, the force, specifically its security service, found itself surrounded by controversy. Scandals involving illegal activities by Mounties in Quebec in the war against separatism continually occupied news headlines across the country. The federal government eventually appointed a Royal Commission to investigate the breaking of laws by law enforcers. Based on the McDonald Commission's recommendations, the Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau stripped the force of its security/intelligence role, creating the Canadian Security Intelligence Service as a replacement. The connection between the events of the 1970s and those the period under discussion is a direct one: the roots of the illegalities and the eventual death of the security service lied in the 1914 to 1939 era.

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INTRODUCTION

POLICING HISTORY

Historical eras are like chapters in a book; they always have an end and a beginning. For the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), an era which began with the advent of war in 1914 ended abruptly on the night of 26 July 1974, when a bomb that RCMP Constable Robert Samson was attempting to plant blew off the tips of four of his fingers. He initially claimed that he had discovered the package, whereupon it had exploded. In reality, the Mountie, a member of the force's Security Service, had been planting the explosive when the blast occurred. Once Samson's story about the bomb crumbled, he began to talk freely about having done worse things for his employer.¹ Soon exploits involving buggings, break-ins, and a barn-burning occupied the front pages of Canadian newspapers.² The people involved in these illicit activities were not criminals, at least not in the ordinary sense; they were police officers. Inquiries followed and eventually the Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau stripped the RCMP of their security/intelligence role; they returned to being simply a regular police force, albeit the most famous one in the world.³ Such realities would seem to conflict

¹It is still not clear if Samson was planting the bomb as part of his day job or whether he was freelancing for someone else.

²Jeff Sallot, *Nobody Said No: The Real Story About How the Mounties Always Get their Man* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1979), 94-5.

³The Canadian Security Intelligence Service replaced the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and has had its own unique problems. See Richard Cleroux, *Official Secrets: The Story Behind the Canadian Security Intelligence Service* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1990).

with the myth of the Mounted Police that had been carefully cultivated since their establishment in 1873.⁴ A recent news story on the copyrighting of the Mountie symbol, for example, noted that the force had attained an unheard of level of fame (in Canadian terms): "The Mountie is probably Canada's most enduring symbol, perhaps the most identifiable of all things Canadian."⁵

"Old Myths Die Hard" is about how the Mounties became more than just a simple police force—not in a symbolic sense since they had always been different, but from a policing point of view. R.C. Macleod, the preeminent historian of the early Mounted Police, has suggested that the First World War "fundamentally altered" the nature of the RNWMP.⁶

The Mounted Police myth, which has lingered on for most of the century, has dominated the way the police have been viewed, especially by the general public. Historian Keith Walden has effectively described the creation process of the Mountie myth:

⁴Even the "dirty tricks" scandal in the 1970s did not carry much weight with those outside the Canadian political, media, and legal establishment. Despite story after story of Mounted Police illegalities a Gallop Poll found that under twenty percent of Canadians believed that the Mounted Police was too powerful. More than two-thirds of those interviewed also did not want the Mounted Police subjected to any interference in their policing activities. Finally, some respondents believed that the RCMP should receive even more powers. Keith Walden, *Visions of Order: The Canadian Mounties in Symbol and Myth* (Toronto: Butterworths, 1982), 2. For a more recent study of the Mountie myth, see Michael Dawson, "'That Nice Red Coat Goes To My Head Like Champagne': Popular Images of the Mountie, 1880-1960," unpublished paper presented at annual meeting of the Canadian Historical Association, June 1996.

⁵"Canadian Mounties Copyrighting," *Clari.World.Americas.Canada*, 13 February 1995.

⁶R.C. Macleod, *The North West Mounted Police, 1873-1919* (Ottawa: The Canadian Historical Association, 1978), 18.

[b]ecause every human creation is inherently mythic, and every society agrees on some basic points about the nature of reality, the popular image of the Mounted Police may be viewed in terms of myth. When Britons, Americans, and English Canadians looked at the Mounted Police they collectively ignored certain aspects of the force, downplayed others, and emphasized those qualities and characteristics that to them seemed important. They thought they were describing a self-evident reality, but they were not. Instead they described what they wanted to see.⁷

The dominant Mountie myth is very much a nineteenth-century creation. Essentially this script suggests that the force, which was undoubtedly quite powerful, did not abuse that power. Instead heroic Mounted dispensed frontier law in a very public fashion from the backs of their horses as they policed the western frontier of Canada. These horsemen maintained a degree of professionalism and neutrality that won them the support of citizens on the prairies and made them the envy of police forces around the world. There was both a practical and a mythic aspect to this piece of Mountie history that has been well-documented by both academic and popular historians and that remains as entrenched in the 1990s as they were in the 1910s.

How the force was "fundamentally altered" after 1914, however, has only recently received attention. This work will go further than Macleod and specifically examine the changes the Mounted Police underwent in Alberta and Saskatchewan between 1914 and 1939. At various points in their history the Mounted Police have faced challenges to their future. The period in question was one such occasion, when the Mounties encountered their greatest threat and, in response, underwent their most dramatic change. To save themselves the Mounted Police re-invented or transformed their purpose. They assumed security

⁷Walden, *Visions of Order*, 11.

intelligence activities that initially overlapped with, and often overshadowed, their regular policing role. These two roles effectively turned the RCMP into a double-headed beast: the public Mounted Police with their daily policing in numerous communities, and an invisible institution with a mandate to spy, infiltrate organizations, encourage informants, open mail, and act as "agent provocateurs"—all the classic characteristics of a secret police, an institution reviled in countries all over the world. Several categories of people received special treatment from the Mounties: members of certain ethnic groups, organized labour, and radicals, primarily of the political left. For various reasons, individuals who belonged, or were perceived to belong, to these groups were labelled as threats to the Canadian state and its institutions, including the national police force. The RCMP spun a web of interconnections—ethnic minorities had to be monitored because they brought the alien seed of Bolshevism to Canada; they also threatened to undermine the Anglo-Canadian character of the nation, turning it into a mongrelized country. Certain kinds of crimes, usually ones connected with immorality were also associated with ethnic minorities; immorality, in turn, would have an impact on the "white" population of Canada. Communists, a large number of whom happened to be non-Anglo-Celts, had to be watched because they inspired labour and ethnic unrest. Workers had to be spied upon because they were responsive to Communist propaganda, and their members included ethnic minorities who were prone to violence and radicalism. Alone, these groups, while troublesome, did not appear to pose nearly the same threat; it was their many interconnections that made them dangerous. Over sixty years, the

web stretched outward from these groups to entangle students and academics, women's groups, homosexuals, and countless other organizations and individuals.⁸

The nature of the RCMP's interaction with the groups at the centre of the web is explained by who the police were and the transformation they underwent. Too often historical work on police forces, especially the Mounted Police, concentrates on what they did and not on who they were. This approach is an example of putting the cart before the horse.⁹ What the police did was very much affected by their place of birth or origins, their social background, their male identity, and the values the force as an institution sought to instill in its members. In other words, gender, ethnicity, race, and class, the four major components of social history, are as important to the story of the Mounted Police as the heroic arrests of smugglers or bank robbers. Mounties were white men, almost exclusively of

⁸For information on campaigns against these groups see Paul Axelrod, "Spying on the Young in Depression and War: Students, Youth Groups and the RCMP," *Labour Le Travail*, vol. 35 (1995), 43-63; Gary Kinsman, "'Character Weaknesses' and 'Fruit Machines': Towards an Analysis of The Anti-Homosexual Security Campaign in the Canadian Civil Service," *Labour Le Travail*, vol. 35 (1995), 133-161; and Steve Hewitt, "Spying 101: The RCMP's Secret Activities at the University of Saskatchewan, 1920-1971," *Saskatchewan History*, vol. 47, no. 2 (1995), 20-31.

⁹See, for example, Charles Rivett-Carnac, *Pursuit in the Wilderness* (Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1965); T. Donovan Saul (ed.), *Red Serge and Stetsons: A Hundred Years of Mountie Memories* (Victoria: Horsdal and Schubert, 1993); *The Way it Was: Fifty Years of RCMP Memories* (Victoria: RCMP's Veterans Association, Victoria Division, 1990); R.G. MacBeth, *Policing the Plains: Being the Real-Life Records of the Famous Royal North-West Mounted Police* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1921); Cecil Edward Denny, *The Law Marches West* (Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1939); Ronald Atkin, *Maintain the Right: The Early History of the North-West Mounted Police* (London: Macmillan, 1973); Louis Charles Douthwaite, *The Royal Canadian Mounted Police* (London: Blackie, 1939); R.C. Fetherstonhaugh, *The Royal Canadian Mounted Police* (New York: Carrick and Evans, 1938).

Anglo-Celtic heritage, who belonged to a militaristic and distinctive organization. Such characteristics have meant something in any age.

Finally, to fully appreciate what members of the RCMP were and what they became, it is also necessary to understand the setting they operated in, including the nature of Canadian society, and the constraints imposed upon them by their political masters. Police forces do not evolve or operate in a vacuum; they work within boundaries imposed by society in general and politicians in particular. Both the Mounties and the changes they underwent between 1914 and 1939 need to be fully contextualized by placing them within the broader trends of historical scholarship on the police. There is a universal aspect to police history since its subject is an institution familiar to almost all nations in the modern era. It is difficult to think of other comparably powerful and complex institutions in a society. The police perform a unique role in being a component of the state, and at the same time enjoying direct contact with the citizen. More significantly, issues of order, authority, security, law, and crime affect us all. Renowned suspense film director Alfred Hitchcock once remarked that the only thing that truly frightened him was a policeman, since he was the one person that could come to your door, tell you to accompany him, and you had to go—you had no choice.

For Hitchcock, the meaning of the police was basic—their frightening power to infringe on personal liberty. Scholars, including historians, criminologists, and sociologists, have spent careers searching for the broader meaning of policing. Much of the historical work generated on the topic comes from the United Kingdom. Whiggish histories, such as Sir Leon Radzinowicz's *History of English Criminal Law*, dominated the first studies of the

creation of the professional police: politicians formed police forces to quell disorder in the streets, and all classes of people benefitted from such changes.¹⁰ In his 1938 book, *The Police Idea*, historian Sir Charles Reith succinctly expressed this view:

What is astonishing in the record is the patience and blindness displayed both by citizens and authority in England over a period of nearly two hundred years, during which they persistently rejected the proposed and obvious police remedy for their increasing fears and sufferings, in the belief that its adoption would endanger their liberties and create 'a super-State above the State', or, in the phrase of the period, 'a power above the Parliament at Westminster'. Peel's single-handed correction of their error at last provided the solution of a national problem which had become intolerable.¹¹

It did not take long for counter views to develop. The nature of this response resembles what historian William Baker has called the

functionalist or pluralist perspective ... [which] in essence ... considers that police serve society as a whole and that police enforcement of the law and maintenance of order is, on the whole, beneficial. This conceptual framework does not necessarily lead to an unsophisticated or uncritical examination of the police. The pluralist approach need not entail a belief that all social groups have an equal or just share of power or that social change will occur without conflict between competing groups.¹²

¹⁰David Philips, "'A New Engine of Power and Authority': The Institutionalization of Law-Enforcement in England 1780-1830." in V.A.C. Gatrell, Bruce Lenman, and Geoffrey Parker (eds.), *Crime and the Law: The Social History of Crime in Western Europe since 1500* (London: Europa Publications Limited, 1980), 157.

¹¹Charles Reith, *The Police Idea: Its History and Evolution in England in the Eighteenth Century and After* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), v. For a recent study that echoes the whiggish interpretation see Hereward Senior, *Constabulary: The Rise of Police Institutions in Britain, the Commonwealth and the United States* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1996).

¹²William M. Baker, "The Miners and the Mounties: The Royal North West Mounted Police and the 1906 Lethbridge Strike," *Labour/Le Travail*, vol. 27 (1991), 62-3.

One study that analyzed the police as a powerful interest of its own was historian Robert Fogelson's *Big-City Police*, a ground-breaking study of American police forces: "Far from being mere administrative bodies that enforced the law, kept the peace, and served the public, the police departments were policy-making agencies that helped to decide which laws were enforced, whose peace was kept, and which public was served."¹³

Some of the new interpretations went beyond the pluralist model and viewed the police as essentially a political and exploitive tool of the ruling capitalist class. Even if in theory the police treated everyone equally, this simply maintained the status quo of inequality since, as Anatole France once quipped, "[t]he law in its majestic equality, forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread."¹⁴ Thus, the police in capitalist societies served as enforcers of class injustice. In his study of American police forces, Sidney L. Harring concurred with this view, arguing that too often "[r]esearch on the police has focused on concepts such as legality, professionalization, reform, political influence, crime control, police-community relations, and the like."¹⁵ Instead, Harring posited that the American police in "its modern form emerged from class struggle under

¹³Robert M. Fogelson, *Big-City Police* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977), 111.

¹⁴Anatole France, *Le Lys Rouge* (Paris, 1894), as cited in Robert Reiner, *The Politics of the Police* (2nd ed.) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 3. One of the first serious works to argue the class nature of authority was Douglas Hay, Peter Linebaugh, John G. Rule, E.P. Thompson, and Cal Winslow, *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975).

¹⁵Sidney L. Harring, *Policing a Class Society: The Experience of American Societies, 1865-1915* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1983), 4.

industrial capitalism and that, in spite of reform movements and professionalization, we now have essentially the same police institution that evolved in the intense class conflicts of the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s."¹⁶

Challenges to this class-conflict based interpretation of policing soon arose. Again, they resembled the pluralist-functionalist model. In *The Politics of the Police*, criminologist Robert Reiner wrote that "the revisionists push aside the aspects of policing concerned with universal interests in social order, cohesion and protection, falsely implying that all social relations can be described in the language of power and domination."¹⁷ Even some among the political left (self described "left realists") have admitted that the poor suffered from violence and crime, actions often committed by perpetrators from within their own class, and on occasion the police afforded protection to these people.¹⁸ Historian Clive Emsley argued that to a certain extent the appearance of a professional police force empowered the working

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁷Reiner, *The Politics of the Police*, 41. The quote is from Michael Ignatieff, "State, civil society and total institutions", in S. Cohen and A. Scull (eds.), *Social Control and the State* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1983), 101.

¹⁸Paul Rock, "Foreword: The Criminology That Came in out of the Cold," in John Lowman and Brian D. MacLean (eds.), *Realist Criminology: Crime Control and Policing in the 1990s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), ix, x. Rock notes on page ix that "[s]ome fifteen years ago, before the first big crime surveys in Britain and Canada, radical criminology tended to follow Gramsci and Althusser to present crime as an ideological distraction from the real, driving contradictions of class; Hobsbawm and Thompson to present crime as primitive, inchoate protest; and Bonger, Rusche and Kirchheimer to present crime as the product of rampant individualism spawned by capitalism. There was no talk of the pains of crime or of victims and victimization. Neither was there talk about crime control and policing unless it was to dispatch them as the works of a repressive capitalist state."

class because it created the expectation that they too should be free of crime.¹⁹ Historian Greg Marquis, writing in a Canadian context, noted that "relations between the police and the working class can be employed to confirm the hypothesis that society's power relations, expressed through the justice system, have been marked by ambiguity, not sheer domination."²⁰ Finally, historian Eric Monkkonen has challenged any notion that the police in the United States appeared simply because of the growth of crime or class and political discord: "If each city had adopted a uniformed police only after a riot, changing crime rate, or the need for a new kind of class-control agency, many places would not today have a uniformed police."²¹

More recently, historians studying the police have started to use the methods generated by the social history revolution. The result has been more complex histories of police forces, including who the police were and what they did. Works such as Emsley's *The English Police: A Political and Social History* and his *Policing and its Context*, and Fogelson's *Big-City Police* are excellent examples of this trend.²² Both traditional and more revisionist studies of Canadian policing have become increasingly plentiful in the 1990s.²³

¹⁹Clive Emsley, *The English Police: A Political and Social History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 75.

²⁰Greg Marquis, "The History of Policing in the Maritime Provinces: Themes and Prospects," *Urban History Review*, vol. 29, no. 2 (1990), 94.

²¹Eric Monkkonen, *Police in Urban America, 1860-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 57, as cited in Reiner, *The Politics of the Police*, 46.

²²Emsley, *The English Police*; Fogelson, *Big-City Police*.

²³Fitting into the category of social histories of the police are Marquis, "Policing in the Maritimes," 84-99; Michael McCulloch, "Most Assuredly Perpetual Motion: Police and Policing in Quebec City, 1838-58," *Urban History Review*, vol. 29, no. 2 (1990), 100-12;

An equally significant development in the writing of police history occurred in the 1980s and 1990s. Historians, mainly those writing from a left perspective, increasingly focused on the liberal democratic state and the institutions used to maintain its hegemony. The police played an important role in the maintenance of authority. In Canada studies of policing under the guise of "state formation" arrived with *Colonial Leviathan: State Formation in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Canada*. The editors observed that

[p]ower is indeed coming to be a central preoccupation of historians of Canada more generally. This tendency can be seen as a reaction against a version of social history that views social structures, cultural norms, and the routines of everyday life as if they existed in a peaceful realm separate from struggles for control. And yet this can hardly be called a 'return to political history' in any simple sense. After all the socio-historical analysis of the last decades, no one could assume that the study of politics equals the study of politicians. ... Clearly, then, social history and political history are engaged in a process of interpretation, as neat distinctions between 'the social' and 'the political' begin to break down.²⁴

This new preoccupation with issues of authority and order naturally led to extremes. On the one hand, the development of professional police forces was not necessarily a good in itself--

John C. Weaver, "Social Control, Martial Conformity, and Community Entanglement: the Varied Beat of the Hamilton, Police, 1895-1920," *Urban History Review*, vol. 29, no. 2 (1990), 113-27. Weaver has also produced a very interesting study of law and order in Hamilton, Ontario. See John C. Weaver, *Crimes, Constables and Courts: Order and Transgression in a Canadian City, 1816-1970* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995). The more traditional works include Greg Marquis, *Policing Canada's Century: A History of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993); R.C. Macleod and David Schneiderman (eds.), *Police Powers in Canada: The Evolution and Practice of Authority* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

²⁴Allan Greer and Ian Radforth, "Introduction" in Allan Greer and Ian Radforth (eds.), *Colonial Leviathan: State Formation in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 9.

societies have always had alternative methods of ensuring order.²⁵ On the other hand, to label police forces and their operations as uniformly oppressive is to write history divorced from the contradictions of reality.

The historical literature on the Mounted Police displays similar extremes as other works on the police. The trend of scholarship resembles a movement from the general, celebratory and simplistic, to critical studies of complexities, contradictions, and sophistication. The works in the former category, however, could be listed in the dozens. One would need only the fingers of one hand to count the studies in the latter group.

Numerous publications about the Mounted Police have appeared through the twentieth century and, except for sheer entertainment value, a large portion of them are junk.²⁶ Much of the early work on the force is hagiographic in nature, glorious fiction disguised as factual history. Works such as A.L. Haydon's *Riders of the Plains*, volumes one and two of John Peter Turner's *The North-West Mounted Police, 1873-1893*, and R.G. MacBeth's *Policing the Plains* are packed with anecdotes of heroic young Englishmen confronting and confounding criminals, earning the respect of Natives, protecting the people, and doing it all with quiet confidence and competence.²⁷ This sort of work

²⁵Charivaris have been cited by Bryan Palmer as an example of the "producing classes ... imposing their own alternatives to legalistic norms." See Bryan D. Palmer, *Working-Class Experience: Rethinking the History of Canadian Labour, 1800-1991* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992), 66-9.

²⁶For a discussion of the literature on the Mounted Police see Walden, *Visions of Order*.

²⁷A.L. Haydon, *Riders of the Plains: A Record of the Royal North-West Mounted Police, 1873-1910* (Rutledge, Vermont: C.E. Tuttle Co., 1910); R.G. MacBeth, *Policing the Plains: Being the Real-Life Record of the Famous Royal North-West Mounted Police* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1921). Also see Cecil Edward Denny, *The Law Marches*

dominated scholarship on the force until the 1970s. But a recent popular work on the Mounted Police in the style copyrighted by Pierre Berton and Peter C. Newman suggests that which is old might be new once again.²⁸

Composed in a similar vein to popular histories is another major segment of Mounted Police literature: memoirs and histories produced by former Mounties. The most notable of these include books by former Commissioners Charles Rivett-Carnac and C.W. Harvison, and retired Assistant Commissioners William Kelly and Vernon Kemp.²⁹ Other less famous figures in the force have also contributed to this genre.³⁰ The only complete history of the RCMP was written by Nora Kelly and her husband, former Mountie William Kelly. *The*

West (Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1939); Ronald Atkin, *Maintain the Right: The Early History of the North-West Mounted Police* (London: Macmillan, 1973); R.C. Fetherstonhaugh, *The Royal Canadian Mounted Police* (New York: Carrick and Evans, 1938); Louis Charles Douthwaite, *The Royal Canadian Mounted Police* (London: Blackie, 1939); John Peter Turner, *The North-West Mounted Police, 1873-1893. Volumes 1 and 2* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1950)

²⁸Alison Griffiths and David Cruise, *The Great Adventure: How the Mounties Conquered the West* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1996).

²⁹C.W. Harvison, *The Horsemen* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, Ltd., 1967); V.A.M. Kemp, *Without Fear, Favour or Affection: Thirty-Five Years with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police* (Toronto: Longmans, Green and Company, 1958); V.A.M. Kemp, *Scarlet and Stetson: The Royal North-West Mounted Police on the Prairies* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1964); Charles Rivett-Carnac, *Pursuit in the Wilderness* (Toronto: Little, Brown, and Company, 1965).

³⁰R.S.S. Wilson, *Undercover for the RCMP* (Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1986); Jack Fossum, *Mancatcher: An Immigrant's Story of Logging, Policing, and Pioneering in the Canadian West* (Comox, B.C.: Lindsay Press, 1990); Jack Fossum, *Cop in a Closet* (Vancouver: Hancock House, 1981); Donovan T. Saul, (ed.), *The Way it Was: Fifty Years of RCMP Memories* (Victoria: Horsdal and Schubert, 1993); *Red Serge and Stetsons: A Hundred Years of Mountie Memories* (Victoria: RCMP's Veterans Association, Victoria Division, 1990); William M. Baker (ed.), *Pioneer Policing in Southern Alberta: Deane of the Mounties, 1888-1914* (Calgary: Historical Society of Alberta, 1993).

Royal Canadian Mounted Police: A Century of History, appeared in 1973, the centennial of the Mounted Police. Not surprisingly, the book contains interpretations that flattered its title subject, including the view that the Winnipeg General Strike leaders planned to overthrow the government,³¹ an argument that even the former official historian of the Mounted Police labelled as "ignoring the scholarship of the last quarter century."³²

Despite the celebration of the centennial of the RCMP, the 1970s was not a good decade for the force. Mountie scandal after scandal dominated newspaper headlines. Although the problems almost exclusively involved the RCMP Security Service, a separate branch from the regular police, such distinctions escaped most Canadians.³³ For the first time interpretations critical of the Mounted Police appeared. In particular, Caroline and Lorne Brown's *An Unauthorized History of the RCMP* represented a watershed in the writing of both the history of policing and the RCMP in Canada. The Browns interpreted every aspect of Mounted Police history in an extremely critical and activist light:

Greater numbers of people are beginning to learn about the reality of the RCMP and what that police force is used for in our society, but old myths die hard. This has been reflected in the fact that the Trudeau government was able to mount an unabashed defence of RCMP activities and that so many people seem willing to grant the police even more power. It is obvious that more people must be educated to the fact that the recent revelations of police activity reflect what and who the police represent and have always represented in Canada. It is only when people see the present events [the

³¹Nora and William Kelly, *The Royal Canadian Mounted Police: A Century of History* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1973), 151.

³²S.W. Horrall, "The Royal North-West Mounted Police and Labour Unrest in Western Canada, 1919," *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 61, no. 2 (1980), 170.

³³This point was emphasized in Paul Palango, *Above the Law* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1994).

RCMP "dirty tricks" scandal] in historical perspective that they can begin to understand the repressive apparatus of the state in this country and then begin to devise strategies to defend themselves against it.³⁴

Unfortunately, the one-sided polemical tone and poor documentation weaken the overall value of *An Unauthorized History*.³⁵ Other works such as *RCMP: The Real Subversives* and *RCMP vs. The People: Inside Canada's Security Service* took similarly critical approaches. So too did journalists such as John Sawatsky, Robert Dion, Jeff Sallot, and Richard Cleroux, who weighed in with studies of various wrong-doings by the RCMP Security Service.³⁶ Only Sawatsky attempted to provide a historical perspective on the force. In fact, the approach of many of these works, especially the journalistic accounts, focused almost exclusively on the activities of the Mounted Police, especially its Security Service in the 1960s and 1970s--who or what the force had once been disappeared in the haze of bad publicity.

There are a couple of notable exceptions to this trend. In *Visions of Order: The Canadian Mounties in Symbol and Myth*, Keith Walden, writing in the aftermath of the

³⁴Lorne and Caroline Brown, *An Unauthorized History of the RCMP* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1978 [1973]), v. Emphasis in the original quotation.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 62, 68. On page 62 it is alleged that J.H. MacBrien who became commissioner in 1931 was "trigger happy" while in the military. No evidence is supplied to support this comment. On page 68 the Browns write that a "full description of RCMP involvement in strikes during the 1930s would require at least an entire volume in itself." An endnote follows this statement; it directs the reader to the book's appendix. The 1978 edition has no appendix.

³⁶John Sawatsky, *Men in the Shadows: The RCMP Security Service* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Ltd., 1980); Sallot, *Nobody Said No*; Cleroux, *Official Secrets*; Robert Dion, *Crimes of the Secret Police* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1982); Richard Fidler, *RCMP: The Real Subversives* (Toronto: Vanguard Press, 1978); Edward Mann and John Alan Lee, *RCMP vs The People* (Don Mills, Ontario: General Publishing Co. Limited, 1979).

revelations of the 1970s, examined much of the early literature on the Mounted Police, and what it had to say about the nature, power, significance, myth, and symbolism of the Mounted Police.³⁷ More recently, Michael Dawson has examined the Mounted Police along similar cultural lines as part of his graduate work at Queen's University.³⁸

The most important work to appear in this era was R.C. Macleod's remarkable *The North-West Mounted Police and Law Enforcement, 1873-1905*; it is beyond doubt the most significant book ever written about the Mounted Police. Macleod's work reflected the emphasis on social history in the 1960s and 1970s; he turned these new historical/sociological interpretative tools squarely on the police and their members. The result was a much more detailed, complex, and sophisticated study of the Mounted Police and the motivation for some of its policing duties. Rather than focus on what the Mounties did, the approach of so many previous works, Macleod looked at the force first and then into its operations. He found an organization with members of a higher social standing than regular police forces which often drew members heavily from the working class. The men in scarlet occupied a powerful position in western Canada in the nineteenth century, often being the only law enforcement in an area, and sometimes the only judge as well—Mounties often served as justices of the peace.³⁹ Macleod encountered few examples of abuses of such

³⁷Walden, *Visions of Order*.

³⁸Dawson, "That Nice Red Coat Goes To My Head Like Champagne."

³⁹Reflecting the rural nature of Western Canada in the nineteenth century, urban police forces did not begin to appear until near the end of the century. In 1874 Winnipeg had one chief and a constable. Calgary's police force appeared in 1885; Edmonton created one eight years later and had four constables and a chief in 1904. Regina did not get an organized police force until 1903. C.K. Talbot, C.H.S. Jayewardene, T.J. Juliani, *Canada's Constables: The Historical Development of Policing in Canada* (Ottawa: Crimecare, 1985), 40-1.

power, even in the interaction between the police and minority groups;⁴⁰ they were skilled at catering their law enforcement to the needs of a community and this made them a success, something Macleod proudly proclaimed in a 1978 Canadian Historical Association pamphlet:

In the case of the NWMP [North West Mounted Police] the lack of suitable models had forced the Canadian government to be creative. Few would argue that the experiment was anything but an outstanding success. The Mounted Police represented much that was best in the Canadian character and little that was mean or petty. It is entirely fitting that they should have become one of our national symbols.⁴¹

Similar comments appeared in the preface to his *The North West Mounted Police and Law Enforcement, 1873-1905*.⁴² These words demonstrated that while Macleod's methods shared

⁴⁰Macleod, *The North West Mounted Police and Law Enforcement*, 144. A recent study takes issue with Macleod's "benevolent despotism" interpretation of this era of Mountie history. Walter Hildebrandt, *Views from Fort Battleford: Constructed Visions of an Anglo-Canadian West* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1994), 36-7.

⁴¹Macleod, *The North West Mounted Police, 1873-1919*, 21. Macleod's opening led to additional studies of the nineteenth century Mounted Police and policing in general. *Men in Scarlet*, a collection of essays on various aspects of the Mounted Police experience, appeared in the mid-1970s. See Hugh A. Dempsey (ed.), *Men in Scarlet* (Calgary: McClelland and Stewart West, 1974). More recently Macleod co-edited an inter-disciplinary collection on the history of policing in Canada. See Macleod and Schneiderman (eds.), *Police Powers in Canada*.

⁴²Macleod wrote, "The question which is the focus of this book rests upon the premise that the NWMP did succeed to an extent which justified their enormous reputation. During my research I made a point of looking for evidence to the contrary and found virtually none. There was certainly no lack of human weakness but for the most part the police were efficient, honest, humane and, when the occasion demanded it, heroic. ... The NWMP enjoyed powers unparalleled by any other police force in a democratic country and the most significant single fact about the history of the force is that they did not abuse those powers." Macleod, *The North West Mounted Police and Law Enforcement*, x.

nothing with much of the literature about the Mounted Police, his conclusions about the benevolent nature of the force were essentially the same.

Legislative changes in the early 1980s, however, hastened a dramatic shift in the writing on the Mounted Police. The passage of the *Access to Information Act* led to the release of tens of thousands of pages of previously classified RCMP security material and fuelled new studies of the Mounted Police. Gregory S. Kealey of Memorial University of Newfoundland has led the charge. Drawing on his work on the Canadian working class, Kealey initially focused on the force's targets, especially the radical left and workers.⁴³ Recently, however, his work has dealt specifically with the development of the RCMP security service, both in his writing of analytical articles and through his co-editing of several volumes of previously classified security material.⁴⁴

⁴³Gregory S. Kealey, "1919: The Canadian Labour Revolt," in Bryan D. Palmer (ed.), *The Character of Class Struggle: Essays in Canadian Working-Class History, 1850-1985* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1986), 90-114; Gregory S. Kealey, "State Repression of Labour and the Left in Canada, 1914-20: The Impact of the First World War," *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 73, no. 3 (1992), 281-314.

⁴⁴Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker (eds.), *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The War Series, 1939-1941* (St. John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1989); Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker (eds.), *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Depression Years, Part I, 1933-1934* (St. John's: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1993); Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker (eds.), *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Early Years, 1919-1929* (St. John's: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1994); Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker (eds.), *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Depression Years, Part II, 1935* (St. John's: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1995); Gregory S. Kealey, "The Early Years of State Surveillance of Labour and the Left in Canada: The Institutional Framework of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Security and Intelligence Apparatus, 1918-26," *Security and National Intelligence*, vol. 8, no. 3 (1993), 129-148; Gregory S. Kealey, "The Surveillance State: The Origins of Domestic Intelligence and Counter-Subversion in Canada, 1914-21" *Security and National Intelligence*, vol. 7, no. 3 (1992), 179-210.

The significance of the security material and the conclusions drawn from it have been the subject of an increasingly heated academic debate. Indeed, the work of Kealey and others on the Mounted Police has not gone unchallenged. In *Policing Canada's Century*, Greg Marquis criticized the emphasis on security intelligence activities in recent work on the Mounted Police: "A number of academics and journalists, fascinated with security and intelligence, duties exclusive to the RCMP as of 1919, have helped perpetuate this distortion, ignoring the more important operational history of the force." He also noted a contradiction in that "[d]espite the federal institution's high profile in popular history, we know little of its activities in the twentieth century, when it invaded the fields of provincial and municipal policing."⁴⁵ R.C. Macleod has echoed this criticism and even gone beyond it.⁴⁶ He has argued that the security operations were insignificant in both manpower and material records to the overall operations of the Mounted Police in the 1920s and 1930s. These activities also do not answer the question of why the Mounted Policemen survived challenges to their existence. Instead, Macleod has strongly contended that the Mounties' real saviour was the more mundane bureaucratic role it fulfilled for the Canadian government by enforcing federal statutes and doing departmental work.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Marquis, *Policing Canada's Century*, 5.

⁴⁶R.C. Macleod, "How They 'Got Their Man,'" *The Literary Review of Canada*, vol. 5, no. 8 (1996), 19-21.

⁴⁷R.C. Macleod delved into the Mounted Police leaving and returning to the provincial field in R.C. Macleod, "The RCMP and Provincial Policing," in R.C. Macleod and David Schneiderman (eds.), *Police Powers in Canada: The Evolution and Practice of Authority* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 44-56.

This is the stage that Mounted Police scholarship has reached in 1997. Where to go from here is an obvious query. There is a middle course to be followed between the growing extremes represented by the work of Kealey and Macleod. A fusion between the two approaches offers tremendous opportunity for a dramatically different look at the Mounted Police. As of yet, no one has provided a nuanced examination of the early twentieth-century Mounted Police in the same way that Macleod so effectively analyzed the nineteenth century version. In addition, new methods are now available to historians that were not around in the 1960s and 1970s when Macleod was writing about the NWMP. Social history methodologies have continued to evolve, with class, in some ways, becoming secondary to questions of gender and race. The historiography on policing is only slowly and sporadically beginning to address interrelated questions of race and gender.⁴⁸ In the case of the Mounted Police, most historians have overlooked or downplayed two obvious characteristics of the members of the RCMP in the early twentieth century: they were exclusively male and almost entirely of Anglo-Celtic background. Using additional tools to analyze the RCMP cannot

⁴⁸Macleod, for example, ignored the significance of the ethnic component of the police, even going so far as to have argued that the Anglo-Celtic Mounties "Canadianized" Western Canada in the late nineteenth century. R.C. Macleod, "Canadianizing the West: The North-West Mounted Police as Agents of the National Policy, 1873-1905," in R. Douglas Francis and Howard Palmer (eds.), *The Prairie West: Historical Readings* (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1985), 187-99. There are a few exceptions to this area of neglect. In the case of Canada, see Greg Marquis, "Working Men in Uniform: The Early Twentieth-Century Toronto Police," *Social History*, vol. 20, no. 40 (November 1987), 259-77. For the United States see Bonnie McElhinny, "An economy of affect: Objectivity, masculinity and the gendering of police work" in Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne (eds.), *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies* (London: Routledge, 1994), 159-72. For a discussion of the negative treatment of contemporary British policewomen by their male colleagues see Malcolm Young, *An Inside Job: Policing and Police Culture in Britain* (Oxford, 1991), 191-252.

help but reveal more about the nature, values, and perspective of both the police as an institution and their personnel. The opening chapters of this dissertation will attempt to do just that by looking at who the police were and at the political and social atmosphere they functioned within.

This examination of the nature of the police will be combined with an explanation of how the Mounties survived and entrenched themselves. In fact, the force eventually prospered because of the way that it transformed itself from a police force of the nineteenth century, equipped for dealing with the problems of that era, into a modern police/security force ready to handle the challenges to the state from an increasingly urbanized, industrialized world. A comprehensive history of the Mounted Police in this era, however, will not be offered for one simple reason: not all Mountie tasks were created equal. Ordinary crime fighting, which the force did not perform in Saskatchewan between 1917 and 1928, and in Alberta between 1917 and 1932, because of the existence of provincial police bodies, was not as significant as some have contended. Police forces normally operate under the gaze of citizens and under the authority, at least in theory, of those who hold power. For these two groups and for members of the police themselves, some aspects of police work were simply more important than others. This statement is true in any era. Today in Canada the arrest of a murderer receives far more attention than the arrest of a burglar, yet petty thieving is much more prevalent than homicide. In the 1920s and 1930s, certain issues caught the attention of the public, the police, and the powerful more than others. Left-wing radicalism and Bolshevism, the drug trade, labour unrest, general disorder, and the challenges ethnic communities posed to Anglo-Celtic supremacy concerned both the

Canadian state and many citizens. The core of this dissertation will consequently be an examination of how and why the Mounted Police interacted with certain ethnic minorities, radicals, and workers between 1914 and 1939.⁴⁹

Where the Mounted Police functioned is also significant. Western Canada is the home of the RCMP, and within this region the roots of the force run deepest in Alberta and Saskatchewan. The Mounted Police were the authority in these two provinces from their creation in 1905 until 1917 when the Saskatchewan Provincial Police and Alberta Provincial Police took over regular policing duties. Even then, the Mounted Policemen never left the two provinces; they remained to enforce federal statutes and perform other tasks and eventually added regular police functions with the dissolution of the provincial police forces - 1928 in Saskatchewan and 1932 in Alberta.

Specifically, two important questions underlie this study. First, how did the RCMP manage to survive this period? On the surface such a question might seem surprising. Yet for a good portion of the Great War and for several years afterwards the future of the RCMP was anything but secure. The force had a persistent critic, labour Member of Parliament J.S. Woodsworth, in the House of Commons, and a not particularly friendly Liberal government in office for a good portion of the 1920s. Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King believed the Mounties, especially the officer corps, to be the puppets of the hated Conservatives.⁵⁰ The Liberals as a party were also advocates of provincial rights, a principle

⁴⁹Native Canadians were another major group that the Mounties policed in Alberta and Saskatchewan. The history of this interaction is not dealt with in this dissertation because it really should be the exclusive subject of such a study.

⁵⁰For more on the politics and patronage surrounding the RCMP in this era, see Steve Hewitt, "[T]he Royal Canadian Mounted Police are above that sort of thing": Ambition,

that a federal police force ran against. Under the British North America Act policing was a provincial responsibility.

The second and equally important question is how the RCMP transformed themselves between 1914 and 1939. In 1914 the Mounted Police carried out duties similar to any other police force. By 1939 the RCMP's day-to-day activities had expanded beyond these traditional police functions to include intelligence gathering and other activities against Communists, Fascists, immigrants, workers, unions, students, academics, etc. Clearly the force had changed. The nature of that transformation answers the question of how the Mounted Police personnel survived challenges to their existence in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Myths do not appear overnight; they take a considerable period of time to develop; they, however, can be destroyed in the split second that it takes for a bomb to explode. The RCMP carried the reputation of being law-abiding, impartial, and benevolent. The roots of what destroyed this myth on that humid Montreal evening were planted, developed, and nurtured between 1914 and 1939. That era changed the RCMP forever.

Politics and Patronage in the Mounted Police, 1896-1931," Law for the Buffalo, Law for the Musk-Ox: A Conference on Law and Society in the Canadian West and North, Calgary, 1997.

CHAPTER ONE

THE ARCHITECT, THE ERA, AND THE STATE

The architect was tired. By October 1918 the white-mustached Aylesworth Bowen (A.B.) Perry, commissioner of the Royal North-West Mounted Police (RNWMP), product of a United Empire Loyalist background in small-town Ontario, and a graduate of Royal Military College, was much nearer the end than the beginning.¹ In a career that stretched back into the nineteenth century, Perry had almost seen it all during his tenure in the force. Having fought against the Métis in the 1885 North-West Rebellion, he slowly worked his way up through the ranks, achieving his final and highest position on 1 August 1900.² Now in October 1918, with the bloodiest conflict in human history about to conclude, Perry was contemplating the future of the Mounted Police. That destiny seemed anything but secure. And it was partly Perry's own fault. A year earlier, in his haste to organize a Mountie military unit for the war effort, he had

¹Gregory S. Kealey, "The Early Years of State Surveillance of Labour and the Left in Canada: The Institutional Framework of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Security and Intelligence Apparatus, 1918-26," *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 8, no. 3 (1993), 144.

²Perry's career almost ended in April 1918 when, in an apparent outburst of anger over the supposed failure of a Mounted Police unit to be sent to Europe as a whole, he submitted his resignation and the government accepted it. Perry was allowed to withdraw it after the Mountie unit travelled across the sea together as he had wished. Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Personnel Records of Commissioner A.B. Perry, Perry to Comptroller A.A. McLean, 10 April 1918; *Ibid.*, Perry to McLean, 29 October 1918.

encouraged the government to remove the Royal North West Mounted Police, the forerunner to the RCMP, from regular policing duties in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Members of the world's most famous police force were consequently left with regular policing duties only in northern Canada. Across the prairies, Mounties were reduced to enforcing federal laws and statutes, providing assistance to federal departments, and occasionally performing other more secretive tasks. Ordinary citizens and provincial governments, meanwhile, realized that they could get by without the RNWMP. Could the RNWMP, however, survive without a guaranteed policing role? Or, for that matter, would the federal government be satisfied with its security needs being fulfilled by the small Dominion Police, Canada's security service up until the end of the First World War—a force so small that it often had to resort to hiring American detectives to collect information?³

The future of the Mounted Police at the close of the war was anything but certain. Perry, however, would see to it that the force survived. In October 1918, he prepared a memorandum outlining three options for the RNWMP's future. Why the commissioner was writing on the subject at this time is an interesting question since it was not until August 1919 that Prime Minister Robert Borden officially sought the commissioner's input on possible changes to the RNWMP. Perry was undeniably crafty, and he may have realized that with the war winding down in Europe his organization's future was truly undecided—far better to provide the government with options than to wait for it to make a

³ Carl Betke and S.W. Horrall, *Canada's Security Service: An Historical Outline, 1864-1966, Volume 1* (Ottawa: R.C.M.P. Historical Section, 1978), 351.

unilateral decision; it may also have been that the government was already unofficially looking for policy choices for the Mounted Police. Whatever the case, Perry outlined three potential futures for the force in his 30 October 1918 memo. Restricting the RNWMP's duties to the Yukon and North West Territory was the first suggestion. The commissioner wrote that this selection required no more than 100 men and hence the force might as well be disbanded.⁴ Perry's second option, based on the long military tradition of the Mounted Police, would have seen the transfer of "the force to the Permanent Militia of Canada."⁵ He noted the militaristic characteristics of the Mounties, but concluded that with their reputation they would be much more valuable as a civilian body. Perry's preferred alternative was to see the RNWMP joined "with all the police forces now maintained by any department of the Government of Canada, thus forming a Canadian Constabulary."⁶ The new force's duties would include intelligence gathering, the policing of Indian reserves, and the enforcement of federal laws and statutes. "The chief advantages to be gained," noted the commissioner, "would be co-ordination, and increased efficiency as a result of careful selection of personnel and thorough training, uniformity in enforcement of federal laws and freedom from local influences."⁷

⁴This option resembled the plan put forward in the 1920s by J.S. Woodsworth, the Mounted Police's arch-enemy.

⁵National Archives of Canada (NAC), Government Archives Division, Records of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Record Group (RG) 18, vol. 572, file 52-19, Perry to McLean, RNWMP Comptroller, 30 October 1918.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷*Ibid.*

A month later, in a second memorandum, Perry called specifically for the amalgamation of the RNWMP and the Dominion Police in order to provide for more effective policing. He suggested the new police force be "subject to a rigid discipline and control ... [and] be armed and trained as a military body so that it can act effectively should it be required to do so."⁸ This emphasis on military values reflected Commissioner Perry's vision of the Mounties in an era that seemed to promise profound change.

The first stage of the reorganization occurred in December 1918 when the force became the federal police for all of Canada west of Port Arthur and Fort William.⁹ Then, in the aftermath of the Winnipeg General Strike, Prime Minister Borden decided that the federal government needed a better system of national security. At a 5 August 1919 meeting, Borden asked Perry to submit options for a new national police force. Amalgamation was the commissioner's answer, either as a single body or with the continued geographic split (Mounted Police in the west, the Dominion Police in the east), but under one boss. Perry preferred a complete merging of one force into the other. He pointed out the strengths of his side: the Mounties were disciplined, military-trained, armed, and non-unionized. He also drew particular attention, according to historians Carl Betke and S.W. Horrall, to "the dual nature of the force Its members were peace officers who could be used instead of the military to maintain order in the streets. The Mounted Police also had experienced

⁸NAC, RG 18, vol. 572, file 52-19, "Memorandum re the constitution and organization of a Police force for General duty in Canada," 3 December 1918.

⁹Gregory S. Kealey, "The Surveillance State: The Origin of Domestic Intelligence and Counter-Subversion in Canada, 1914-21," *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 7, no. 3 (1992), 184-193.

detectives and commissioned officers who had recognized social status in the community." Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the historians wrote, "Perry was careful to note that through its past record the force had attained a reputation which was respected throughout the country." The commissioner's arguments won Borden over.¹⁰ On 1 February 1920, the Royal North-West Mounted Police and the much smaller Dominion Police merged to form the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Merger is actually the wrong word, since it suggests the joining together of two bodies. In fact, the Mounted Police completely absorbed their rival.

In writing these memos and constructing his arguments for the government, several things must have swirled through Perry's mind--the force's history, the new challenges to Canadian society, and the nature of the relationship between various governments and the RNWMP. All three factors determined the course of the Mounted Police after the First World War.

The North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) came into being in 1873. The actual implementation of the new police force was sparked by the brutal massacre of a group of Indians in the Cypress Hills by some American whiskey traders. Prime Minister John A. Macdonald had long believed that a body such as the Mounted Police was the perfect tool for ensuring the orderly development of western Canada as opposed to the lawlessness

¹⁰Betke and Horrall, *Canada's Security Service: An Historical Outline, 1864-1966, Volume 1*, 349-51. Greg Kealey notes that C.H. Cahan, a prominent Conservative, was opposed to the Mounted Police becoming Canada's security police; he wanted a stronger Dominion Police and a prominent role for his son. Cahan's arguments, however, failed to sway those who had the power to decide such things. Kealey, "The Surveillance State," 184-193.

that seemed endemic in the American west.¹¹ Originally Macdonald had considered employing westerners, specifically Métis, in this new force. This plan ended with the Métis-initiated Red River Resistance. Instead the personnel came largely from eastern Canada. The first glorious tale of adventure, the initial trek across the west, nearly ended tragically because of a poorly planned, organized and led operation.¹²

The nineteenth-century Mounted Police represented a fundamental break with the policing tradition in Canada that was based on the English system of the constable and the common law.¹³ First appearing in the eleventh or twelfth century, constables were often known as tythingman, borsholder, or headborough depending on the particular region of England they served. Their duties were first codified in 1285 under the Statute of Winchester, the only major English act on law enforcement until 1829.¹⁴ The constable served at least three masters: himself, the crown, and his fellow citizens.¹⁵ The final two competing loyalties were recognized in song by Surrey constable James Gyffon:

¹¹The best study of the early years of the Mounted Police is R.C. Macleod, *The North-West Mounted Police and Law Enforcement, 1873-1906* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976).

¹²R.C. Macleod, *The North West Mounted Police, 1873-1919* (Ottawa: The Canadian Historical Association, 1978), 6.

¹³DeLloyd J. Guth, "The Traditional Common Law Constable, 1235-1829: From Bracton to the Fieldings of Canada," in R.C. Macleod and David Schneiderman (eds.), *Police Powers in Canada: The Evolution and Practice of Authority* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 18.

¹⁴T.A. Critchley, *A History of Police in England and Wales, 900-1066* (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1967), 6-7.

¹⁵T.C. Curtis identifies several influences on constables: "politico-religious sympathies," "family ties," "other local ties," and "local opinion." T.C. Curtis, "Quarter Sessions Appearances and their Background: A Seventeenth-Century Regional Study," in J.S.

The Justices will set us by the heels,
If we do not as we should;
Which if we perform, the townsmen will storm;
Some of them hang 's if they could.¹⁶

What were the qualities necessary to be a constable? Gyffon suggested a few:

A constable must be honest and just,
Have knowledge and good report
And able to strain with body and brain,
Else he is not fitting fort....

My counsel now use, you that are to choose;
Put able men ever in place;
For knaves and fools in authority do
But themselves and their country disgrace.¹⁷

According to historian Allan Greer, this form of policing first appeared in British North America in Quebec after the 1837-38 rebellions.¹⁸

The Mounted Police had completely different origins.¹⁹ Wanting a police force that could perform both military and civil roles, Macdonald modelled the men in scarlet after the

Cockburn (ed.), *Crime in England, 1550-1800* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977), 144-7.

¹⁶James Gyffon, "The Song of a Constable," (1626), in A.V. Judges (ed.), *The Elizabethan Underworld* (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1930), 489.

¹⁷Gyffon, "The Song of a Constable," 488-490.

¹⁸Allan Greer, "The Birth of the Police in Canada," in Allan Greer and Ian Radforth (eds.), *Colonial Leviathan: State Formation in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 17-49.

¹⁹In part this can be seen in the oaths of the various forces. Members of the RCMP swear obedience to their superiors to "well and truly obey and perform all lawful orders and instructions that I receive." On the other hand, municipal police forces in British Columbia, with their connection to a much older tradition of policing, promise the Crown to "cause the

Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC).²⁰ Originally formed in 1836, the Irish Constabulary gained the title "Royal" in 1867. The goal of the Irish Constabulary's English masters was to control the Irish. In this respect the RIC needs to be viewed not as a traditional police force, but as a paramilitary one with the firepower to match and a home base in barracks.²¹ It still performed the functions of a regular police force, however, while acting as a more subtle tool than the military for dealing with turmoil in Ireland.²²

Like the RIC, the Mounted Police policed regions as outsiders. Serving as the police force in western and northern Canada, Mounties slowly strengthened their position as they balanced law and order with community policing needs. Prostitution was one area where the NWMP looked the other way. On the other hand, when the men in scarlet elected to rigidly enforce liquor laws a huge civilian furor ensued forcing the police to back down.²³ They

peace to be kept and preserved, and will prevent all offences against the persons and properties of Her Majesty's subjects." Guth, "The Traditional Common Law Constable, 1235-1829," 23.

²⁰Greg Marquis argues that three other forces were also modelled after the RIC: the Ontario Provincial Police, the Sûreté du Québec, and the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary (RNC). The latter police force does not resemble a paramilitary unit the way the RCMP and RIC did mainly because members of the RNC still do not carry sidearms. In this they most closely resemble English police officers. All three forces are different from the Mounted Police in that they were created to police an already existing society. Greg Marquis, "The History of Policing in the Maritime Provinces: Themes and Prospects," *Urban History Review*, vol. 29, no. 2 (1990), 88.

²¹Clive Emsley, *Policing and its Context, 1750-1870* (New York: Schocken, 1984), 60.

²²John J. Tobias, "The British Colonial Police: An Alternative Police Style," in Philip John Stead (ed.), *Pioneers and Policing* (Montclair, New Jersey: Patterson Smith Publishing Corp., 1977), 242-3.

²³Macleod, *The North West Mounted Police and Law Enforcement*, 125-8, 131-42.

suffered a more serious setback in 1885, however, after being soundly defeated by the Métis at Duck Lake. Most Mounted Policemen spent the rest of the rebellion safely in Prince Albert, a fact which earned them the disdain of the commander of the Canadian military force, General Frederick Middleton.²⁴

The force's future looked especially dim as the nineteenth century ended. Wilfrid Laurier and the Liberals, strong champions of provincial rights, had come to power in 1896. The new government's responsibilities included overseeing the Mounted Police, a federal remnant of the Conservative era. And they had little sympathy for Mounted Policemen, now that western settlement, the original purpose behind the force's creation, seemed well underway. The Mounties' work in policing the Yukon Gold Rush, however, saved them from possible extinction and then aided their growth and continuance since they were seen to have brought law and order to a brand new lawless frontier.²⁵ The importance of the NWMP was further demonstrated when they remained as the provincial police force for Alberta and Saskatchewan after the provinces' creation in 1905.

Slowly, the fame and myth of the NWMP grew. Here, after all, was an outfit that had kept the frontier orderly and safe for settlers. Then, the image of the Mounted Police gained even greater attention when some policemen fought as a unit in the Boer War. For this participation and thirty years of service, the entire force was rewarded with the title "Royal" in 1904. By the early twentieth century, works of literature, both non-fiction and fiction,

²⁴Macleod, *The North West Mounted Police, 1873-1919*, 9-11.

²⁵William R. Morrison, *Showing the Flag: The Mounted Police and Canadian Sovereignty in the North, 1894-1925* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985), 17.

began to appear; they added to the growing fame of the Royal North-West Mounted Police. Western Canada's police force had become world famous by the outbreak of war in August 1914.

The Great War had an immediate impact on the Mounted Police. Prairie Canada was the home to thousands of immigrants, including Germans, Austrians, and Ukrainians--the latter group had the misfortune to come from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Suddenly, these groups became "enemy aliens." Fearing the potential for disorder in western Canada, the government increased RNWMP ranks by 505 non-commissioned officers and constables shortly after the war began. Almost of all of these new recruits were trained at Regina, the capital of Saskatchewan and home of the Mounted Police. As well, a reserve unit capable of dealing with a major disturbance was stationed in the same city. These various factors meant that the force stationed ninety-three percent of its members in either Saskatchewan or Alberta in 1914 (see Table 1-1).

Until the end of 1916 the Mounted Police mixed regular policing duties with new war duties, specifically monitoring enemy aliens in Alberta and Saskatchewan. (The federal government had enacted an order-in-council in October 1914 that required all enemy aliens within twenty miles of urban centres to report once a month.) At the beginning of 1917, Alberta and Saskatchewan formed their own police forces, thereby freeing the Mounties from regular policing, except for the continued enforcement of federal statutes and other special duties for the government in Ottawa.²⁶ This decision reflected, in part, the simple fact

²⁶For a history of the Alberta Provincial Police, see Sean Innes Moir, "The Alberta Provincial Police, 1917-1932," (M.A. thesis, University of Alberta, 1992). For the history of the Saskatchewan Provincial Police see Duncan F. Robertson, "The Saskatchewan Provincial Police, 1917-1928," (M.A. thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1976).

TABLE 1-1²⁷RNWMP IN ALBERTA AND SASKATCHEWAN (Sept. 1, 1914)

DISTRICT	OFFICERS	NON-COMS AND CONSTABLES	OTHER	TOTAL
REGINA ("DEPOT" DIV.)	15	699	2	716 (56%)
MAPLE CREEK ("A" DIV.)	3	49	0	52 (4%)
DAWSON ("B" DIV.)	3	46	0	49 (4%)
BATTLEFORD ("C" DIV.)	3	55	0	58 (5%)
MACLEOD ("D" DIV.)	5	68	1	74 (6%)
CALGARY ("E" DIV.)	3	58	0	61 (5%)
PRINCE ALBERT ("F" DIV.)	4	54	0	58 (5%)
EDMONTON ("G" DIV.)	6	68	0	74 (6%)
LETHBRIDGE ("K" DIV.)	3	54	0	57 (4%)
HUDSON BAY ("M" DIV.)	3	17	0	20 (2%)
ATHABASKA ("N" DIV.)	4	45	0	49 (4%)
TOTAL- CANADA	52	1213	3	1268 (100%)
SASKATCHEWAN	24	844	2	870 (69%)
ALBERTA	20	283	1	304 (24%)

²⁷"Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police," *Sessional Paper* 29 (1915), 7. "Officers" includes the commissioner, assistant commissioners, superintendents, and inspectors. "Non-commissioned officers and constables" includes staff sergeants, sergeants, corporals, constables, and special constables. "Other" includes surgeons and veterinary surgeons. Due to rounding, the percentages do not add up to 100.

that the Mounted Police were trying to do too much with too few resources. Perry had written Borden in October 1916 to suggest that a more effective force was possible only if it was freed from regular policing duties in Alberta and Saskatchewan.²⁸ Perry also wanted his charges to make a direct contribution to the war effort with an overseas unit of their very own. In addition, he had no particular desire to enforce the new prohibition laws.

The commissioner, however, did not turn his back on internal security concerns in western Canada. The Mounted Police continued to patrol the prairie section of the border with the United States. They maintained a "close supervision of enemy nationalities." Finally, they kept a strong force in Regina ready to be sent wherever disorder, potentially caused by "[t]he anarchical and dangerous activities of the Industrial Workers of the World," might arise.²⁹ Perry had established priorities for Mountie attentions that would survive the war.

This was the history of the Mounted Police up to the time that Perry began to churn out memoranda on the future of the force. The force was about to enter an era of uncertainty. The same was true of Canada. In effect, the First World War marked the collapse of the nineteenth century and the beginning of a completely different world. Sixty thousand Canadians would not be returning from France; they may not have recognized home anyway. The change actually began prior to the war, but the conflict intensified it. To create a role for

²⁸Kealey, "The Surveillance State," 181-2.

²⁹"Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police for the Year Ended September 30, 1917," *Sessional Papers* 28 (1918), 9.

the RNWMP in the post-war period, Perry had to be aware of the realities of the new Canada.

The new Canada really started with the arrival into power of Wilfrid Laurier and the Liberals in 1896. Laurier, as it has been frequently noted, declared that the twentieth century would be Canada's. His government worked to ensure the accuracy of the prophecy. Western Canada played an important role in its plans. This hinterland region was to be the great breadbasket for the rest of the nation and the world. Immigrants were the key factor in constructing this new Canada. Under the influence of cabinet minister Clifford Sifton, massive immigration to Canada began, including the entrance of non-traditional immigrants. Sifton sought "men in sheepskin coats"—hardy peasants who knew how to make a farm work because it was in their blood and the blood of countless generations before them. Those Sifton deemed unsuited for life in Western Canada—urban proletarians, American Blacks, Asians, and southern Europeans—were discouraged from entering. While Britain and the United States continued to be the main sources for new Canadians, for the first time eastern and central Europeans began to arrive in Canada in sizable numbers. The population of Canada as a whole increased by sixty-four percent between 1901 and 1921.³⁰

The newcomers arrived in a nation undergoing rapid change; they were part of the transformation, but it extended beyond them. Nineteen-twenty-one was a significant year of that metamorphosis—for the first time the Canadian population became half urban. This

³⁰Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada, 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991 (1974)), 50-64.

urban component included a growing industrial proletariat, a reflection of the increasing importance of industrialization and manufacturing to the economy of Canada. In the west the workers of the new factories, railways, and mines were often eastern and central Europeans who could not make a successful career at farming or who, despite Sifton's opposition, had been brought in by business interests as industrial labourers in the first place.³¹

Rapid change created friction. The presence of non-Anglo-Canadians, or "foreigners" as they were derogatorily labelled, generated hostility from entrenched ethnic groups, particularly those of a British background. British Columbia became the centre of anti-Asian sentiment, including a riot in 1907. The hostility was largely fuelled by a belief that Asians could not be assimilated.³²

For other newcomers, assimilation or, in the rhetoric of the day, "Canadianization," became the key.³³ Even those friendly to immigrants, like social gospeller J.S. Woodsworth and author Ralph Connor, believed in the need for assimilation.³⁴ Education became the key for building these new Canadians. Anything perceived as an impediment to such important

³¹Donald Avery, *"Dangerous foreigners": European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979).

³²Peter W. Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978), 12. Also see Patricia Roy, *A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1989).

³³Brown and Cook, *Canada, 1896-1921*, 72.

³⁴J.S. Woodsworth, *Strangers Within Our Gates Or Coming Canadians* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972 [1909]); Ralph Connor, *The Foreigner: A Tale of Saskatchewan* (Toronto: Westminster, 1909).

work met with widespread opposition. When the government allowed immigrant groups like Ukrainians to establish block settlements, the hackles of nativists rose out of the fear that such settlements discouraged assimilation.³⁵

For some, assimilation was not enough. After his appointment in 1905, Frank Oliver from Alberta, Clifford Sifton's successor as Laurier's minister of the Interior, tried to discourage non-British immigration and to encourage those from the British Isles to come. Instead, Canada's economic needs triumphed, and the numbers of non-British immigrants, especially eastern and central European navvies, increased until the start of the Great War when virtually all immigration ended.

Organized labour was also on the rise: its numbers grew five-fold between 1900 and 1914. The growth of capitalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century had driven Canada's immigration policy as businessmen sought a cheap pool of labour. Workers increasingly saw their strength in unity and numbers. Slowly, however, the Canadian unions they belonged to became branches of larger American ones.³⁶ Those who belonged to unions, however, tended to be the skilled workers. The unskilled, including a large number of non-British labourers, were left to fend for themselves.

Industrial disputes often occurred. Many degenerated into violent clashes between strikers and the militia or police. Once the war began, labour peace quickly ensued in the initial excitement and patriotism of the conflict. This respite, however, lasted only until 1917 when a new militancy emerged in what one historian has called the "Canadian labour

³⁵Brown and Cook, *Canada, 1896-1921*, 67

³⁶*Ibid.*, 113-4.

revolt."³⁷ The high cost of the war in the form of rampant inflation and the enormous loss of life fuelled the discontent on the part of Canadian workers. Conscription only made matters worse; they might have to go off and die in France while business leaders like Joseph Flavelle grew wealthy supplying the war effort. The number of strikes in Canada, which had declined precipitously in the first two years of the war, rose rapidly in its last years.³⁸ As Commissioner Perry wrote his first memorandum in October 1918, the Winnipeg General Strike was only a few months away.

Even more disturbing to those in power than the growth of unionism and labour strength was the appearance of radicalism. Organized labour tended to be supporters of the traditional parties. Some workers, nonetheless, especially non-British ones, began to listen to appeals from more radical sources. Socialist parties appeared in Canada at the turn of the

³⁷Gregory S. Kealey, "The Canadian Labour Revolt of 1919" in Bryan D. Palmer (ed.), *The Character of Class Struggle: Essays in Canadian Working-Class History, 1850-1985* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1986), 90-114.

38

Strike Activity in Canada, 1912-1921

YEAR	NUMBER OF STRIKES
1912	242
1913	234
1914	99
1915	86
1916	168
1917	222
1918	305
1919	428
1920	459
1921	208

century. These parties frequently fought amongst themselves over issues of policy and doctrine, diminishing their threat to the status quo of capitalism.³⁹ The turning point in the growth of radicalism, however, occurred outside Canada in 1917, when first the Tsar was toppled in Russia in February, and then the Bolsheviks under Vladimir Lenin overturned the government of Aleksandr Kerenski in October. The world's first Communist nation emerged. The Soviet Union was a clear challenge to capitalism in two ways: it represented an alternative to the status quo and demonstrated to workers around the world the potential strength of the working class. Senior Bolsheviks, especially Lenin, wanted to promote world revolution.⁴⁰

The commissioner had more than Reds, radicals, strikers, and immigrants to consider in late 1918 as he drew up a blueprint for the RNWMP's future. Perry's worries also included the audience for his list of proposed changes—the government of Canada. He had to reflect on the demands and needs of the Canadian state, as well as the nature of the relationship between the state and the Mounted Police. Was it an arm's length association or one of a police force that did the bidding of the state without asking questions?

The usual line is that governments govern, police forces police. Certainly in the case of the RCMP, those with a connection to the force have argued that Mounties are public servants, whose only allegiance is to the law. This belief in the independence of the police is

Source: Kealey, "1919: The Canadian Labour Revolt," 94.

³⁹Brown and Cook, *Canada, 1896-1921*, 122-5.

⁴⁰Richard Pipes (ed.), *The Unknown Lenin: From the Secret Archive* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996), 8.

very much a British concept⁴¹ and quite different from attitudes in the United States, which has had a long tradition of mixing policing and politics.⁴² On the other side, some theorists view the police as merely a tool of the state—there to ensure the dominance of one class, one group, and one ideology, often, but not exclusively, in the form of capitalism.⁴³ With the Mounted Police, notions of police impartiality and separateness from government are not historically tenable. The federal government served as the Mounties' creator, appointed their commissioner, set their budgets, repeatedly received information from Mounted Police reports, and often issued orders to the force.⁴⁴ The words of one scholar effectively capture

⁴¹James C. Robb, "The Police and Politics: The Politics of Independence," in R.C. Macleod and David Schneiderman (eds.), *Police Powers in Canada: The Evolution and Practice of Authority* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 168, 177; and Phillip C. Stenning, "Police and Politics: There and Back and There Again?," in R.C. Macleod and David Schneiderman (eds.), *Police Powers in Canada: The Evolution and Practice of Authority* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 210.

⁴²For a discussion of the political nature of American policing see Robert M. Fogelson, *Big-City Police* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977), 23, 29.

⁴³For example, see Sydney L. Haring, *Policing a Class Society: The Experience of American Cities, 1865-1915* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1983); and Allan Greer and Ian Radforth (eds.), *Colonial Leviathan: State Formation in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), especially Greer, "The Birth of the Police in Canada," 17-49.

⁴⁴The governments of Alberta and Saskatchewan and some municipal governments within the two provinces also had a close relationship with the Mounted Police. There were several divisions in Alberta and Saskatchewan during the inter-war period. "F" Division had its headquarters in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan and covered two-thirds of Saskatchewan, including the city of Saskatoon. The Southern Saskatchewan District covered the southern part of the province and was headquartered in Regina. "Depot Division" was also based in that city. This Division handled incoming recruits and during the First World War consisted of the emergency force collected to deal with any disorder which might break out during the war. In Alberta the two main divisions were "K" Division, headquartered in Lethbridge and including Calgary and mining towns such as Drumheller, and Blairmore; and "G" Division, based in Edmonton and covering northern Alberta.

In 1932, with the return of the RCMP to provincial policing in Alberta, the divisional system would be changed in both Alberta and Saskatchewan. All of Saskatchewan was now

this relationship: "The civil police is a social organization created and sustained by political processes to enforce dominant conceptions of public order."⁴⁵

This does not mean, though, that the RCMP has always been a pliant tool of the government. The relationship has been more complicated, since the force enforces laws and carries out policies designed by the Canadian state, while exercising a great deal of power of its own in determining the nature of these laws and policies and how they are to be enforced.

Who or what determined the policy and direction of the Mounted Police between 1914 and 1939? The force, after all, is an institution of the Canadian state. This reality does not necessarily mean, however, that the roles of individuals, in the form of commissioners and politicians, have not been significant. The Mounties had better relations with Conservative governments, both provincially and federally, during the opening decades of this century than with their Liberal opponents. Historian Greg Kealey has argued that Commissioner Perry was a much more effective wielder of political power in getting what he wanted from the government than his successor, Cortlandt Starnes.⁴⁶ (In Starnes' defence, however, Perry did not have to spend most of his tenure as commissioner dealing with a Liberal government not kindly inclined toward the Mounted Police.) J.H. MacBrien, who

included in "F" Division, headquartered in Regina, while all of Alberta was the domain of "G" Division, based in Edmonton.

⁴⁵J. Skolnick, "Changing conceptions of the police," *Great Ideas Today* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1972), 41, as quoted in Robert Reiner, *The Politics of Police* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 2.

⁴⁶Kealey, "The Early Years of State Surveillance of Labour and the Left in Canada," 142-3.

served from 1931 to 1938, was arguably the most influential commissioner in the history of the post-Perry RCMP.

While what party was in power and what commissioner was in charge were important, this still does not answer the question of who or what ultimately directed Mounted Police operations. Official Mounted Police historians, Carl Betke and S.W. Horrall, have contended that the notion of an arm's length relationship between the RCMP and the government, especially on security matters, was an illusion:

It looked almost as if the politicians did not wish to be too closely associated in the public eye with the work of the security service. Actually, nothing could have been further from the truth. The Minister of Justice met frequently with the Commissioner to discuss the activities of the R.C.M.P. In addition, the cabinet was informed through weekly or monthly reports of its intelligence work. What the politicians preferred, however, was that the force appear to define its own role in these matters. The R.C.M.P. was left to steer the ship of security itself, but the Government was looking over its shoulder to make sure it was going in the right direction. The difficulty for the R.C.M.P. was that without precise instructions it was forced to some extent to try and read the minds of its masters. Fortunately it was able to do this without any serious problem arising. Had it not been able to do so, the government would have to have stepped in. There never was any doubt as to who was ultimately in control.⁴⁷

The authors suggested that the RCMP was not entirely happy with this relationship:

First of all, the Mounted Police were by instinct, training and experience officers of the law. They were used to having their conduct and responsibilities carefully defined by a multitude of statutes, regulations, and legal traditions. Secondly, in keeping them at arm's length, the government made the R.C.M.P. the principal butt of criticism for those opposed to its intelligence activities. In their silent or evasive response to such accusations, the Governments tended to shift on to the shoulders of the

⁴⁷Betke and Horrall, *Canada's Security Service, Volume 2*, 426-7.

R.C.M.P. criticism for policies for which they were in the final analysis responsible.⁴⁸

There is a great deal of merit in Betke and Horrall's interpretation. Yet, the situation is more complicated than they suggest. Yes, the government maintained an artificial degree of separation in order to create a deniability factor when RCMP operations went awry. Even a strong commissioner like MacBrien discovered this reality in the aftermath of the RCMP-provoked Regina Riot. The Conservative government of R.B. Bennett, which had followed the advice of its police force, sought to pass some of the blame for the fiasco on to the RCMP.

As at Regina in 1935, the advice offered by the RCMP appears to have been generally listened to by governments in this era, and that includes the King government during the 1920s. When J.S. Woodsworth alleged in the House of Commons in 1924 that the Mounted Police had spied upon meetings he had addressed as well as upon other gatherings of radicals and workers, Ernest Lapointe, the minister of Justice, turned to the RCMP for some words in defence of its actions. Commissioner Starnes sent the minister a lengthy memo which provided the government with a non-denial denial of the socialist's allegations.⁴⁹ This memo would serve as the basis for government obfuscation over whether Mounted Policemen were engaged in domestic spying activities.⁵⁰

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 426-7.

⁴⁹Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), RCMP Records Related to J.S. Woodsworth, vol. 23, file No. 88-A-60, J.S. Woodsworth to Ernest Lapointe, 26 May 1924; *ibid.*, "Memorandum for the Honourable Minister," 28 May 1924.

⁵⁰For example, see House of Commons' *Debates*, 12 June 1929: 3634-35.

So, yes, the government was the ultimate controller of RCMP operations. But—and this is an important but—the police exercised a great deal of control over which policies the government selected. When the force offered options to the government, they were often designed to ensure the government chose the one preferred by the RCMP, or, at least, by the commissioner. The ultimate example of this selective packaging of proposals was Perry determining the future of the force at the end of the First World War. In his 30 October 1918 memo to the comptroller, one that he would duplicate for Borden in August 1919, the commissioner set forth three options for the force, the final one being his preferred choice. Accordingly, he was careful to emphasize the weaknesses of the first two options before recommending the amalgamation of the RNWMP and the Dominion Police.⁵¹ The government issued the orders, but the orders reflected the advice of its "experts."

The frequent communication between the upper echelons of the force and various levels of government demonstrated their close relationship. Quite regularly, and especially during crises, RCMP officers shared confidential information with several different federal departments and politicians, not to mention provincial departments and politicians.

⁵¹NAC, RG 18, vol. 572, file 52-19, Perry to McLean, 30 October 1918. In a 3 December 1918 memo that went to the federal government, Perry specifically advocated the amalgamation of the Dominion Police and the RNWMP. *Ibid.*, Memorandum from Perry regarding "the constitution and organization of a Police Force for General Duty in Canada," 3 December 1918. The following day, Arthur Meighen wired Borden, who was attending peace talks in Europe, with the information that the Privy Council believed that the RNWMP and the Dominion Police should be united. NAC, Borden Papers, reel C-4418, Meighen to Borden, 4 December 1918: 138502.

Sometimes this was done at the behest of the department or branch of government,⁵² or just as frequently on the RCMP's own initiative.⁵³

⁵²For example, "Col. Spry, of Calgary, called upon me today, and said Col. Gibsonne, in charge of M.D. No. 13 had asked him to see me and find out if there was anything special to tell him about the "Red Element," because one of the Officers here had sent him some disquieting reports ... I told him I was not aware of anything out of the ordinary I could report, and suggested that enquiries of this secret nature should be made between our respective Departments with which he agreed." CSIS, RCMP Records Related to the Communist Party of Canada in Edmonton, vol. 22, file 88-A-61, Ritchie to Starnes, 21 September 1926; *Ibid.*, RCMP Records Related to the Estevan Strike and the Mine Workers Union of Canada, vol. 84, file 88-A-60, W.A. Gordon, Acting Minister of Justice, to MacBrien, 16 October 1931.

⁵³As one illustration of this interaction, during the 1931 Estevan strike the RCMP sent regular reports to the provincial government and the federal departments of labour, justice, and defence. NAC, RG 146, vol. 6, file 1025-9-91093, pt. 2, Asst. Commissioner T.S. Belcher to Private Secretary of the Minister of Justice, 9 September, 1931; *Ibid.*, Supt. R.R. Tait to M.A. MacPherson, 15 September 1931; *Ibid.*, Belcher to H.H. Ward, Deputy Minister of Labour, 17 September 1931; *Ibid.*, H.H. Mathews, Dep. Minister of Defence, to Belcher, 30 September 1931. Ward was apparently so enamoured with his relationship with the Mounted Police that after he retired he wrote this poem about the force that appeared in the *R.C.M.P. Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 4 (1934), 176:

To the Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Our Dominion is guarded from shore to shore,
By the highly trained men of the Mounted Corps;
No finer body can there be found,
Their minds so keen and limbs so sound.

In the course of their duty from day to day,
Difficult problems come their way;
But they can be counted on without fail,
No matter the task or hard the trail.

For sixty years now they have stood the test,
And have rendered always service the best;
They are highly respected by the populace all,
Who know they'll respond when need to call.

Their many heroic deeds the records relate,
In performance of duty for our vast State;

On rare occasions the Mounted Police found itself caught between two opposing levels of government. Again, the On to Ottawa Trek was the best example of this. The Saskatchewan Liberal government under James Gardiner vigorously opposed the halting of the Trekkers in Regina during June of 1935. Nevertheless, this became the preferred option of the federal Conservative government and of the RCMP, even though in this area the police should have officially answered to the government of Saskatchewan. In an earlier telegram to Wood, MacBrien instructed him to ask the provincial attorney general to arrange for the riot act to be read in Regina in the event of disorder with the arrival of the Trekkers. If the attorney general refused, MacBrien ordered Wood to "READ RIOT ACT YOURSELF IN YOUR CAPACITY AS JUSTICE OF THE PEACE BEFORE COMMENCING POLICE ACTION."⁵⁴

Municipalities had even less say when it came to the operations of the RCMP. In the early 1930s, the leadership of the city of Saskatoon worried about the potential for disorder that the operation of a temporary relief camp within city boundaries represented. On 6 November 1932, the mayor of Saskatoon contacted the deputy attorney general of Saskatchewan to request that twenty Mounties, plus horses, be sent to his city to police a

Whatever the demands they always succeed,
For once assigned they never recede.

So here's to men brave of the R.C.M.P.,
Who so nobly guard our liberty;
Their fame is know the world throughout,
They are a gallant Corps of that no doubt.

⁵⁴NAC, RG 146, RCMP Records Related to the On to Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot, vol. 25, file 93-A-00086, pts. 1-3, MacBrien to Wood, 15 June 1935.

demonstration of the unemployed scheduled for the following day. Despite going through proper channels, the mayor never received his requested RCMP contingent because J.W. Spalding, the assistant commissioner commanding Saskatchewan, decided, after consulting with his colleague in-charge of the Saskatoon detachment, that they were not required.⁵⁵

Such communication illustrated that it was often Mounted Police personnel who decided their own orders, at least when dealing with less powerful governments. But the concept of the Mounties as a reserve force to be plugged in wherever disorder occurred illustrates their importance as an entity within the Canadian state, a reality outside of any particular partisan political context.⁵⁶

How did the state view the RCMP's role, and what was that role? Once more, the visions of the Mounted Police presented during the First World War are key. In December 1918 Perry telegraphed G.L. Jennings, the commander of the Mounted Police's military unit in Europe, that the government planned on fully re-establishing the RNWMP by increasing its strength to 1200 and maintaining it either as "a federal police force for the whole of

⁵⁵NAC, RG 146, RCMP Records Related to Radicals and Transients in Saskatchewan, vol. 27, file 92-A-00123. pt. 1, Spalding, Asst. Commissioner Commanding Sask. Div, to MacBrien, 9 November 1932. A year later MacBrien had to caution S.T. Wood, the new commander of "F" Division and hence all of Saskatchewan, to at least inform the Attorney General of the province before he pulled any "troops" out of Saskatoon. NAC, *Ibid.*, pt. 4, MacBrien to Wood, 29 April 1933.

⁵⁶It is important to note that the Canadian state is not the same as the Canadian federal government. "State" is a much broader concept which includes various levels of government as well institutions such as government departments, the judiciary, the military, and the police. See Leo Panitch, "The role and nature of the Canadian state," in Leo Panitch (ed.), *The Canadian State: Political Economy and Political Power* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 6.

Canada or a permanent unit of the Canadian Militia."⁵⁷ The federal government had passed an order-in-council four days earlier that specifically set out various functions for the force to perform, not only in 1918, but for decades to follow:

- (a) The enforcement of Federal Laws.
- (b) The patrolling and protection of the International Boundary Line.
- (c) The enforcement of all Orders-in-Council passed under the War Measures Act for the protection of the Public Safety.
- (d) Generally to aid and assist the civil powers in the preservation of law and order whenever the Government of Canada may direct.⁵⁸

The enforcement of federal laws and statutes would make up a major portion of the work performed by the Mounted Police during the 1920s. Aiding the department of Health in enforcing the Opium and Narcotic Drug Act (ONDA), policing Indian reserves, and administering the Inland Revenue Act kept the force busy. The number of RCMP investigations related to federal statutes increased from 2068 in 1921 to 8353 in 1932, while investigations undertaken for other departments and not related to federal statutes increased from 8500 in 1921 to 83,216 in 1932.⁵⁹ Historian R.C. Macleod believed that the force "served as an important element in the great expansion of the Canadian state in the early twentieth century," and thus ensured its continuation in a period when its existence was threatened. He has dismissed suggestions that the Mounties' anti-subversion function

⁵⁷NAC, RG 18, vol. 572, file 52-19, Perry to G.L. Jennings, 16 December 1918.

⁵⁸NAC, RG 18, vol. 1003, file "Personnel," Order in Council of 12 December 1918, P.C. 3076, 12 December 1918.

⁵⁹R.C. Macleod, "The RCMP and the Evolution of Provincial Policing," in R.C. Macleod and David Schneiderman (eds.), *Police Powers in Canada: The Evolution and Practice of Authority* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 48-9.

determined their survival when they found themselves under attack during 1922 and 1923.⁶⁰ Undoubtedly there was some truth in his position. But Macleod missed the deeper meaning of the force in the context of both its needs and the needs of the Canadian state in this period.

The concept of the Mounted Police as a military body, for example, was significant to the role it performed for the Canadian state. Right from the beginning, Canada's national police force had strong militaristic tendencies, hence its later military action in South Africa and Europe. It was for this very reason that Commissioner Perry suggested in his October 1918 memo that one possible future for the RNWMP would have seen them become part of Canada's permanent militia; this option was the path not taken by the federal government—it wanted more subtlety from the Mounted Police. Making them solely a military body would have transformed the RCMP from a hammer into a sledgehammer during an era of great disorder in Canada.

Strikes, radicalism, and discontent were widespread in Canada in 1918 and 1919. What options did the government have for dealing with the turmoil? The traditional method for handling a strike or protest was to send in the local militia to quiet the situation. This was a particularly blunt option since, as historian Allan Greer has pointed out, "there was not much soldiers could do with rioters other than shoot them."⁶¹ Between 1876 and 1914 the militia was called out forty-eight times in Canada, thirty-three of them to deal with strikes. From the end of the First World War to 1970, however, the military was used only four

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 44.

⁶¹Greer, "The Birth of the Police in Canada," 18.

times, despite the fact that "aid to the civil power remained a military responsibility."⁶² The reason why is quite simple: the RCMP now served this function in areas outside Quebec and Ontario. The militia and regular military had become the course of last resort. This was true of the Winnipeg General Strike, the Estevan Strike and Riot, the Saskatoon Relief Camp Riot, coal strikes in Alberta, and events surrounding the On to Ottawa Trek. In at least three of these examples, military units were readied in case the RCMP proved incapable of dealing with the problems. Only in Winnipeg did soldiers take to the streets, and this was after the Mounted Police had already used force to disperse a group of protesters.⁶³

To make the Mounted Police especially reliable, the government passed an order-in-council in October of 1918 prohibiting members of the Mounted Police from forming or joining a union. The words of the order-in-council left little doubt as to the reasoning behind this prohibition; the police were responsible for "the maintenance of order in connection with strikes, lockouts or labour disturbances."⁶⁴

R.C. Macleod disputed this role, noting that King informed the House of Commons in 1922 that the Mounted Police would not police strikes and other labour disturbances.⁶⁵ He failed to acknowledge, however, that King was ambivalent on this issue. During the debate

⁶²Desmond Morton, "Aid to the Civil Power: The Canadian Militia in Support of Social Order, 1867-1914," *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 51, no. 4 (1970), 407, 424.

⁶³See David Jay Bercuson, *Confrontation at Winnipeg: Labour, Industrial Relations, and the General Strike* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1980[1974]), 172-4.

⁶⁴NAC, RG 18, vol. 1003, file "Personnel," Order-in-Council of 7 October 1918, P.C. 2213.

⁶⁵Macleod, "The RCMP and the Evolution of Provincial Policing," 46.

in the House, the prime minister said that according to its governing act, quelling labour disputes should not be a function of the force and was more suitable work for the militia.⁶⁶ But at the same time as King was promising to refrain from using the RCMP in a traditional militia role, his government briefly transferred the Mounted Police from the department of Justice to the department of Defence, a move which made sense, Macleod stated, "if the RCMP were to act primarily as a backup for forces in cases of civil unrest, a role previously performed by the militia."⁶⁷ Additionally, in the same debate in the House, two Conservatives articulated the new role for the Mounted Police in the interwar period. Party leader and former prime minister Arthur Meighen called for the RCMP, which he believed to be a more effective tool than the militia when it came to ensuring law and order, to be a "mobile police reserve" with forces concentrated in strategic locations across the country. Another Conservative encouraged the federal government to leave the RCMP under the control of the department of Justice. In doing so he hinted at the important role the Mounted Police could play in place of the militia: "We have had troubles in past strikes and that sort of thing, and although under the present Militia Act it is within the power of a municipality to call upon the militia to turn out for the preservation of law and order, that is the very last resort that should be adopted in this country."⁶⁸

⁶⁶NAC, William Lyon Mackenzie King Papers, reel C-2247, Memo from D.D. McKenzie, 10 August 1922.

⁶⁷Macleod, "The RCMP and the Evolution of Provincial Policing," 46.

⁶⁸General Mewburn, as quoted in Don Macgillivray, "Military Aid to the Civil Power: The Cape Breton Experience in the 1920's," in Michael S. Cross and Gregory S. Kealey (eds.), *The Consolidation of Capitalism, 1896-1929* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1983), 119.

Then there was the force's security role. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s Mounties in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and elsewhere in Canada, collected information on a wide range of people and groups. Some scholars have argued that these security records form a small percentage of the RCMP's overall total, and that the RCMP security personnel at headquarters in the 1930s were no more than a handful. In response, Greg Kealey and Reg Whitaker have noted that in this period the force's security operations stretched from headquarters down to each division through the Criminal Investigation Branch (CIB). It was not until the 1930s that a greater separation between regular policing and security work occurred.⁶⁹

Much of the debate on this issue has had an "either/or" quality to it. There is, however, a middle ground to be captured. Yes, the security role can be overemphasized, as Kealey himself has acknowledged.⁷⁰ And policing federal statutes certainly gave the RCMP a public role in the 1920s. Two additional points need to be made, though. For the state and the general public in this period not all police activities had equal value. Spying on Communists and busting Chinese opium dealers and addicts carried far more currency with the state and with many citizens than enforcement of some of the more mundane federal statutes. The Mounted Police were an instrument of control in themselves, something the provincial governments of Alberta and Saskatchewan were well aware of. Soon after the return of the RCMP to Saskatchewan, Alberta, which had previously blanchèd at replacing

⁶⁹Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, Letter to the Editor, *Literary Review of Canada*, vol. 5, no. 10 (1996), 22.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*

its provincial police force, considered a similar move. Premier J.E. Brownlee wrote to the attorney general of his eastern neighbour to collect information on the experience. The Mounted Police's effectiveness at policing the Noxious Weeds Act or at catching shoplifters in small-town Saskatchewan did not interest him; he wanted to know about the willingness of the RCMP to deal with challenges to order, specifically from labour and the unemployed.⁷¹ His Saskatchewan correspondent assured him that the "Police have co-operated in every way with us and ... I am satisfied will do everything they can to help us."⁷² Regular policing duties, while significant, in no way made the RCMP different from the various provincial bodies they replaced. If such activities were the determining factor in the future of the Mounted Police, then Alberta and Saskatchewan would still have provincial police forces.⁷³

No, the Mounted Police survived because for the state they were more than a regular police force. After 1919, the RCMP had a national presence, allowing for the coordination of some aspect of policing efforts, whether of the criminal or security variety. The men in scarlet could also play several roles: a unit involved in ordinary policing; a heavily armed militia capable of dealing with strikes and riots; and a security service charged with gathering

⁷¹Public Archives of Alberta (PAA), Premier Papers, Access No. 69.289, file 77A, Brownlee to MacPherson, 5 November 1930; *Ibid.*, file 108, Brownlee to MacPherson, 12 November 1930.

⁷²*Ibid.*, MacPherson to Brownlee, 8 November 1930.

⁷³Cost was also another significant factor, especially in explaining the RCMP replacing several provincial police forces in 1932; it was cheaper for these provinces to use the RCMP than to have their own forces. For more on this see Macleod, "The RCMP and the Evolution of Provincial Policing."

information on a wide range of individuals and groups.⁷⁴ The RCMP were far more flexible than any policing alternative. These various roles, which often coincided in Alberta and Saskatchewan between 1914 and 1939, first appeared during the First World War.⁷⁵ And these powers of the Mounted Police became increasingly focused on those deemed threats to the status quo of order and morality: immigrant and ethnic communities, workers, and radicals. The RCMP had a domestic war to both police and fight.

Commissioner Perry knew of these realities in 1918. He was aware of the challenges to the status quo posed by a wide range of groups, he had a very good idea of what the state expected from the Mounted Police; and he understood the nature of the force. Any successful police force, he concluded in his 3 December 1918 memo, had to depend on

1. Its organization.
2. Its personnel.
3. Its discipline.
4. Its training.
5. Its Esprit de Corps.⁷⁶

⁷⁴In trying to ensure a role for the RNWMP in the aftermath of the war, one of the selling points for the comptroller, undoubtedly with the knowledge of Perry, was the secret service role the Mounties would play in Western Canada. NAC, RG 18, vol. 572, file 52-19, Memo from McLean to Rowell, 30 November 1918.

⁷⁵NAC, Robert Borden Papers, reel C-4379, R. Bishop, for the comptroller, memo to the government, 10 January 1917: 96095. Bishop, basing his memo on a letter from Perry, listed three roles being performed and to be performed by the RNWMP in western Canada: "1. To strengthen the Boundary Patrols. 2. To maintain strong detachments where alien settlements are large. 3. To concentrate at Divisional Headquarters, i.e. Headquarters of Districts, the remainder of the force after the above requirements have been met."

⁷⁶NAC, RG18, vol. 572, file 52-19, Perry, "Memorandum re the constitution and organization of a Police force for General duty in Canada," 3 December 1918.

He did not, however, spell out any specifics. What then was the nature of the training that Mountie recruits went through? Who were the recruits? What sort of values did the world's most famous police force instill in its rank-and-file and officers? Napoleon once reputedly said that an army could not travel on an empty stomach. Similarly a police force cannot function without personnel. Many people at the time thought they knew what it was like to be a Mounted Policeman. After all, one only had to pick up one of the numerous books written on the topic or attend a moving picture show to see what glamorous and exciting lives the scarlet-uniformed men on horseback led. The actual life of a Mountie in this period, however, was something quite different.

CHAPTER TWO

MASCULINE MEN IN SCARLET

"What did you say your name was?"

"Kemp," I replied.

"Where did you come from?"

"My home's right here in PA. But originally I'm from England. The family came over a couple of years ago." "Ye gods," he cried to the others. "Did you hear that? Another bloody Englishman. How many does that make now in the post? Apart from the OC, who's a French Canadian, I'm the only native-born, true-blue Canadian in the place. The force is getting lousy with these blokes from England."¹

Fifteen-year-old Vernon Kemp, barely old enough to shave, was given a rough ride by a barracks' mate after he joined the Mounted Police in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan in 1910. After all, what was an Englishman doing in the ultimate Canadian symbol, the Mounted Police? But far from being unrepresentative, Kemp exemplified the dominant characteristics of the force in this era: he was an English-born male.

Commissioner Perry's memos of late 1918 dealt with the force's future in a broad sense. But who really were the members of the Mounted Police that Perry's recommendations would affect? How did these ordinary men drawn from society as constructed at the time see their job, their employer, and the world around them? These

¹Vernon A.M. Kemp, *Scarlet and Stetson: The Royal North-West Mounted Police on the Prairies* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1964), 79.

questions are important because who the Mounted Police were leads directly into what they did.

To answer these questions properly, more tools need to be used than previous historians have called upon. Specifically, two of the most important characteristics of the Mounted Police in this era, their gender and ethnic background, need to be examined. Too often these two areas have been ignored in previous work on the Mounties.

Gender analysis of men is a recent trend in the historical profession. In *The Gender of Breadwinners*, historian Joy Parr dismissed the usual dichotomy which views women as the product of gender and men of class. "Men, like women," she argued, "were gendered subjects."² In addition, Parr demonstrated that people are composed of many variables, including class, ethnicity, and gender. Concepts of manliness and masculinity are also not rigid. They are complex, sometimes contradictory, and ever evolving.³ For example, historian Gail Bederman distinguished between the concepts of manliness and masculinity. Manliness, more of a nineteenth century concept, emphasized honour, self control, and order. Masculinity, on the other hand, which was displacing manliness as a primary middle-class male definition by the early twentieth century, stressed physicality, size, and violence.⁴ The concept was changing because increasingly middle-class men believed themselves to be under threat from working-class men, a group closely associated with a physical form of

²Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 245.

³Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the U.S., 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 11.

⁴*Ibid.*, 19.

maleness.⁵ These two versions of this male identity that were particular to middle-class society--manliness and physical masculinity--were not mutually exclusive, but often contradictory and complementary. The early-twentieth century Mounties were not exceptions to this rule, and their male identity was an important issue to the Canadian state between 1914 and 1939. Although not rigidly so, manliness remained more prevalent among the officers, the calm authority figures, while masculinity was primarily cultivated in the rank-and-file, the ones required to use brute force on occasion.

Ethnicity heavily influenced this middle-class male gender image; it was also a significant factor in how Mounties perceived the society around them. The meaning of ethnicity is similar to what people in the interwar period called race. As historian Catherine Hall has noted, "[i]n the nineteenth century the word 'race' covered the terrain now also referred to by the term 'ethnicity'"⁶ Thus to Mounties and many others in Canada at the time, both Ukrainians and Chinese were racial groups, albeit not equal ones in the view of the dominant society. Ethnicity (or race), in the words of Catherine Hall, was "increasingly seen as a crucial dividing line between peoples."⁷

To appreciate the role played by the Mounties in the interwar period, it is important to understand how they defined themselves. Like Kemp, they were English, usually

⁵*Ibid.*, 11-13.

⁶Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle-Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 25.

⁷*Ibid.*, 25.

popularly known as Anglo-Saxons. Again Hall has provided insight into the significance and symbolism of this label:

That national identity [English] was powerfully articulated by middle-class men in [the nineteenth century]: men who claimed to speak for the nation and on behalf of others. ... The search for masculine independence, for a secure identity, was built on their assertion of their superiority over the decadent aristocracy, over dependent females, over children, servants and employers, over the peoples of the Empire, over all others who were not English, male and middle class.⁸

To deal with class, ethnic, and political challenges to the status quo in the interwar period, the Canadian state needed a body to perform its bidding.⁹ After seeing their very future questioned in the early 1920s, Mounted Police personnel quickly found a niche for themselves, thus ensuring their survival. The fact that the force, especially its officer corps, usually shared the values, world outlook, and ethnic and gender background of those who designed public policy in Canada only increased its chances of survival.¹⁰

⁸*Ibid.*, 207. In replace of "Anglo-Saxon" English, Anglo-Canadian, and Anglo-Celtic are used to, in effect, denote an attitude or ideology, instead of just simply a place of birth.

⁹Even the federal government of William Lyon Mackenzie King, which was not overly concerned about radicals in the 1920s, found the RCMP useful because of its work enforcing federal statutes and performing work on behalf of government departments. R.C. Macleod, "The RCMP and the Evolution of Provincial Policing," in R.C. Macleod and David Schneiderman (eds.), *Police Powers in Canada: The Evolution and Practice of Authority* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 48-50.

¹⁰Jack Fossum, who served between 1932 and 1953, described the commissioned officers of his era as "an elite, above the nitty-gritty of day-to-day law enforcement ... [with] concerns ... more in the areas of policy making, personnel work and interior economy." Letter from Fossum, 9 March 1996.

And what were the wider values of Anglo-Canadian society from which members of the political and economic elite were drawn? Examining Canada's English roots provides some answers to this question. Although the Great War had discredited in many quarters the imperialist form of Canadian nationalism identified by historian Carl Berger, large parts of Canadian society still embraced the values of English society.¹¹ Ethnocentrism was a prominent part of English identity in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first few decades of the next. Generations of English children had been raised to say as part of their prayers:

How happy is our lot
Who live on Britain's isle
Which is of heaven the favour'd spot,
Where countless blessings smile.

And that

I was not born as thousands are,
Where God was never known;
And taught to pray a useless pray'r
To blocks of wood and stone.¹²

¹¹Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970). For an example of the importance of English values to Anglo-Canada in the interwar period see Michiel Horn, "Keeping Canada 'Canadian': Anti-Communism and Canadianism in Toronto, 1928-29," *Canada: An Historical Magazine*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1975), 35-47.

¹²T. Bilby, *A Course of Lessons* (London, 1823), 94, 85, as cited in James Walvin, "Symbols of moral superiority: slavery, sport and the changing world order, 1800-1950," in J.A. Mangan, and James Walvin (eds.), *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 246-7.

Much of English society viewed the world through hierarchical glasses; there was a natural order to things, and those of Anglo-Saxon heritage were naturally on top. Much of the basis for this attitude emanated from the English class system. This class hierarchy aided the hardening of racial attitudes during the Victorian era because inequality appeared inherent in society. In other words, if the concept of a lower class was accepted, then it was not a great leap in logic to believe that there were racial and ethnic groups beneath one's own.¹³

Anglo-Canada reflected its English roots in every way, including bigoted attitudes towards non-Anglo-Celtic groups. The Canadian educational system, heavily influenced by Britain, cultivated and reinforced racial and ethnic perspectives. Textbooks such as *History of England for Public Schools* inculcated Canadian school children with a sense of English nationalism and a pride and recognition of the fact that the English made up only a seventh of its empire's population:

Unless this fact is grasped clearly, it is impossible to appreciate the wonderful work being done in controlling and civilizing the millions of subject peoples, comprising hundreds of races, each with its own language, customs, and religion. Rarely, if ever, does Britain find it necessary to resort to force in governing her subject peoples. Even their prejudices are respected, their religion, their social customs, and local laws are seldom interfered with, unless for the purpose of preventing crime or abolishing brutal customs.¹⁴

¹³Douglas Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (New York: Leicester University Press, 1978), 106-7.

¹⁴*History of England for Public Schools*, (Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada, 1923), 297, as quoted in Timothy J. Stanley, "White supremacy and the rhetoric of educational indoctrination: a Canadian case study," in J.A. Mangan (ed.), *Making Imperial Mentalities: Socialization and British Imperialism* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1990), 150.

Even reformers sympathetic to the plight of immigrants and ethnic minorities reflected the prevailing prejudices of Anglo-Canadian society.¹⁵

Whether from Britain or Canada, the vast majority of Mounted Policemen were products of English-dominated societies. In 1914 Prime Minister Robert Borden, under questioning from the opposition, proudly confirmed in the House of Commons that the United Kingdom had supplied seventy-nine percent of the members of the Mounted Police.¹⁶ The opposition had wanted to know why Canadians were not enlisting in their national police force. Two major reasons for the lack of domestic participation were poor wages and even worse working conditions, which discouraged Canadian men from joining, forcing the government to actively recruit in Britain.¹⁷ Vernon Kemp's initial wage upon joining was

¹⁵See J.S. Woodsworth, *Strangers Within Our Gates or Coming Canadians* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1972 [1909]), 46-160.

16

NATIONAL ORIGIN OF MOUNTIES IN 1914

ORIGIN	TOTAL	% OF TOTAL
UNITED KINGDOM	490	79%
CANADA	76	12%
OTHER BRITISH POSSESSIONS	24	4%
UNITED STATES	10	2%
FOREIGN COUNTRIES	17	3%
TOTAL	617	100%

Source: Canada. House of Commons' *Debates*, 12 February 1914: 710.

¹⁷Robert Borden, using RNWMP information, noted that of ninety-eight English recruits in 1913 "45 were old soldiers, a large proportion from the Guards and Cavalry. All

\$.60 a day. That amount later rose to \$.75 in 1912 and \$1.25 in 1935.¹⁸ For a considerable period of time this wage was below what an unskilled labourer could hope to attain, and unskilled labourers did not have their jobs follow them home. Mounties, especially those in small towns and rural areas, were literally on duty around the clock. Lost your child? Call the RCMP. Your barn is on fire? Call the RCMP. Someone has stolen your prize Holstein? Call the RCMP. There has been an accident in the middle of the night and there are smashed bodies bleeding all over the road? Call the RCMP. Cops dealt with aspects of life, especially homicides and accidents, that no one else, with the possible exception of undertakers, wanted to go near. On the other hand, despite occasional bursts of excitement, many of the duties of an ordinary Mountie in Alberta and Saskatchewan were incredibly banal. The day-to-day life of most Mounted Policemen consisted of uneventful patrols. During the month of November 1919, for example, Constable Carlson of the Short Creek Detachment in Saskatchewan travelled 375 miles, or an average of twenty-one miles for each day he ventured out on his horse.¹⁹ In only one case was he investigating a theft, something that in fact was the responsibility of the Saskatchewan Provincial Police. Most of his excursions involved "registering aliens," "general patrol," and another exciting activity listed

promised to be very serviceable members of the force." *Canada, House of Commons' Debates*, 12 February 1914: 709.

¹⁸S.W. Horrall, *The Pictorial History of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police* (Toronto: McGraw Hill-Ryerson Limited, 1973), 34.

¹⁹Technology had crept in elsewhere. The North Portal, Saskatchewan detachment was at the same time using the train, an "auto cycle" and automobiles for transportation. These methods allowed 934 miles to be covered in a month. National Archives of Canada (NAC), *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Records, Record Group (RG) 18*, vol. 1933, file 3, pt. 8, "List of Patrols, made from North Portal Detachment, between the 24th September & the 24 October 1919."

as "Re: Mail."²⁰ In the history of the RCMP up until 1994 the number one killer of those who died in the line of duty was not an escaped prisoner, a desperate bank robber, or an angry rioter. Instead, accidents claimed sixty-two percent of those killed while on active duty.²¹

Then there were the actual working conditions many bored policemen laboured in for their low wage. As late as October 1915, the six members of the Mounted Police detachment at Yorkton slept in a fifteen-by-twenty-foot room, situated directly above the guard room which had no sanitary facilities for the prisoners (different odours than coffee and bacon greeted the Mounties upon waking in the morning). Prisoners and police had to share one bathtub and four wash basins. Finally, after typhoid fever struck one Mountie, six constables petitioned Commissioner Perry for better facilities.²² Such working conditions, not surprisingly led some to seek employment elsewhere (see Table 2-1). In 1919, the last occasion when a detailed breakdown of discharges was listed, roughly twenty-five percent of Mounted Policemen opted to leave either by purchasing an early exit or by outright desertion (see Table 2-2).

²⁰*Ibid.*, "Patrols made at the Short Creek Detachment from Oct. 23, 1919 to Nov. 25, 1919."

²¹Robert Knuckle, *In the Line of Duty: The Honour Roll of the RCMP Since 1873* (Burnstown, Ontario: General Store Publishing House, 1994), 15. Out of the 188 Mounties listed on the honour roll, 117 died accidentally, fifty-six were murdered, and fifteen were killed fighting overseas during World War Two.

²²Kemp, *Scarlet and Stetson*, 41.

TABLE 2-1²³STATISTICS RELATED TO NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND CONSTABLES

YEAR	DISCHARGED	EN- GAGED	TOTAL MEMBERS	% CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR
1914	262	767	1213	—
1915	630	286	869	-28.36
1916	354	225	740	-14.84
1917	434	297	603	-18.51
1918	310	876	*886	46.93
1919	564	1848	1540	73.81
1920	853	917	1608	4.42
1921	549	558	1610	0.12
1922	144	591	1167	-27.52
1923	261	188	1090	-6.60
1924	269	141	962	-11.74
1925	141	103	924	-3.95
1926	161	148	910	-1.52
1927	133	174	952	4.62
1928	165	246	1033	8.51
1929	112	318	1145	10.84
1930	193	239	1189	3.84
1931	169	277	1292	8.66
1932* *	197	1176	2257**	74.69

²³Source: RCMP Annual Reports.

1933#	415	571	2209	-2.13
1934	248	317	2263	2.44
1935	203	347	2410	6.50
1936	211	67	2261	-6.18
1937	187	212	2277	0.71
1938	234	239	2290	0.57
1939	1110	2274	2458	7.34

*This figure includes the 443 N.C.O.s and constables who found themselves transferred to RNWMP "B" Squadron (Cavalry), C.E.F., for service in Siberia.

**1932 marked the RCMP takeover of provincial policing functions in Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island.

#This year marks the beginning of annual reports which coincided with the end of the fiscal year (March 31). The first report covered eighteen months.

TABLE 2-2²⁴MOUNTED POLICE CAREERS ENDED IN 1919

CATEGORY	No.	%	% in 1914
TIME EXPIRED	45	7.98	4.96
DIED	4	0.71	1.52
PURCHASED	92	16.31	15.26
DESERTED	45	7.98	10.30
BAD CONDUCT	37	6.56	18.32
INEFFICIENCY	25	4.43	6.20
INVALIDED	167	29.61	0
PENSIONED	5	0.89	0.38
SPEC. CSTS. DISMISSED	69	12.23	42.74
FREE DISCHARGE AFTER REJOINING ON LEAVE FROM C.E.F.	69	12.23	0
TOTAL	564	100	

²⁴Source: RNWMP Annual Report for 1919.

The Mounties who deserted or purchased their freedom may have hesitated in complaining about poor conditions because of the harsh discipline of the force, a reflection of the militaristic nature of the RCMP. After all, one normally associates "desertions" with the military. Under section 30 of the *Rules and Regulations for the Government and Guidance of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police*, rank-and-file Mounties could face arrest for "making any anonymous complaint to the government or the Commissioner; (n) communicating without the Commissioner's authority, either directly or indirectly, to the public press any matter or thing touching the force."²⁵

Not all who joined were discouraged by the nature of the life of a Mountie. Former British military men found the emphasis on discipline and hierarchy especially appealing;²⁶ they joined in large numbers. These same Mounties, however, chose to enlist to fight for King and Empire once the First World War began.²⁷ Many would never return from the killing fields of France; they were replaced in the force by Canadians. The values of the RCMP, however, remained the same.

²⁵*Rules and Regulations for the Government and Guidance of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 1928* (Ottawa: F.A. Acland, 1928), 243. Even today members of the force have found themselves in trouble over calls for unionization. "No RCMP union, court rules," *Montreal Gazette*, 1 December 1989: A5; "Manitoba support for RCMP union called strong," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 21 October 1986: 10; "Officers appeal to Ottawa in drive for RCMP union," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 30 September 1986: 13; "RCMP union hits snag at labor board," *Montreal Gazette*, 9 June 1986: E10.

²⁶Interview with Superintendent (retired) Stirling McNeil, 24 January 1996.

²⁷By the conclusion of 1915, sixty percent of volunteers from Canada were British born. Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Inc., 1991 (1974)), 262.

The Canadian content in the RCMP increased throughout the 1920s and especially in the 1930s, when other work could not be found. Nevertheless, a retired Mounted Policeman who joined in 1934 could still recall over sixty years later a strong English influence during his training: "the four Commissioned Officers in 'Depot' were Englishmen. The chief Riding Sergeant-Major was born in England. The Corporal who was the riding instructor for my squad was an English man, former member of the famous British Cavalry regiment, Our P.T. instructor was an Englishman, Another drill instructor formerly of Gordon Highlanders stationed on N.W. Frontier in India - and on and on."²⁸ Another who served in Saskatchewan in the 1930s simply said that there were "too damned many of them."²⁹ Numbers culled from obituaries in the *R.C.M.P. Quarterly* demonstrate that the English-born represented the single largest definable ethnic group of those who did not have Canadian origins among Mounties who served at least part of their careers in Alberta and Saskatchewan between 1914 and 1939 (see Table 2-3). One would also suspect that the majority of those categorized as "Canadian" were, in fact, of Anglo-Celtic background. For example, former commissioner C.W. Harvison was a Canadian, born in Ontario. His father, however, left England at the age of four and although his "memories of the Old Country were vague ... he retained a deep-rooted loyalty to England, the Crown, and the Flag."³⁰

²⁸Letter from an anonymous retired Mountie, 30 January 1996.

²⁹Interview with Staff-Sergeant (rtd.) Stan Wight, 28 March 1996.

³⁰C.W. Harvison, *The Horsemen* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Inc., 1967), 4.

TABLE 2-3³¹ORIGIN OF ALBERTA AND SASKATCHEWAN MOUNTED POLICEMEN (1914-1939)

ORIGIN	TOTAL	% OF TOTAL
ENGLISH	197	25%
IRISH	27	3%
SCOTTISH AND WELSH	22	3%
OTHER*	34	4%
CANADIAN	517	65%
TOTAL	797	100%

*Other includes the United States and other European nations.

³¹Source: *R.C.M.P. Quarterly*. Because of spotty reporting in the *Quarterly* and the destruction of manuscript records deemed historically insignificant, these numbers are not complete. Nevertheless, the sample size is large enough to indicate trends confirmed by other statistics and other qualitative comments.

For the Mounted Police, gender and ethnicity were intertwined. Their maleness and the dominant English ethnicity meant that they had been inculcated with certain masculine values. Patriotism was one such emphasis, although it was part of a larger group of values which made up the Victorian ideal of manliness: "physical courage, chivalric ideals, virtuous fortitude, with additional connotations of military and patriotic virtues."³² In the later Victorian period, spartan stoicism was increasingly encouraged in the young. The belief, according to Gail Bederman, was that "[b]y gaining the manly strength to control himself, a man gained the strength, as well as the duty, to protect and direct those weaker than himself."³³ Organizations, such as the Boy Scouts and the Boys' Brigade, sprang up in an effort to indoctrinate working-class boys with the values of their supposed superiors. The Boys' Brigade promoted "the advancement of Christ's Kingdom among Boys and the promotion of habits of Obedience, Reverence, Discipline, Self-Respect and all that tends towards a true Christian Manliness."³⁴

The even more popular and famous Boy Scouts (10,000 adherents in 1910 in English Canada³⁵) promoted similar values, albeit with the emphasis on Christianity replaced by a promotion of patriotism and militarism. As Lord Baden-Powell's *Scouting for Boys* noted in 1908: "Every boy ought to learn how to shoot and to obey orders, else he is no more good

³²J.A. Mangan, and James Walvin, "Introduction," in *Manliness and Morality*, 1.

³³Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 12.

³⁴John Springhall, "Building character in the British Boy: the attempt to extend Christian manliness to working-class adolescents, 1880-1914," in *Manliness and Morality*, 52-3.

³⁵Berger, *The Sense of Power*, 255.

when war breaks out than an old woman." Baden-Powell was also famous for the phrase "BE A BRICK," which encouraged scouts to accept the status quo and their lot within it:

If you are discontented with your place or with your neighbours or if you are a rotten brick, you are no good to the wall. You are rather a danger. If the bricks get quarreling among themselves the wall is liable to split and the whole house to fall.

Some bricks may be high up and others low down in the wall; but all must make the best of it and play in their place for the good of the whole. So it is among people; each of us has his place in the world, it is no use being discontented, it is no use hating our neighbours because they are higher up or lower down than themselves. We are all Britons, and it is our duty each to play in his place and help his neighbours. Then we shall remain strong and united, and then there will be no fear of the whole building—namely, our great Empire— falling down because of rotten bricks in the wall.³⁶

The masculine Mountie exhibited the values of the society that produced an organization like the Boy Scouts. The force, in addition, also reflected the transformation in white male middle-class identity which was taking place in the early decades of the twentieth century.³⁷ Victorian values and the emphasis on being "manly" were giving ground to an increasing emphasis on aggression and physical strength.³⁸ Along the way the ideal body shape of men changed. During the 1850s, a lean and wiry body was the middle-class ideal. By the turn of the century, however, there was an increasing emphasis on large, muscular bodies. It is no coincidence that this was an age when heavyweight boxing not only became

³⁶Michael Rosenthal, *The Character Factory: Baden-Powell and the Origins of the Boy Scout Movement* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 9.

³⁷Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 15-17.

³⁸The same was true of the Boy Scouts where physical ability was stressed over intellectual ability. Allen Warren, "Popular Manliness: Baden-Powell, scouting and the development of manly character," in *Manliness and Morality*, 194.

the most popular form of pugilism, but also enjoyed increasing popularity outside the working classes.³⁹

The RCMP celebrated the new ideal male body type. A thirty-five inch chest, the minimum requirement for a new recruit, was more highly valued in the Mounted Police of the early twentieth century than a high school education.⁴⁰ Having a "good physique" was the first thing that came to the mind of a former Mountie upon being asked the characteristics of a competent police officer.⁴¹ This attitude was reflected in the 1919 annual report when Commissioner Perry lamented that many of those allowed in turned out to be "unsuitable" mainly because of "physical unfitness." "Examining surgeons do not recognize," a clearly irritated Perry wrote, "that the force has no place for weaklings."⁴² This observation by the

³⁹Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 15-17.

⁴⁰Prior to 1974 (when it was raised to Grade 12) the minimum educational requirement for a Mountie was Grade 11. (As a point of comparison, the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the United States had required a minimum of a college education since the 1950s. In 1963 after being asked how many Mounties had university degrees, then Commissioner Cliff Harvison responded, "I don't have time for all that research." Sixteen years later a high-ranking Mountie estimated that fifteen percent of the force had a university degree. Edward Mann and John Alan Lee, *RCMP vs the People: Inside Canada's Security Service* (Don Mills, Ont.: General Publishing Company Ltd., 1979), 123.

⁴¹Letter from anonymous, 30 January 1996. R.C. Macleod has suggested that a good physique was necessary in this era because of the rough conditions. While there may be some truth in this, a RCMP recruiting officer in the 1960s found it necessary to write "[t]his applicant is small [5'9", 150 pounds], somewhat soft-looking with short neck, round, broad face, clear complexion, and a full head of dark brown hair combed to the right side" on the application form of Patrick Kelly (later to become famous for killing his wife). His RCMP trainers described him as "[a] square-jawed member of small build and little over minimum height, who presents a good appearance in uniform." Michael Harris, *The Judas Kiss: The Undercover Life of Patrick Kelly* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Inc., 1995), 39.

⁴²"Report of the Royal North-West Mounted Police for the Year Ended September 30, 1919," *Sessional Papers* 8, 1920, 17.

commissioner is significant for it indirectly reflects turn-of-the-century fears among many in North America and Britain that the white race was in decline. Two events both confirmed and fuelled the apprehension. A large number of British Army volunteers had been found physically incapable, prompting many to talk of the deterioration of the "manly British character."⁴³ In the United States in 1910, the battering of that generation's "Great White Hope" by Jack Johnson, a Black boxer, ignited race riots and killings across the country. Many white men viewed the loss of the fight as a blow to their male identity.⁴⁴ The concern about racial decline sparked efforts and schemes to improve all aspects of white males.⁴⁵

Perry's remark is also important because it demonstrates the masculine construction of policing, specifically the emphasis on physicality. Policing had long been a profession which emphasized more physical masculine values as opposed to the Victorian emphasis on manliness. In his study of the early twentieth-century Toronto police, historian Greg Marquis explored the masculine nature of that force: "the atmosphere of the police station was akin to that of the military barracks where job socialization and the camaraderie of the all-male group interacted with working-class culture to produce an exaggerated masculinity."⁴⁶ That "police culture," continued Marquis, was

manifested in the maintenance of a bold front with the public, feats of physical courage, support of fellow workers, direct action and the use of colourful language. ... The military background of many Toronto recruits no

⁴³Rosenthal, *The Character Factory*, 3.

⁴⁴Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 41-2.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 3-7.

⁴⁶Greg Marquis, "Working Men in Uniform: The Early Twentieth-Century Toronto Police," *Social History*, vol. 20, no. 40 (September 1987), 270.

doubt enhanced this rough culture. ... The image of the patrolmen as exercising restraint yet able to take care of themselves in the rough and tumble of the beat, an image in keeping with the working-class concept of 'masculiness', did much to maintain popular admiration for the department.⁴⁷

These male characteristics and values were not simply applicable to the Toronto Police or the working classes; they were even more true of Mounted Policemen, many of whom actually lived in barracks in remote places and in all-male atmospheres.⁴⁸

Mounted Police personnel willingly embraced the male identity which had been constructed for them: these were the very values that were used to judge their capability as a

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 270.

⁴⁸Evidence of an "exaggerated masculinity" can still be seen in the Mounted Police. A 1994 semi-autobiographical work by Mounted Policeman Robert Gordon Teather, contains a rather revealing section on gender and the Mounted Police:

"Female police officers were not well liked. Most supervisors openly admitted their disgust at having to work with a crip – short for cripple. Any police officer could easily establish his manhood by referring to his female counterpart as an emotional, intellectual or physical cripple. But Bev was different. She had been baptized by fire the night she lost a fight to William Curtis – also known as "Wiener." ... Bev knew the rules and in a back alley one warm summer evening she took him on. Bev lost – sort of. Her injuries healed in less than month but when the paramedics forced an airway down her almost lifeless throat they found, inside her mouth, half chewed, Wiener's ear!"

Robert Gordon Teather, *Scarlet Tunic: Inside our Cars – Inside our Hearts. On patrol with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police* (Surrey, B.C.: Heritage House, 1994), 55-6.

Female officers have had, and continue to have, a difficult time fitting into not only a nearly all male world of policing but also a world constructed by and for men. A recent study found that female police officers in Quebec have a much higher suicide rate than their male counterparts or the general populace. *Globe and Mail*, 25 May 1995: A4. In addition, a study of the Pittsburgh Police, which has one of the highest proportions of female officers in the world, found women police officers admitting to having behaved in uncharacteristic ways in order to fit in. Bonnie McElhinny, "An economy of affect: Objectivity, masculinity and the gendering of police work" in Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne (eds.), *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies* (London: Routledge, 1994), 7. For a discussion of the negative treatment of contemporary British policewomen by their male colleagues see Malcolm Young, *An Inside Job: Policing and Police Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 191-252.

Mountie. For example, the criteria used to evaluate non-commissioned and commissioned officers reflected both the older Victorian manly characteristics and the newer emphasis on physical power. The evaluation form contained a section entitled, "Physical and Athletic Qualifications," and assessed Mounties according to the following categories: "Appearance," "Physique," "Strength," "Energy," "Endurance," "Horsemanship," and "Keeness on games."⁴⁹ The reference to games reflected a Victorian English notion that athletics, especially team play, built character and promoted discipline.⁵⁰ Baseball, it was also believed, served a similar role for many young Canadian and American males.⁵¹ The RCMP must have hoped that those who played together, stayed together. When asked why he thought he would make a good Mounted Policeman, retired RCMP member Stirling McNeil replied, "I was athletic. I played football for Calgary and Winnipeg as a junior." McNeil also expressed admiration

⁴⁹Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Personnel Records of Superintendent Walter Mortimer, "Annual Confidential Report- Non-Commissioned Officers," 1931.

⁵⁰An English football commentator noted in 1888 the value of games to building the character of men: "Health, endurance, courage, judgement, and above all a sense of fair play, are gained upon the football field. A footballer must learn, and does learn, to play fairly in the thick and heat of a struggle. Such qualities are those which make a nation brave and great. The game is manly and fit for Englishmen; it puts a courage into their hearts to meet any enemy in the face." Montague Shearman, *Athletics and Football* (London: The Badminton Library, 1888), 369-70, as quoted in James Walvin, "Symbols of moral superiority: slavery, sport and the changing world order, 1800-1950," in *Manliness and Morality*, 242. Historian Peter Bailey notes that in the Victorian era games were intended for the upper classes while drill was designed for the working classes in order to encourage discipline and make them better workers. Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 130.

⁵¹Colin D. Howell, *Northern Sandlots: A Social History of Maritime Baseball* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 5.

for a particular officer because the individual was an excellent athlete who frequently played rugby with the rank and file.⁵²

McNeil's emphasis on athletics, however, also demonstrates the increasingly popular masculine characteristics of the age, especially among the rank-and-file who had to perform the police grunt work. He first came to the attention of Mounted Police recruiters when he played as a civilian on the RCMP softball team in Calgary. His physical size (six feet, four inches and 200 pounds) and strength led an officer to ask him to enlist.⁵³ A fellow Mountie from this era, I.C. Shank, also exemplified the physical characteristics of the era; in fact, a friend encouraged him to enlist after remarking that "physically, [he] was ideally suited to be a Mounted Policeman."⁵⁴ He, in addition, played football for the Saskatchewan Roughriders and later became a Canadian heavyweight boxing champion.⁵⁵

The mixture of manly and masculine values, such as order, patriotism, militarism, and physicality, went hand-in-hand with being a Mounted Policeman and help explain why seemingly endless numbers of Britons enlisted. This was an era when the "soldier-hero" was in vogue in British society,⁵⁶ and the RCMP was a police force, after all, which had "tact, and

⁵²Interview with Superintendent (rtd.) Stirling McNeil, 24 January 1996.

⁵³*Ibid.*

⁵⁴Letter from Superintendent (rtd.) I.C. Shank, 15 December 1995.

⁵⁵Interview with McNeil, 24 January 1996.

⁵⁶Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire, and the Imagining of Masculinities* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 233.

courage, and an endless patience and persistence."⁵⁷ Even the Mountie uniform, historian Douglas Owram has argued, carried with it a great deal of patriotic symbolism:

The scarlet coat of the North West Mounted Police had been deliberately chosen in order to evoke the British tradition. Thus the myth of the police became in reality a part of the tradition of law in British society.... The man and the abstract concept merged into a symbol that few dared to challenge.⁵⁸

New recruits would need such confidence and dedication if they were to last as a member of the Mounted Police; theirs was a quasi-religious undertaking⁵⁹ in a militaristic organization which would rule almost every aspect of their life and demand a monastic-like commitment in return, including, apparently, celibacy. Until the 1970s, except under special circumstances, the RCMP accepted only single men who would not be allowed to marry until having served several years in the force.⁶⁰ This rule forced many Mounties to either

⁵⁷L.V. Kelly, "Canada's Famous Mounted Police," *Scarlet and Gold* (1920), 38, as quoted in Keith Walden, *Visions of Order: The Canadian Mounties in Symbol and Myth* (Toronto: Butterworth, 1982), 36.

⁵⁸Doug Owram, *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 140.

⁵⁹The McDonald Commission stated that the RCMP "through its recruiting, training and management practices, engulfs its members in an ethos akin to that found in a monastery or religious order." McDonald Commission, vol. 1, 102, in Daniel Robinson and David Kimmel, "The Queer Career of Homosexual Security Vetting in Cold War Canada," *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 75, no. 3 (1994), 334. Paragraph 764 of the duties section of the "Rules and Regulations ... of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police," expected that all Mounties whenever practical were "to attend Divine Service at their respective places of worship, and are to show an example of due respect for, and observance of the Sabbath Day." *Rules and Regulations for the Government and Guidance of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police 1928* (Ottawa: F.A. Acland, 1928), 109.

⁶⁰Mann and Lee, *The RCMP vs The People*, 123. The following rules appear under a section entitled "Married Quarters and Privileges" in *Rules and Regulations for the Government and Guidance of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 1928*, 33. "187. Married men are not eligible for engagement, except for "A" Division, or in such special

marry in secret or leave the force to wed.⁶¹ The prohibition on marriage, coupled with the encouragement of members to spend their free time in the barracks, probably led to some homosexual activity on the part of Mounties.⁶² Certainly any such activity, combined with the stereotype of the effeminate homosexual, would have challenged the masculine image of the Mounted Policeman.⁶³ Here is what Jack Fossum, a twenty-year veteran of the force who served during the 1930s, had to say about a fellow barracks member:

Next to [Jeff was] Earl— a Cockney, an Imperial Army type whose every sentence was spiced with four letter words. He was in his mid-thirties, a powerful man with the build and walk of a gorilla. We suspected him of being a fag. He had a crush on Jeff for whom he'd buy sweets and little

circumstances as the Government or Commissioner may decide. ... 188. Any N.C. Officer or Constable who wishes to be married must obtain the authority of the Commissioner through the usual channels. 189. The Commissioner may grant permission to marry to Non-Commissioned Officers of not less than 8 years service and to Constables of not less than 12 years service, provided their record is good and they are recommended by their Commanding Officer."

⁶¹Harvison, *The Horsemen*, 60-4.

⁶²Similar activities occurred in other all-masculine environments. See Steven Maynard, "Rough Work and Rugged Men: The Social Construction of Masculinity in Working-Class History," *Labour/Le Travail*, vol. 23 (1989), 159-69. On page 168, Maynard specifically cites the military as being "an important institution in fostering same-gender sexual networks."

The Mounted Police did not have an official policy against homosexual members but the unofficial policy up until recently was to dismiss them. In the Cold War era the Mounties led the witch hunt against homosexuals in the civil service. See Robinson and Kimmel, "The Queer Career of Homosexual Security Vetting in Cold War Canada," 334. The *Rules and Regulations* did allow for the arrest of rank-and-file members who engaged in "grossly immoral conduct."

⁶³Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies* (New York: Quality Paperback Book Club, 1995 [1981]), 4-5. This stereotype, which would have been particularly opposite to the Mountie identity, was one of many examples of the gay identity at the time. For more information on early twentieth-century gay culture and life see George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

presents. Jeff, a lusty hetero, would often as not toss the presents back to him with a curt "stick it!"⁶⁴

Fossum also noted that in the force's Lethbridge barracks all the washroom cubicle doors had been removed specifically to inhibit acts of "sexual perversion."⁶⁵

And it seems likely that Mounties frequented houses of "ill-fame." R.C. Macleod devoted a chapter in *The NWMP and Law Enforcement* to the subject of prostitution, arguing that the Mounties tolerated it because they were attuned to attitudes in the communities they policed.⁶⁶ Nowhere does he suggest another likely reason for Mountie tolerance: that prostitution was a service regularly used by policemen.

The militaristic nature of the force stretched far beyond the creation of an all-male environment and its emphasis on discipline and self control. As Commissioner Perry noted in his 1918 memos on the future of his organization, militarism was a traditional characteristic of the force.⁶⁷ Of course, the model for the Mounted Police had been the English-designed Royal Irish Constabulary, a para-military force which operated out of barracks. It was no coincidence that three of the four commissioners who served between 1914 and 1939 graduated from the Royal Military College (RMC); the lone exception during this period was Cortlandt Starnes who had served in the military before enlisting with the NWMP. In fact,

⁶⁴Jack Fossum, *Mancatcher: An Immigrant's Story of Logging Policing and Pioneering in the Canadian West* (Comox, B.C.: Lindsay Press, 1990), 59-60.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 98.

⁶⁶R.C. Macleod, *The North-West Mounted Police and Law Enforcement, 1873-1905* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 127-8.

⁶⁷NAC, RG 18, vol. 572, file 52-19, Perry to McLean, 30 October 1918.

the education ranking on evaluation forms offered two choices: university or RMC.⁶⁸ Personnel could be appointed directly to the officer corps of the Mounted Police simply by graduating from the RMC, as future commissioner Stuart Taylor Wood would do, or by being an officer in the Canadian militia. There was no requirement for an officer to have risen through the non-commissioned ranks of the Mounted Police.⁶⁹

The connections between the militia and the Mounted Police went even further. The Governor General had the "power to prescribe the rank and seniority in the militia which Officers of the force shall hold, for the purpose of seniority and command, when they are serving with the Militia."⁷⁰ The *Rules and Regulations of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police* even listed the honorary ranks in the militia held by officers of the force.⁷¹

Being a military man was seen as conducive to working as a policeman. Certainly A.A. McLean, the comptroller of the RNWMP, believed in this linkage when he sent a memo about recruiting to his superiors in the federal government. McLean's recommendation, written while the post-war disorder was underway and at a time when the RNWMP were having trouble finding new recruits, was that all former Mounties returning from the war be re-enlisted. If that recruiting approach failed then he advocated the signing

⁶⁸RCMP, *Personnel Records of William Mortimer, Annual Confidential Report-Non-Commissioned Officers, 1931.*

⁶⁹*Rules and Regulations for the ... the Royal Canadian Mounted Police force, 1928,* 14.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 19.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 119. The ranking came from the *King's Regulations and Orders for the Canadian Militia, 1917.*

up of any members of the Canadian Cavalry in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) "who might be desirous of joining."⁷²

Military service also had symbolic importance in terms of male gender identity.

Historian Graham Dawson has noted that

military virtues such as aggression, strength, courage and endurance have repeatedly been defined as the natural and inherent qualities of manhood, whose apogee is attainable only in battle. Celebrated as a hero in adventure stories telling of the dangerous and daring exploits, the soldier has become a quintessential figure of masculinity.⁷³

The recruitment campaign conducted in Ontario during the First World War directly equated being a real man with serving in the military. On the other hand, posters depicted those who avoided service as emasculated men.⁷⁴

Some military experience does turn up in the backgrounds of those who served in the force in this period. Still, Mounties came from a wide variety of experiences and class backgrounds, something that differentiated the Mounted Police from urban police forces that tended to be more heavily drawn from the working class (see Table 2-4).⁷⁵ A definitive statement cannot be made about the class background of those who joined. Still, the nature of

⁷²NAC, RG 18, vol. 1003, file "Personnel," Memo from A.A. McLean, 10 December 1918.

⁷³Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 1.

⁷⁴Paul Maroney, "'The Great Adventure': The Context and Ideology of Recruiting in Ontario, 1914-17," *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 77, no. 1 (1996), 92-3.

⁷⁵See Marquis, "Working Men in Uniforms"; Clive Emsley, *The English Police: A Political and Social History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 178-82.

TABLE 2-4⁷⁶

PREVIOUS OCCUPATIONS OF SELECTED ALBERTA AND
SASKATCHEWAN MOUNTIES

<u>MOUNTIE</u>	<u>PREVIOUS OCCUPATION</u>	<u>HIGHEST RCMP POSITION</u>
ALFRED BALL	TEAMSTER	SERGEANT
ALFRED ALLEN	BRITISH MILITARY	STAFF SGT.
T.C. DAVIES	MESSENGER	SGT. MAJOR
FRANZ DROESKE	DOMINION POLICE	CORPORAL
GERALD ENGEL	JUNIOR CLERK	ASST. COMMISSIONER
PHILLIP HOBBS	CLERK	INSPECTOR
G.L. JENNINGS	MILITARY	DEP. COMMISSIONER
H.P. KEELER	LONDON METROPOLITAN POLICE	STAFF SGT.
RADIVOY KOYICH	YUGOSLAVIAN POLICE	SPECIAL CONSTABLE
A. LAWRENCE	TEAMSTER	CONSTABLE
JOHANN LEOPOLD	FARMER	SUPERINTENDENT
W.A. MacBRAYNE	SOLDIER	STAFF SGT.
STIRLING McNEIL	AUTO WORKER	SUPERINTENDENT
MICHAEL MORIARITY	GLASGOW POLICE/LONDON METROPOLITAN POLICE	SGT. MAJOR
WALTER MORTIMER	ACCOUNTANT	SUPERINTENDENT
ARTHUR MOSS	COAL MINER/SAWMILL WORKER	SERGEANT
JAS. RITCHIE	BOOK KEEPER	SUPERINTENDENT
J.O. SCOTT	EDMONTON FIRE DEPT.	SUPERINTENDENT
I.C. SHANK	STUDENT	SUPERINTENDENT
J.G. SHAW	MIDDLESBOROUGH CONSTABULARY	CONSTABLE
JOHN SKELTON	SOLDIER	STAFF SGT.
R. SMYLY	BANK CLERK	SERGEANT
R.R. TAIT	FARMER	SUPERINTENDENT
TED TURNER	JEWELLER	SUPERINTENDENT
S.L. WARRIOR	BRICKLAYER/WAREHOUSEMAN	STAFF SERGEANT
STAN WIGHT	SEASONAL CPR WORKER	STAFF SGT.
G.S. WORSLEY	MILITARY	ASST. COMMISSIONER

⁷⁶Sources: Interviews, *R.C.M.P. Quarterly*, Obituaries, and RCMP Personnel Records.

the male values promoted in the force were middle-class ones even if all of its members were not.

The linkage between maleness and the military led the Mounted Police to indoctrinate their recruits with militaristic values under harsh conditions. Former Commissioner William Kelly described the goal of recruit training, or "boot camp," as an opportunity to instill discipline in young Mounties. As the name suggests, "boot camp" was not the most pleasant experience in many Mounted Policemen's careers. Harry Morren, who joined the force in 1911 and would serve for most of the Great War period, noted that the training depot of the Police in Regina, constructed in 1882, offered little in the way of comfort: "Heating was a problem, mud was a problem, sleeping was a problem and ventilation was thirty years in the future."⁷⁷

The first weeks of a Mountie's career involved physical exercise, marching, riding, and rifle and revolver practice. Scientific criminal investigation and the practices associated with it only arrived in a meaningful way during Commissioner J.H. MacBrien's tenure in the 1930s.⁷⁸ The *Rules and Regulations of the Mounted Police* characterized training as a "process which will place the recruit in a good position to become familiar with all the duties of a member of the force, give him the broad outlines of the knowledge required to carry out such duties, and to instill discipline."⁷⁹ The emphasis was on the physical, not on the

⁷⁷Frank W. Anderson, *Sergeant Harry Morren: Royal North West Mounted Police* (Calgary: Frontier Pub. Ltd., 1969), 9.

⁷⁸Larry Hannant, *The Infernal Machine: Investigating the Loyalty of Canada's Citizens* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 41.

⁷⁹*Rules and Regulations for the ... the Royal Canadian Mounted Police*, 105.

intellectual. Even in the 1990s criticism has been levelled that the force continues to place too much importance on physical skills and discipline.⁸⁰ Whatever the case, the final product was, according to future commissioner Charles Rivett-Carnac, was a policeman who could "be depended upon to obey orders intelligently and without comment, under all conditions."⁸¹

Ultimately the masculine and manly values promoted in Mounties would be reflected in their work. Physical size and strength came into play in policing strikes and riots between 1914 and 1939. Not surprisingly, the cultivation of masculine values, such as physicality, often led to the use of force--sometimes violence--in policing situations. In 1919 in Winnipeg, the Mounted Police rode over and shot protesters who had become disorderly.⁸² At Estevan, Saskatchewan in 1931 the RCMP lost control of a volatile situation and turned to violence; three miners died as a result.⁸³ Finally, the Regina Riot on Dominion Day 1935 is perhaps the best example of Mounted Police choices leading to violence.

⁸⁰James McKenzie and Lorne McClinton, *Troop 17: The Making of Mounties* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprise Ltd., 1992), 75-85.

⁸¹C.E. Rivett-Carnac, "The Training Depot," *R.C.M.P. Quarterly*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1933), 24.

⁸²David J. Bercuson, "The Winnipeg General Strike," in Irving Abella (ed.), *On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada, 1919-1949* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1974), 26-7.

⁸³S.D. Hanson, "Estevan 1931," in *On Strike*, 54; Steve Hewitt, "September 1931: A Re-Interpretation of the RCMP's Handling of the Estevan Strike and Riot," *Labour Le Travail*, vol. 37 (1997).

Often the implied threat of violence, represented by physical size, was enough to ensure social conformity.⁸⁴ In the 1930s the town of Melfort, Saskatchewan acquired the reputation of being rough and lawless. The Mounted Police responded by sending into the town four of their physically biggest constables from Regina, including I.C. Shank.⁸⁵ Occasionally Mounties took matters (literally) into their own hands. In 1936 Stirling McNeil handled a spousal abuser by challenging him to a boxing match, that most masculine of games, and then pummeling him.⁸⁶

The ultimate symbolism of the RCMP as a male institution, however, was an even more important deterrent to attacks on the status quo. Such assaults meant being at odds with an institution whose male members symbolized the best of Anglo-Canadian society and, because of the power of this ethnic group, the best of Canada. Thus a Mounted Policeman and everything he represented became synonymous with law and authority. In a hierarchical and patriarchal Canada, the white, the middle-class male version of the Mountie was king.

The values of the RCMP influenced what they defined as the norm in Canadian society. The Mounted Police between 1914 and 1939 was very much a British institution, reflecting all of the popular middle-class, Anglo-Saxon male definitions of manliness and masculinity, including a belief in racial superiority. Gail Bederman describes the goal of this version of male construction during this era as an effort to demonstrate that "civilized white

⁸⁴Bederman argues that at the "turn-of-the-century manhood constructed bodily strength and social authority as identical." Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 8.

⁸⁵Interview with Wight, 29 March 1996.

⁸⁶*The Way It Was: Fifty Years of RCMP Memories* (Victoria: Victoria Division RCMP Association, 1990), 158.

men were the most manly ever evolved—firm of character, self-controlled; protectors of women and children."⁸⁷ As an institution the RCMP believed in order, discipline, and hierarchy, and strove for a world which reflected these values. Various ethnic groups, Communists, socialists, students, university faculty, labour activists, union leaders, strikers and anyone else not content with their place in the brick wall of society found themselves under suspicion, either directly from uniformed Mounties, or more subtly through hordes of RCMP informants, secret agents, and undercover Mounties. Be a brick or beware!

⁸⁷Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 25. RCMP intelligence reports in the 1920s and 1930s frequently mentioned the number of women and children in attendance at meetings and rallies.

CHAPTER THREE
DEALING WITH UNDESIRABLES

By the end of the First World War, many Canadians, including members of the Mounted Police, believed that the nation was desperately in need of an exorcism. Who were the demons that required expulsion? Many of them resembled the "men in sheepskin coats," previously held up as ideal citizens for Canada. Immigrants from central and eastern Europe had become the "other," representing the opposite of everything the Mounted Police and Anglo-Canadian society stood for.¹ Historian Catherine Hall put it well when she wrote that "Englishness is defined through the creation of an imagined community ... For the imagined community is built on a series of assumptions about 'others' which define the nature of Englishness itself."² In this case, the assumptions were that the very presence of certain ethnic groups undermined the English character of the country and, in doing so, dashed the dreams of greatness for the twentieth century.

¹"Other," a concept developed by anthropologists, is the idea that "the worldview of many peoples consists essentially of two pairs of binary oppositions: human/nonhuman and we/they. The two are often correlated ... so that 'we' equals 'human' and 'they' equals 'not human.'" Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Random House, 1995), xviii. Pagels' comments are derived from Robert Redfield, "Primitive World View," in Robert Redfield (ed.), *The Primitive World and Its Transformations* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1953), 92 and Jonathan Z. Smith, "What a Difference a Difference Makes," in Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs (eds.), *To See Ourselves As Others See Us: Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity* (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1985), 3-48.

²Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle-Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 25.

The Mounted Police shared the apprehension about the newcomers. Members of the force had no innate immunity from the ethnic bigotry of much of Canadian society—they were ordinary men who bore the values of the society that bore them. "Without fear, favour, or affection" is part of the RCMP's founding creed. This notion, however, was largely a myth between 1914 and 1939. The Mounted Police in their operations in Alberta and Saskatchewan in this period did favour certain ethnic groups over their neighbours; others they simply feared. The usual suspects included Ukrainians, Doukhobors, Chinese, Finns, and, during the First World War, Germans. In this era, certain crimes became "ethnic crimes," while radicalism became the playground of those who had names with large numbers of consonants. In the minds of the scarlet-clad men, Germans became synonymous with deceit, Chinese with the immorality of the narcotics trade, and Ukrainians with the operation of illegal stills, political radicalism, and labour disturbances.

In the early 1920s, the Mounted Police sought ways to strengthen themselves from their previously precarious position at the end of the war. What better way to demonstrate their utility than to perform tasks, connected to immigrant and ethnic groups, that were deemed terribly important by the decision makers of Canada: spying on ethnic radicals and enemy aliens, busting Chinese dope peddlers, investigating the backgrounds of those seeking citizenship, gathering evidence on subversive activities, and finally rounding up those to be deported. While the force was performing assigned tasks in an era when its future was very much up in the air, it was not simply a case of the police following or leading public opinion. Instead the force reflected the public discourses of the period. Members of the Mounted Police, especially the officer corps, held the same beliefs about ethnic minorities as

did others in Anglo-Canadian society; they, after all, were drawn from those ranks. And unlike so many others for whom ethnic minorities were an abstract, albeit a strongly disliked threat, Mounties had a direct opportunity to do something about how they felt.

Many of the groups targetted by the RCMP and the Canadian state in the early twentieth century had, in a sense, one man to thank for being in Canada in the first place. Federal cabinet minister, Clifford Sifton, determined the groups that made up the "other" that existed in western Canada in the early twentieth century. Sifton's immigration plan had opened the door to tens of thousands of previously non-preferred peasants--eastern and central Europeans. In a few decades Anglo-Canadians in the west found their numbers reduced from an overwhelming majority of the population to barely over fifty percent (see Table 3-1).³ These immigrants chiefly settled on farms in the west, often surrounded by citizens from similar backgrounds.⁴ Much to Sifton's chagrin, business had its own conception of the ideal immigrant. Owners desired a cheap labour supply that would aid in, among other things, the building of railways, the cutting down of trees, and the extracting of minerals from the soil. Ironically, the arrival of eastern and central European navvies increased under Sifton's replacement, Frank Oliver, a man who specifically stated his

³Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 272-3.

⁴Block settlements would come under attack because they were perceived as impediments to assimilation. J.C. Lehr, "Government and Coercion in the Settlement of Ukrainian Immigrants in Western Canada," *Prairie Forum*, vol. 8, no. 2, (1983), 179-194.

TABLE 3-1⁵
 POPULATION IN SASKATCHEWAN AND ALBERTA BY ETHNIC AND RACIAL ORIGIN, 1931

ETHNIC CATEGORY	SASKATCHEWAN		ALBERTA	
	GROUP TOTAL	%	GROUP TOTAL	%
ENGLISH	205,519	22	188,456	26
SCOTTISH	121,485	13	110,720	17
IRISH	104,096	11	79,978	11
OTHER BRITISH	6,736	.7	10,084	1
FRENCH	50,700	6	38,377	5
AUSTRIAN	17,061	2	6,737	.9
BELGIAN	4,458	.5	2,726	.4
CZECH AND SLOVAK	5,056	.5	6,404	.9
DUTCH	24,695	3	13,665	2
FINNISH	2,313	.3	3,318	.5
GERMANS	129,232	14	74,450	10
"HEBREW"	5,116	.5	3,722	.5
HUNGARIAN	13,363	1	5,502	.8
ITALIAN	1,040	.1	4,766	.7
POLISH	25,961	3	21,157	3
ROMANIAN	9,530	1	4,712	.6
RUSSIAN	35,421	4	16,381	2
SCANDINAVIAN	72,684	8	59,461	8
UKRAINIAN	63,400	7	55,872	8
OTHER EUROPEANS	3,272	.4	3,398	.5
CHINESE AND JAPANESE	3,615	.4	4,527	.6
OTHER ASIANS	804	.08	402	.05
INDIAN AND ESKIMO	15,268	2	15,252	2
UNSPECIFIED AND OTHERS	960	.08	1,538	.2
TOTAL	921,785	100	731,605	100

⁵Source: 1931 Census, vol. 2, table 33.

opposition to the arrival of non-British immigrants. Canada was in the process of importing an industrial proletariat.⁶

The changes to Canada's ethnic balance triggered a reaction. Widespread nativism, however, did not appear overnight. Like sharks beneath a calm sea, such attitudes had always lurked beneath the surface of the Canadian mythology of tolerance; occasionally they rose to snap. Historian Howard Palmer defined nativism as a merging of nationalism and ethnic and racial prejudice to form an "opposition to an internal minority on the grounds that it posed a threat to Canadian national life."⁷ He identified three strains of nativism as pertinent to western Canada: Anglo-Saxon, anti-Catholic, and anti-radical.⁸ "Underlying all the different variations of nativism," wrote Palmer, "was a distrust of difference, a sense that minority groups which attempted to maintain separate identities diminished the national sense of identity and posed a challenge to prevailing ideals and assumptions."⁹ Anti-immigrant feeling, which was just as prevalent in the United States, was fuelled by stereotypes.¹⁰ Immigrants were viewed as criminals; they were immoral; they

⁶Donald Avery, *'Dangerous Foreigners': European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979), 9.

⁷Howard Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1982), 7.

⁸*Ibid.*, 9. In his groundbreaking 1955 study of nativism in the United States, John Higham also identified three similar categories of nativism. See John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1955).

⁹*Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁰For a contemporary exploration of American nativism see Alan M. Kraut, *The Huddled Masses: The Immigrant in American Society, 1880-1921* (Arlington Heights, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1982), 148-178. For a description of the widespread

were dirty; they were mentally inferior; they reeked of garlic; they lacked the proper sexual restraint that characterized the superior Anglo-Canadian society.¹¹ Some even suggested that they were heathens; one Methodist minister remarked that "[t]o Canadianize them, they have to be Christianized."¹²

Incidents of nativism, although certainly not unheard of before the war, increased as the conflagration dragged on longer than anyone could, did, or dare predict. Canada had lost nearly one percent of its population in the muck and mire of the trenches of France, and many, including returning survivors, sought vengeance. Ethnic minorities who were exempted from military service because of religious beliefs or because they had not been naturalized received special scorn; if these same groups also happened to be from one of Canada's enemies, then so much the worse for them. Many of these same ethnic groups found their farms prospering because of war conditions; others took advantage of the shortage of labour to secure higher wages than they might otherwise have earned. None of this success was lost on Anglo-Canadian society. "These foreigners have us where the hair is short as regards wages," complained activist Irene Parlby in a letter. "[Meanwhile] their people over there are mangling and killing off our men."¹³

nativism in American society by the end of the First World War and its implications for the career of a young J. Edgar Hoover see Richard Gid Powers, *Secrecy and Power: The Life of J. Edgar Hoover* (London: Hutchinson Ltd., 1987), 33-55.

¹¹Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993 [1991]), 104-14.

¹²As quoted in Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada, 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991 [1974]), 67.

¹³As quoted in John Herd Thompson, *The Harvests of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), 86.

Certain ethnic minorities, specifically eastern and central Europeans, also found themselves labelled as radicals. The upsurge of radicalism at the end of the war, symbolized externally by the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and internally by the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, was officially linked to ethnicity-- "foreigners" equalled radicals.¹⁴

Many enemy aliens suffered directly during the war because of the hostility. Close to 8,000 people, including 5,000 Ukrainians, found themselves in internment camps.¹⁵ In 1917, enemy alien males naturalized after 1902 were disenfranchised at the federal level. The federal government banned foreign-language newspapers in the same year. Finally, the government of Saskatchewan introduced unilingual education at the end of the war.¹⁶

Even the general response from those considered more sympathetic to the cause of immigrants was indirectly threatening. Labour activist J.S. Woodsworth¹⁷ and some members of the Liberal party embraced a policy of assimilation or, in the parlance of the time, "Canadianizing" newcomers. As historian Paul Rutherford has noted, the so-called "'new nationality' was in fact an Anglo-Canadian, if not an Anglo-Protestant, creature with a

¹⁴Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners*, 85.

¹⁵S.R. Hewitt, "Malczewski's List: A Case Study of Royal North-West Mounted Police-Immigrant Relations," *Saskatchewan History*, vol. 46, no. 1 (1994), 35.

¹⁶Thompson, *Harvests of War*, 87.

¹⁷J.S. Woodsworth, *Strangers Within Our Gates or Coming Canadians* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972 [1909]), 46-160. Woodsworth lists a hierarchy of desirable immigrants with Anglo-Saxons at the top and Blacks and Asians at the bottom.

French-Canadian tail."¹⁸ And as Mariana Valverde has argued, assimilation was not about making newcomers equal with the Anglo-Canadian majority, it was really about encouraging social conformity and an acceptance of the status quo.¹⁹

Some made no pretense about their dislike for those who differed from the Anglo-Canadian norm. From this hostile group came calls for repressive measures against the minority groups.²⁰ Bishop George Exton Lloyd, the bespectacled bigot of Saskatchewan, felt confident enough in the mid-1920s to describe publicly his fellow citizens of non-Anglo-Celtic background as "dirty, ignorant, garlic-smelling, non-preferred continentals."²¹ For those inspired by the rabid rhetoric of Lloyd, there were only two solutions to the problem. On the one hand, Lloyd called on Ottawa to restrict immigration so as not to allow undesirables into the country in the first place; for those who had already infested the country, deportation became the political mallet of choice.²²

¹⁸Paul Rutherford, "The New Nationality, 1864-1897: A Study of the National Aims and Ideas in English Canada in the Late Nineteenth Century," (PhD Thesis, University of Toronto, 1973), 1.

¹⁹Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water*, 29.

²⁰See Martin Robin, *Shades of Right: Nativist and Fascist Politics in Canada, 1920-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 1-44.

²¹Quoted in Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 405; for a specific study of Lloyd's prominent role in the anti-immigrant movement, see Christopher J. Kitzan, "The Fighting Bishop: George Exton Lloyd and the Immigration Debate," (M.A. thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1996), 110-57.

²²For a study of official deportation use in the early twentieth century, see Barbara Roberts, *Whence they Came: Deportation from Canada, 1900-1935* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988).

Not surprisingly, many Mounted Policemen also exhibited the nativist sentiments held by much of Anglo-Canadian society. Commissioner Perry set the tone in 1919 when he supported the vigilante actions of returning soldiers against enemy aliens in western Canada, while offering governments advice on how to handle the ethnic problem:

During the war ... all foreigners received the most considerate treatment as long as they obeyed the laws of the country and pursued their ordinary avocations. The returned soldiers found them filling their jobs and enjoying prosperity. In Winnipeg, Calgary, Medicine Hat and other points, the resentment of the soldiers found expression in small disturbances provoked by the indiscreet acts and words of these people, who, as a body, have shown little appreciation of the just and fair treatment meted out to them by the people of this country. They have shown themselves ready to follow and support the extremists who play upon their ignorance and appeal to their national prejudices and sympathy for the central powers. Bolshevism finds a fertile field among them and is assiduously cultivated by the ardent agitator.

The assimilation of our large alien population is of the greatest importance and it demands wise and sympathetic action and constant attention.²³

In 1932, Commissioner J.H. MacBrien employed his predecessor's scapegoating tactic when he commented on the problem of radicals in Canada to an audience in Toronto: "[i]t is notable that 99% of these fellows are foreigners." Like Perry, he also offered a solution to his defined problem: "many of them have not been here long ... If we were rid of them there would be no unemployment or unrest in Canada."²⁴ Even naturalized non-Anglo-Celts were not free of suspicion since citizenship did not automatically cure inherent defects

²³"Report of the Royal North West Mounted Police for the Year Ended September 30, 1919," *Sessional Papers*, 14.

²⁴Lorne and Caroline Brown, *An Unauthorized History of the RCMP* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1978), 63.

of breeding. Assistant-Commissioner S.T. Wood warned in a 1935 letter to the Attorney General of Saskatchewan that certain immigrants, both of the naturalized and unnaturalized versions, were the enemies of the police and the state:

[w]holesale murder of the police forces of the country is part and parcel of the program of the Communists in the overthrow by force of the Constitution. This was done in Russia in 1917, and it should be borne in mind that the Communist Party of Canada derives the bulk of its support from the foreign elements in this country, irrespective of whether they are naturalized citizens or not.²⁵

Part of Wood's sentiment may have been symptomatic of real fear. A 1932 RCMP report noted that central Europeans in attendance at a radical gathering were especially enthusiastic when reference was made by the speaker to "digging graves for Police."²⁶

Similar and cruder attitudes can easily be found throughout the Mounted Police in this era. A scarlet uniform did not shield policemen from the prevailing prejudices of the era. In describing a rural Saskatchewan rally for the leader of the Communist Party of Canada, Tim Buck, Constable H.A. Buntine, as was common for many Mounties reporting on such events throughout this era, offered a comment on the ethnic makeup of the audience. He noted that the "proportion of foreigners present was 95 percent. Anglo Saxons [made up

²⁵National Archives of Canada (NAC), RG 146, RCMP Records Related to Arthur Evans, vol. 6, file 1025-9-91093, pt. 1, Wood to Attorney General of Saskatchewan, 15 September 1935. Interestingly enough, Commissioner Starnes called for tolerance in the 1920s by explicitly pointing out that the poor relations between immigrants and police often reflected the former's experience with police repression in the home country. Greg Marquis, *Policing Canada's Century: A History of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 152.

²⁶Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), RCMP Records Related to Annie Buller, file 117-92-53, A.E. Acland to the Commissioner, 10 February 1932.

the remaining] 5 percent. The foreigners in attendance were all farmers ... of a particularly ignorant type."²⁷ In 1919 Sgt. Major William George Edgenton reported on allegations concerning the poor behaviour of some of his colleagues. He added that there had been complaints of Mounties in Regina "associating with undesirable characters such as coons, etc."²⁸ Detective Cecil Hildyard, a native of Yorkshire, England and a graduate of Eton and Oxford,²⁹ noted in 1922 that a meeting in Saskatoon "was attended by approximately fifty people, mostly of a decent British type, only about ten foreigners."³⁰ And, reflecting the anti-semitism of the interwar period, a Mountie secret agent, himself of eastern European background, noted during the Estevan miners' strike of September 1931 that "all Jews in Estevan and Bienfait are 100% behind the Communist movement."³¹

²⁷NAC, RG 146, RCMP Records Related to Tim Buck, vol. 21, file 92-A-00099, pt. 2, Report of Const. Buntine, 18 July 1936. In commenting on this report to Commissioner MacBrien three days later, Assistant Commissioner S.T. Wood emphasized two points: the small attendance in Biggar, and "the overwhelming majority of foreigners present." *Ibid.*, Wood to MacBrien, 21 July 1936.

²⁸NAC, RG 18, Records of the RCMP, vol. 1950, file no. 13/9, Report of Sgt. Major Edgenton, 6 June 1919.

²⁹RCMP, Personnel Record of Cecil Thoroton Hildyard.

³⁰NAC, RG 146, RCMP Records Related to the Saskatoon Relief Camp Riot, vol. 27, file 92-A-00123, pt. 4, Report of Detective C. Hildyard, 21 December 1922.

³¹NAC, RG 146, RCMP Records Related to the Estevan Strike and Riot, vol. 6, file 1025-9-91093, pt. 3, Secret Report, 4 October 1931. The author of the report was almost certainly J.L. Eberhardt. This statement may or may not have been true, although one must question how Eberhardt was able to determine such a fact. Regardless of its accuracy, such a statement does not appear to have been particularly relevant to what was occurring at Estevan.

Of course, many Anglo-Canadians were involved in radical activity. How did Mounties square that reality with their stereotype of all radicals as "foreigners." For at least one Mountie, those of Anglo-Celtic background who chose to involve themselves in radical activity were racial traitors. Superintendent P.W. Pennefather of "K" Division in southern Alberta described such individuals as "renegade whites," "white agitators," and "certain white men, or so-called white men [who] have the upper hand over the foreign elements."³²

The racial and ethnic attitudes of Mounted Policemen were not only directed outward, but they also applied to potential or actual members of the force. In 1919 Assistant Commissioner W.H. Routledge underlined the words "Russian Jew" and wrote "NO" in the margin of a letter that offered the services of an individual of that ethnic background.³³ In another case, Assistant Commissioner J.W. Spalding advised Regina, headquarters of "F" Division, on its choice to replace Special Constable J.L. Eberhardt, a Mountie of Czech background: "Mr. M. Black appears to have qualifications by way of education and experience much superior to those of Eberhardt—further, as he is of Anglo-Saxon origin—his value as an interpreter would far exceed that of Eberhardt."³⁴

³²NAC, RG 18, vol. 1933, file G-57-9-1, Confidential Monthly Report for April 1919- "K" Division, Lethbridge, 8 May 1919; *Ibid.*, Confidential Monthly Report for August 1919; *Ibid.*, Confidential Monthly Report for March 1919.

³³*Ibid.*, vol. 2169, file 16/18, Letter to Assistant Commissioner W. Routledge, 3 April 1919.

³⁴RCMP, Personnel Records of Special Constable J.L. Eberhardt, Assistant Commissioner J.W. Spalding to Officer Commanding "F" Division, 28 December 1932. Eberhardt was released from service two months later.

Those Mounties of non-British backgrounds who belonged to the police were almost exclusively secret agents or special constables; they experienced even less job security and employment rights than regular Mounties. That non-Anglo Saxon members of the force were almost solely in these positions speaks to a certain practicality in that they were being asked to spy on those similar to themselves.

The case of Jacob M. Tatko, who spoke nine languages, "mostly of the slavic countries,"³⁵ exemplifies the transient nature of someone in his position. In 1916, he joined the Mounted Police in Alberta as an interpreter and Secret Agent 125. He served in Alberta until 1928 when the force discharged him. He later rejoined as a special constable, lasting until 1937 when the commissioner dismissed him because of incompetence. Due to the nature of his service, specifically his secret agent work, Tatko did not qualify for a pension. He went so far as to hire a lawyer in a futile effort to obtain a pension.³⁶

Occasionally the exploits of non-Anglo Canadian Mounties received popular praise. Bohemian-born John (Johann) Leopold, through his activities as an undercover Mountie active in the Regina branch of the Communist Party of Canada, became the most famous Mountie of the inter-war period. He was not even a Canadian citizen when he joined the Mounted Police in 1918, something prohibited under its regulations.³⁷ His non-English

³⁵RCMP, Personnel Records of Jacob M. Tatko. Obituary, 1942.

³⁶*Ibid.* Tatko had earlier allowed a prisoner to escape and apparently began to make a habit of entering Vegreville-area bars and openly discussing his police work, including his previous activities as a secret agent.

³⁷*Rules and Regulations for the Government and Guidance of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 1928* (Ottawa: F. A. Acland, 1928), 14.

language skills, however, were badly needed at the time, so the Mounted Police ignored Leopold's national status.³⁸ Even with his celebrated exploits, Leopold still found himself regularly challenged by the guards at police headquarters in Ottawa because he was, in the words of the official historians of the RCMP Security Service, "foreign looking."³⁹

Still, even a regular member of the force could find himself under surveillance because of his ethnicity. Shortly after World War Two began, members of the RCMP worried about the loyalty of Corporal Franz Droeske, a German-Canadian Mountie. At first the RCMP sought to station him in less sensitive positions so as to avoid public criticism. (He was assigned to traffic duty.)⁴⁰ Even that, however, was not enough to allay suspicions amongst his colleagues or his commander who had Droeske and another Mountie of German background put under surveillance.⁴¹

Like other Anglo-Canadians prior to 1914, many Mounties needed no encouragement to dislike and mistrust "foreigners." Not surprisingly, once hostilities began, the target of their venom was "enemy aliens," specifically Germans, who had previously been considered model citizens,⁴² and Austrians, the latter category including Ukrainians, because the section

³⁸"Famed Former RCMP Officer Dies Suddenly," *R.C.M.P. Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 1 (1958), 37; RCMP, Personnel Records of John Leopold.

³⁹Carl Betke and S.W. Horrall, *Canada's Security Service: An Historical Outline, 1864-1966, Volume 1*, (Ottawa: RCMP Historical section, 1978), 449.

⁴⁰RCMP Records, Personnel Records of Franz Droeske, F.A. Blake, Superintendent Adjutant, to O.C. "A" Div., 15 September 1939.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, T.B. Caulkin, O.C. "A" Div., to Commissioner S.T. Wood, 4 June 1940.

⁴²Thompson, *Harvests of War*, 74-6. Racial theorists had long discussed the links between those of British and German background. These views were downplayed once the war began and news of German atrocities in Belgium spread. Because of the widespread

of the Ukraine they hailed from was also part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. These groups came from nations that Canada now warred against; many were also officially military reservists for their old countries. The Borden government, in response to public fears about the loyalty of enemy aliens, enacted an October 1914 order-in-council which required certain classes of aliens to register at government offices, report monthly, carry government-issued identification, and acquire special papers for travelling.⁴³ During the early part of the war, the Mounted Policemen supervised registration centres on the prairies providing them with regular contact with ethnic minorities. In Saskatchewan and Alberta, the police investigated 173,568 citizens of German and Austrian backgrounds during the war.⁴⁴ In Manitoba alone, between April and September 1919, 75,000 enemy aliens made monthly reports to the RNWMP.⁴⁵ Some aliens required additional investigation. Police reports often included references to enemy aliens having been given "the thirty two questions," a list of questions asked of those being checked.⁴⁶

anti-German hostility, many Germans denied their ethnic origins and "became" Scandinavians overnight.

⁴³Peter Melnycky, "The Internment of Ukrainians in Canada," in Frances Swyripa and John Herd Thompson (eds.), *Loyalties in Conflict: Ukrainians in Canada During the Great War* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1983), 2-3.

⁴⁴William and Nora Kelly, *The Royal Canadian Mounted Police: A Century of History* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1973), 146.

⁴⁵"Report of the Royal North-West Mounted Police for the Year Ended September 30, 1919," 13.

⁴⁶NAC, RG 18 Series A1, vol. 519, file 10, pt. 1, 11 April 1917. Here are the thirty-two questions put to many of the aliens being investigated:

1. What is your full & proper name?
2. What is your age?

After referring to the large number of enemy aliens the RNWMP had to worry about in his 1914 annual report,⁴⁷ Commissioner Perry offered a more reassuring note in 1915

3. What is your nationality?
4. What is your religion?
5. Where were you born?
6. Are you married or single?
7. How many family members do you have?
8. What is your exact location in Canada?
9. Where is your family?
10. What is the exact date upon which you entered Canada?
11. At what point did you enter Canada?
12. What is the name of the steamship which brought you to Canada?
13. What is the name of the railroad by which you entered Canada?
14. Are you a reservist?
15. If so what unit?
16. Are you subject to any military duties in the country from which you emigrated?
17. At what place were you ordered to report for service?
18. Have you been in communication with any official, military or otherwise, of the country from which you emigrated?
19. Have you been in communication by letter or otherwise with any agent, in that country from which you emigrated?
20. Have you been in communication in any manner with friends in that country from which you emigrated?
21. Have you been in communication in any manner with the papers in the country, from which you emigrated?
22. If you have been in communication with papers or friends in that country what was the nature of the information?
23. Have you been in receipt of any money, from any of the officers of the country, from which you emigrated?
24. Have you a patent for your homestead?
25. What real-estate have you in this country purchased or otherwise?
26. Are you naturalized British subject?
27. Have you been previously paroled?
28. Have you been previously interned?
29. Where is your family residing?
30. Will your family have to be provided for during your interment?
31. What is the nature of the relief required?
32. What is the name and age of each of your children?

⁴⁷"Report of the RNWMP for the Year Ended September 30, 1914," *Sessional Papers*, 1914, 8.

when he commented that the decline in the strength of the Mounted Police and a smaller role in dealing with enemy aliens was due to a lack of problems from "enemy nationalities."⁴⁸ Rumours of enemy alien activity, including a report that German agents disguised as Swiss farmers intended to spread "hoof and mouth" disease among western Canada's farm animals, proved unfounded.⁴⁹ His junior officers in Alberta and Saskatchewan reiterated Perry's opinion, although they often portrayed Germans and Ukrainians in a stereotypical and negative light. At the same time, they reaffirmed the need for a RNWMP presence--if deviousness was inherent in the character of Germans, backs could never be safely turned. Ukrainians, on the other hand, were considered "ignorant" farm hands and thus prone to being misled by others, especially the "cunning" Germans. Superintendent J.A. McGibbon, in charge of the Regina District, reflected this mentality: "The Germans as a body are no doubt very bitter, and only for the fact that they are very closely watched and know that the first move they make will get them into trouble, would no doubt try and do something."⁵⁰ Superintendent F.J. Horrigan, in-charge of "K" Division which covered Southern Alberta, expressed similar sentiments, even though most of the German and Austrian population in the area had been naturalized:

The sympathies of most of these people are all with the enemy and they require a great deal of watching; but in cases where they have openly expressed their sympathies, they have been firmly dealt with by us, with the

⁴⁸"Report of the RNWMP for the Year Ended September 30, 1915" *Sessional Papers*, 1915, 8.

⁴⁹NAC, RG 18 series A1, vol. 519, file 11, Perry to O.C. Calgary, 4 August 1917.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, Report of Superintendent McGibbon, Regina District, 54.

result that they have become more chary of expressing themselves in public, and we now hear but few complaints against them.⁵¹

Horrigan echoed these sentiments in an 18 May 1915 letter to Perry. In it he specifically depicted naturalization as a threat since it offered protection to outsiders and radicals:

The people say that the time has now arrived for action to be taken in regard to alien enemies, and that they should not be allowed any liberty or license whatever in regard to the cruel war now going on. As I have informed you in previous reports (and my conviction deepens the more I investigate the matter) a great many naturalized subjects are really worse than those who are not naturalized. It also appears to me, from my investigations, that those who became naturalized did so for a special purpose, and are here for that purpose. ... the only proper term for them is Galvanized Canadians.⁵²

This notion would appear again in the 1920s and 1930s.

Perry, well aware of the reality that the enemy alien population was docile, responded to these various sentiments with a recommendation of caution. He reminded his officers that they "must act carefully and not be carried away by popular frenzy or press agitation. You will have done your duty if you administer the law without fear or favour."⁵³ The lack of seditious activity on the part of aliens led to a reduction of the RNWMP role in policing them. In 1915, for example, the Mounted Police office for registering enemy aliens in Calgary was closed and the function taken over by the Calgary police, although some registration by rural Mounted Police detachments continued for the conflict's duration.⁵⁴ The

⁵¹*Ibid.*, Report of Superintendent Horrigan, Southern Alberta District, 133.

⁵²*Ibid.*, vol. 517, file 406, Horrigan to Perry, 18 May 1915.

⁵³*Ibid.*, Memo from Perry, 22 May 1915.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

force also fired nearly all of its secret agents taken on at the start of hostilities. One of those dismissed had worked as a barber in Edmonton in a shop that the Mounted Police paid the rent for and equipped.⁵⁵

With the elimination of the Mounted Police as the provincial police forces in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and the creation of a RNWMP unit for overseas service, the policing of ethnic groups grew even less significant, although Perry still felt it necessary to reassure worried governments and citizens that the force's continued presence in these two provinces would involve detectives and secret agents monitoring enemy aliens.⁵⁶ The beginnings of a harsher police-immigrant relationship, however, was already at hand by 1917, as discontent with the war continued to grow. An increase in radicalism and opposition to conscription led to renewed anti-alien sentiment. In 1917, for example, a staff sergeant at Vegreville, Alberta, threatened an alien organizing a meeting of the socialist party with arrest and imprisonment. "He left and I don't think he has stopped yet," the proud Mountie relayed. The policeman did lament, however, "that circulars like the attached would be allowed to be printed and circulated amongst ignorant foreigners as it takes very little to cause trouble amongst them."⁵⁷ This report prompted the sergeant's superior to write the commissioner to wonder if legislation could be enacted making it illegal for "anyone under any pretense whatever,

⁵⁵Bill Waiser, *Park Prisoners: The Untold Story of Western Canada's National Parks* (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1995), 6. The agents had been taken on in 1914 specifically to investigate "alleged unrest among the foreign population ..."; NAC, RG 18, vol. 469, file 456, Perry to Comptroller Fortescue, 24 August 1914.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, vol. 517, file no. 1, pt.3, Perry to Comptroller, 8 February 1917.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, vol. 537, file 393, Report of Staff Sergeant Fyffe, 27 June 1917.

during the period of the war, to make speeches which do or are likely to cause unrest among the foreign and enemy alien population? I do not think that the present War Measures Act covers it."⁵⁸

Reports of alien unhappiness with conscription flooded in. In the Hague District of Saskatchewan a Mountie found "contempt" on the part of Germans and Mennonites towards the signing of National Service Cards.⁵⁹ This report prompted his superior, Inspector A.W. Duffus, to conclude that "99% of the Alien Enemies are disloyal to the core and those of Alien enemy extraction are very little better."⁶⁰ There seems to have been little awareness among Mounted Policemen that it was not just aliens who were unhappy with conscription. Anti-conscription riots occurred in Quebec, for example, while many Anglo-Canadian prairie farmers expressed anger after the government ended the exemption for their sons.

In 1917, Perry instructed one of the spies hired back, Secret Agent 25 (W.H. Balsinger), to investigate the attitudes of alien and French-Canadian communities in Saskatchewan towards conscription. The agent, pretending to be a cattle dealer, went among various groups and reported that most, especially French Canadians, opposed conscription. Perry forwarded the report to Ottawa and recommended that it be given to Prime Minister Borden.⁶¹

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, Wroughton to Perry, 28 June 1917.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, vol. 524, file 453, Report of Hildyard, 5 January 1917.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, Duffus to Hildyard, 9 Jan 1917.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, vol. 537, file 432, Report of Secret Agent 25, 11 August 1917; *Ibid.*, Perry to Comptroller, 28 August 1917; *Ibid.*, Comptroller to Col. Hugh Clark, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, 1 September 1917. The linking of French Canadians

The following year, and the final one of the war, Perry's future successor, Cortlandt Starnes, wrote to the commissioner to recommend a renewed RNWMP policing role in western Canada. Specifically, he argued, this change would allow for greater "prestige and authority amongst the foreign element and general public ... and we would be in closer touch with every thing that went on." He also encouraged the resumption of RNWMP control of enemy alien registration and reporting since "[t]his is one of the greatest aids in following the labor situation" and providing the Mountie in charge of the Crow's Nest Pass, a centre of coal mining and labour discontent, "Magisterial powers ... to be used only in cases where Alien Enemies are concerned, or of emergency."⁶²

The growing radicalism and discontent in Canada as the armistice approached, combined with a peaking of anti-alien hostility, created a volatile situation. The tense environment worried both the Canadian government and the Mounted Police. Neither had any doubt about the link between ethnicity and political and labour radicalism. In October 1918, the president of the Privy Council, Newton Rowell, asked for Mountie feedback on a proposal to have the force resume control of the coal mining districts of Alberta and B.C. Both Perry and Superintendent P.W. Pennefather, whose district included several coal-mining areas, favoured the proposal. The Alberta Mountie stressed that the RNWMP should

to other aliens was an interesting one. French Canadians also found their educational rights under attack. Historian John Thompson noted that grouping French Canadians with other non-British groups seemed to indicate that "the French, far from 'partners' in Confederation, were simply another ethnic group speaking another foreign language. Thompson, *Harvests of War*, 74.

⁶²*Ibid.*, vol. 565, nos. 495-507, Starnes to Perry, 10 October 1919. On 27 January 1919, the government passed an order in council transferring the task of registering enemy aliens in Western Canada from the Dominion Police to the RNWMP. *Ibid.*, vol. 1003, file Personnel.

have complete legal control over the mines. To do otherwise, he argued, would "put the force in a poor light." He also noted that sixty to seventy-five percent of miners were "of alien enemy nationality, and the greater part of them are married and living with their families in close proximity to the mines."⁶³

With the conclusion of the war, Germans and espionage became a secondary concern to the police. (Eventually Germans recaptured the high standing they occupied prior to the start of hostilities.⁶⁴) They were replaced on the police agenda by Ukrainians and the threat of radicalism. Ukrainians had not escaped unscathed during the First World War: several thousand were interned because they were deemed enemies of Canada.⁶⁵ Now many of these foreigners and enemy aliens were also radicals, and the radicalism they practiced was a Slavic version: Bolshevism. In February 1919, Commissioner Perry demonstrated the new fears of alien radicalism when he reported to the comptroller on a conversation with Secret Agent 50 (F.E. Reithdorf), stationed in Edmonton. Perry commented on the Socialist Party in Edmonton, especially its ties with "the Bolsheviki element among the Aliens." He carefully added that he had not used "the word 'enemy' because many of the most pronounced are not enemy aliens, but are Russians, Swedes, Ukrainians and Finns, with a sprinkling of all other nationalities." Their goal, the RNWMP commissioner concluded, was

to secure a revolution by force. ... Close supervision will be maintained on the conditions in Edmonton. I do not think it advisable, as yet, to commence

⁶³*Ibid.*, vol. 565, RCMP 1918 Nos. 495-507, Pennefather to Perry, 9 October 1918; *Ibid.*, Perry to McLean, 15 October 1918. Nothing seems to have come of the proposal.

⁶⁴Thompson, *The Harvests of War*, 74-5.

⁶⁵Melnycky, "The Internment of Ukrainians in Canada," 1-24.

prosecutions, which might, or might not, be successful. I am attempting to obtain accurate and complete information on the whole subject in Western Canada. When this information has been secured, then it ought to be considered whether vigorous prosecutions should not take place everywhere about the same time.⁶⁶

Perry had already dispatched memoranda in early 1919 directing his subordinates to begin conducting widespread intelligence operations against anyone or anything with a radical, specifically, Bolshevist tinge. Aliens were a top target of these operations:

3. Attention is also drawn to the various foreign settlements located throughout Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and B.C. which are very susceptible to Bolshevism teachings and propaganda.

4. Officers Commanding will take steps to see that careful and constant supervision is maintained over these foreign settlements with a view to detecting the least indication of Bolshevism tendencies and doctrines.⁶⁷

The government also presented the police with new powers during the Winnipeg General Strike in June 1919. In keeping with the popular thinking that foreigners were behind labour unrest, it amended section 41 of the Immigration Act to allow for increased powers of arrest and deportation of non-naturalized troublemakers.⁶⁸ Older legislation also

⁶⁶NAC, RG 24, Department of National Defence Records, vol. 2544, file H.Q. C-2501, Commissioner Perry to Comptroller McLean, 18 February 1919.

⁶⁷RG 18 A1, vol. 599, files 1309-1335, Circular Memo #807, "Re: Bolshevism," January 6, 1919.

⁶⁸A month after section 41, the government passed section 98 of the *Criminal Code*. The legislation provided for jail terms of up to twenty years for a wide range of seditious offences. It was up to the accused to prove his or her innocence. Bill Waiser and Dave De Brou (eds.), *Documenting Canada: A History of Modern Canada in Documents* (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1992), 272-3.

proved useful in dealing with immigrants.⁶⁹ P.W. Pennefather noted in his November 1919 report that several prosecutions of enemy aliens had occurred in southern Alberta under the 1914 order-in-council's requirement of alien registration.⁷⁰

The anti-immigrant environment created the potential for police abuse above and beyond the abuse already inflicted on individuals targeted for deportation. One example of how the power of the Mounted Police over immigrants led to mistreatment occurred in 1919 when several Ukrainian farmers in the Kamsack area of Saskatchewan alleged that a particular Mounted Policeman had extorted money from them while conducting alien registration. Stephen Malczewski, a Polish-Canadian lawyer, publicized the complaints of the farmers. The first response of the Mounted Police was to investigate Malczewski. Eventually the Mountie in question was charged with several offences. The presiding judge at his trial was A.B. Allard, who happened to have another job as commander of the RNWMP's Southern Saskatchewan District. Allard had already written to the commissioner in the immediate aftermath of the allegations to assure him that they were groundless. Not surprisingly, he discounted the testimony of the Ukrainian farmers and convicted the Mounted Policeman on only one charge of accepting a \$1 bribe, something the accused had already admitted.⁷¹

⁶⁹Lyle Dick notes that order-in-councils passed under the War Measures Act already provided the federal government with a great deal of power over radicals. "In reviewing the record of the Borden administration in anti-radical legislation, one is struck more by its continuity than its aberrations." Eric Lyle Dick, *Deportation Under the Immigration Act and the Canadian Criminal Code, 1919-1936* (M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1978), 41.

⁷⁰RG 18, vol. 1933, file G-57-9-1, "K" Division, Confidential Monthly Report for November 1919.

⁷¹Hewitt, "Malczewski's List," 35-47.

Since it was fervently believed that certain types of ethnicity equalled radicalism, the campaign against foreigners/radicals gathered speed. The war, and the disorder that followed it, had left little tolerance for those outside defined political and social norms. Mounties at all levels began making detailed reports on the activities of non-Anglo-Celtic Canadians who were either actually involved in radical activity or were perceived to be. In 1920, the newly-amalgamated RCMP began compiling summaries of the reports and sending them out to a select group of politicians and officials. The "security bulletins," as they were to become known, became a major source of information on the activities of particular ethnic groups.

There was some justification for the police connection between certain ethnic groups and left-wing radicalism. Without question, a large number of eastern and central Europeans did embrace radical politics in the same way that they or their parents had in their native countries. Ukrainians, Finns and Jews represented eighty to ninety percent of all members of the Communist Party of Canada in the late 1920s. In 1929 the number reached ninety-five percent. In the 1930s the Communist Party made a concerted effort to attract native-born Canadians, while at the same time large numbers of Finns left because of doctrinal disputes within the Canadian party and the growing menace of Stalinism. Those of foreign birth, however, remained prominent at all levels of the party; the Communist-dominated Ukrainian Labor Farmer Temple (ULFTA), for example, experienced a membership increase from 8,080 in 1932 to 15,000 in 1938.⁷²

⁷²Ivan Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada: A History* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), 35, 119-20.

Ukrainians figured prominently in police reports in the immediate post-war years. In 1923 Superintendent G.L. Jennings, the head of "G" Division in Alberta which included Edmonton, warned Commissioner Starnes of "the anti-Canadian sentiment of the Ukrainians. This appears to be getting more so as time goes on, and the younger generations, who are born in Canada, grow up with ideas instilled in them from many years of association with this propaganda."⁷³ And there seemed to be good reason to worry. A year earlier, a Mounted Policeman had prepared a report on the political leanings of approximately 100,000 Ukrainians in Alberta. He identified twenty-five percent as "militant" members of the Communist Party, and another thirty-five percent as "semi-militant." The policeman believed that only ten percent of Alberta's Ukrainian population were "on the side of authority."⁷⁴

While the RCMP believed that Ukrainians were the main ethnic group involved in radical activity, others did not escape the Mounties' unflinching glare. The Finnish community had a strong socialist wing.⁷⁵ The RCMP at Red Deer, Alberta found it difficult, however, to report on the revolutionary activities of local Finns, because "they are a very clannish race" and thus difficult to infiltrate.⁷⁶ The Chinese in Edmonton in 1927 came

⁷³CSIS, RCMP Records Related to the Communist Party in Edmonton, vol. 22, file 88-A-61, pt. 7, G.L. Jennings to Commissioner Starnes, 4 April 1923.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, Report of Detective S/Sgt. MacBrayne, 18 July 1922. The criteria he used for defining "Ukrainian" is unclear since according to the 1931 census there were no more than 56,000 people of that ethnicity in the province (see page 89). It may have been used as a generic term to denote anyone of eastern European background.

⁷⁵Avery, *'Dangerous Foreigners,'* 49.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*

under similar police scrutiny when the Communist Party there made a concerted effort to recruit Chinese members.⁷⁷

The Doukhobors, a religious sect from Russia, garnered a great deal of Mountie attention in the 1930s after a factional split led to acts of violence on the part of the Sons of Freedom, including the burning of schools and grain elevators. This group of settlers proved especially frustrating to the Mounted Police because of their unwillingness to conform to the precepts of Canadian society. In fact, in 1933 Inspector W.J. Moorhead, in-charge of the Yorkton sub-division that had the responsibility of actually policing the Doukhobors, repeatedly told his superior, S.T. Wood, that detectives and secret agents should be removed from the their community. "[L]eave them alone," he counselled in response to police concerns, "for as they were burning their own schools they had to pay for their re-building." Wood was not impressed with the advice.⁷⁸

It was also inevitable that this group, outside the mainstream, would be connected to political radicalism. In 1936 Wood reported that "Communist elements" in Saskatchewan were attempting to take advantage of the pacifist principles of the Doukhobors.⁷⁹ The RCMP linking of Doukhobors with Bolsheviks had also occurred in 1929 when Superintendent W.P. Lindsay, in-charge of southern Saskatchewan, warned headquarters about the unsavoury background of Sons of Freedom leader Peter Verigin:

⁷⁷NAC, RG 146, vol. 27, file 92-A-00123, Pt. 6, Ritchie to Starnes, 29 March 1927.

⁷⁸RCMP, Personnel Records of Inspector William Moorhead, S.T. Wood to MacBrien, Re: Reg. No. 10854, Const. Campbell, 21 July 1933.

⁷⁹"Report of the RCMP for the Year Ended March 31, 1936," 78. Some Doukhobors did belong to the CPC in the 1930s. Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada*, 121.

[T]here does not seem to be any doubt that he [Verigin] is a dangerous Communist and is responsible for all the trouble we have had with the Doukhobors. It must be remembered that this Peter Verigin only came out to Canada after the Russian Revolution and must have been through the same. Furthermore, to the best of my recollection, at the time he came out the Soviets made no effort to prevent him, which would go to show that he was, at least, in sympathy with their views.⁸⁰

In 1933, a detective corporal in Saskatchewan reported that "Veregin [the spiritual leader of the sect] has turned completely Bolshevistic ... advocating the use of revolvers, Rifles and machine guns."⁸¹ Whatever the case, the Sons of Freedom sect of the Doukhobors were especially reviled because, like many Ukrainians, they refused to be, in the words of Assistant Commissioner Walter Mortimer, "assimilated [by] Canadian ideas," and they would not "bring up their children as Canadian citizens."⁸²

Radicalism was not the only reason immigrants and ethnic minorities garnered police attention in the 1920s and 1930s. Crime and immorality, so often associated by reformers with foreigners, became of special concern to the Mounted Police and the state in the heightened nativism of the interwar period. In their cultural practices ethnic minorities were often viewed as intricately associated with immorality; this sparked reform campaigns, such as the temperance movement, the anti-white slave trade campaign, and the crackdown on

⁸⁰Superintendent W.P. Lindsay as quoted in John McLaren, "Wrestling Spirits: The Strange Case of Peter Verigin II," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, vol. 27, no. 3 (1995), 101.

⁸¹CSIS, RCMP Records Related to Peter Verigin, vol. 51, file 117-91-22, Report of D/Cpl A.J. Stretton, 8 August 1933.

⁸²*Ibid.*, Report of Assistant Commissioner W. Mortimer, O.C. F Div., 18 March 1936. For a detailed study of the Doukhobors in this period, see McLaren, "Wrestling Spirits: The Strange Case of Peter Verigin II."

illicit narcotics.⁸³ These attitudes simply reflected popular definitions of "race," a concept which mixed ethnicity, biology, and cultural practices together.⁸⁴ In an era when the Mounties sought to entrench their position as Canada's national police force, concentrating resources on ethnic crime was sure to win the RCMP support from the Anglo-Celtic population of Canada.

One important aspect of the RCMP's moral reform work was the enforcement of the Opium and Narcotic Drug Act (ONDA). The concern about narcotics reflected a fixation on drugs among members of the Canadian elite. This was a new trend in Canada. At the beginning of the twentieth century, drugs were not perceived as a significant social problem. Members of the Mounted Police found narcotics more of a nuisance as they pursued their war against alcohol.⁸⁵ All of this changed in 1908 when anti-Chinese riots erupted in Vancouver. The catalyst for rendering drugs illegal was a familiar face to students of Canadian history, William Lyon Mackenzie King. Charged with investigating Chinese-Canadian compensation claims in the aftermath of the riots, King discovered two requests for recompense from the owners of opium dens. The outraged Canadian political icon delved further into the matter, interviewing leaders of the Chinese-Canadian community. He came away believing in the necessity of drug criminalization since "opium smoking was making

⁸³For an excellent study of the moral reform campaigns of this era see Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water*.

⁸⁴Hall *White, Male, and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History*, 25; Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the U.S., 1880-1917* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 13.

⁸⁵R.C. Macleod, *The NWMP and Law Enforcement, 1873-1905* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 125.

headway, not only among white men and boys, but also among women and girls."⁸⁶ This theme of drugs, specifically opium, as a racial threat would be repeated throughout the 1920s. To many moral reformers, opium was but one symbol of the various assaults upon the purity of the white race.⁸⁷ In *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water*, Mariana Valverde depicted the underlying goals of these campaigns as an attempt "to legitimize certain institutions and discourses--[such as] the patriarchal nuclear family, and racist immigration policies--from the point of view of morality."⁸⁸ In the 1920s, opium would serve as a stick for the state and reformers to beat the Chinese.

⁸⁶Robert Montserin, "Criminalization of Drug Activity in Canada," (M.A. thesis, University of Ottawa, 1981), 40.

⁸⁷For a discussion of the purity campaigns see Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water*. Valverde's study contains little on the campaign against drugs. One of the major driving forces behind the war on illicit drugs in the 1920s was Emily Murphy, also known as "Janey Canuck" and celebrated today as one of the litigants in the famous 1929 "person's case." In her other role as an Edmonton police magistrate, Murphy generated a moral fervour in a series of articles which later formed a book, *The Black Candle*. Its author did not leave any doubt about why drugs were so dangerous to Canadian society:

A man or woman who becomes an addict seeks the company of those who use the drug, and avoids those of their own social status. This explains the amazing phenomenon of an educated gentlewoman, reared in a refined atmosphere, consorting with the lowest classes of yellow and black men. ... One becomes especially disquieted-- almost terrified-- in the face of these things, for it sometimes seems as if the white race lacks both the physical and moral stamina to protect itself, and that maybe the black and yellow races may yet obtain the ascendancy.

Indeed, this seems possible-- even probable-- unless the enslavement which comes from these abhorrent and debasing narcotics can be strongly and speedily dealt with. And yet, the ignorance concerning the scope and nature of the menace is known and recognized by only a few of our people.

Emily Murphy, *The Black Candle* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1922), 210.

⁸⁸Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water*, 167.

The Chinese were, arguably, the most despised group in Canada. The predominant Anglo-Canadian stereotype of these citizens was, in the words of historian Peter Ward, "the unassimilable Asian."⁸⁹ The Chinese, like Blacks, were too different from the Anglo-Canadian norm to ever be capable of assimilation. With new clothes, proper food, and the right amount of acculturation a Ukrainian could be "Canadianized." The Chinese, however, would always be Chinese. The response of many Canadians to Asians was often open hostility.⁹⁰ By the 1920s, however, the hostility of citizens was focused through institutions of the Canadian state, including the RCMP.

The first legislation that specifically criminalized drugs in Canada was introduced by King in 1911. It would remain virtually unchanged until the enactment of the Opium and Narcotic Drug Act in the 1920s. Again, opium, associated with Chinese-Canadians, was separated from other "white drugs" (a prevalent term at the time) such as cocaine, morphine, and heroin.⁹¹ The law would be amended in 1921 and 1922 and consolidated in 1923.

It would be up to the Mounted Police to lead the fight against drugs. Commissioner Perry struck the proper moral note in his annual report from 1922:

⁸⁹W. Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978), 12. J.S. Woodsworth stated bluntly that the "Orientals cannot be assimilated." Several negative characteristics such as disease, prostitution, gambling, and the aforementioned drugs were attributed to them Woodsworth, *Strangers Within Our Gates*, 155.

⁹⁰Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 20.

⁹¹C.W. Harvison, *The Horsemen* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), 66. Harvison, who was a foot soldier in the 1920s war against drugs, would later become Commissioner of the Mounted Police.

the repulsive nature of the work of repression, entailing as it does contact with ... [the] dregs of humanity ... [leads] our men [to] greatly dislike it, and it is undertaken only in accordance with duty, and because of the knowledge that while unpleasant it is a service to humanity.⁹²

The department of Health had requested a year earlier that the RCMP officially enter the anti-illicit drugs campaign. The force and its partner in the war on drugs, the Opium and Narcotic Drug Branch of the department of Health, had a strong influence on the expansion of anti-narcotic laws in the 1920s.⁹³ The anti-narcotic campaign was especially important to the Mounted Police in an era when their only presence in Saskatchewan and Alberta was as an organization charged with enforcing federal statutes and aiding other federal government departments.

Historian R.C. Macleod correctly observed that narcotics did not represent the most important investigation category numerically, especially in provinces such as Alberta and Saskatchewan with smaller Asian populations (see Table 3-2).⁹⁴ What Macleod failed to recognize, however, was the symbolism the war on drugs had in the Canada of this era. The image of the ultimate symbol of middle-class Anglo-Celtic maleness, the Mounted Police, leading a moral crusade against hated and evil Asiatics had a powerful resonance in Anglo-

⁹²Perry as quoted in "Report of the RCMP for the Year Ended September 30, 1922," *Sessional Paper* no. 21, 17.

⁹³Neil Boyd, "The Origin of Canadian Narcotics Legislation: The Process of Criminalization in Historical Context," in R.C. Macleod (ed.), *Lawful Authority: Readings on the History of Criminal Justice in Canada* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1988), 203.

⁹⁴R.C. Macleod, "The RCMP and the Evolution of Provincial Policing," in R.C. Macleod and David Schneiderman (eds.), *Police Powers in Canada: The Evolution and Practice of Authority* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 49.

TABLE 3-2⁹⁵CASES INVESTIGATED UNDER THE OPIUM AND NARCOTIC DRUG ACT

YEAR (SEPT. TO SEPT.)	AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL CASES INVESTIGATED UNDER FEDERAL STATUTES IN CANADA	NO. IN ALTA.	AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ONDA INVESTIGATIONS	NO. IN SASK.	AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ONDA INVESTIGATIONS
1921	29	201	25	139	15
1922	32	123	22	50	4
1923	29	99	19	91	5
1924	15	83	13	75	4
1925	24	64	18	64	5
1926	20	45	9	23	2
1927	14	47	13	32	3
1928	14	15	5	69	5
1929	15	25	9	101	6
1930	16	40	11	54	4
1931	17	48	10	42	3
1932	8	35	4	22	2
1934*	4	71	2	32	1
1935	4	103	4	48	3
1936	4	48	3	35	3
1937	4	31	2	53	3
1938	5	28	4	44	6
1939	4	35	5	49	7

*covers eighteen month period

⁹⁵Source is RCMP Annual Reports.

Canadian society. As Perry acknowledged, it was repulsive work, but someone had to set things right—even if it meant saving only a handful of white victims.

Throughout the 1920s the Mounted Police leadership emphasized the problem of drugs and the importance of the force in dealing with the issue. In the first annual report to contain a specific reference to narcotics, Commissioner Perry declared that the "investigations have convinced me that the evil is greater than appears upon the surface, and that a serious national menace has arisen." Later in the same report, he reiterated

the deep sense of the danger of the traffic. Our investigators have uncovered a volume of addiction which seriously threatens our national life, and apart from the aspect of public policy, numerous and most distressing and lamentable cases have come to our notice. The dreadful suffering endured by those addicted to the drugs, the ruin of lives which should be useful, do not constitute the whole of the evil, for the ills spread to their families. Children rob parents, husbands and fathers plunge their families into misery, wives ruin their husbands. In one case which came to our knowledge, a man discovered that his wife had been an addict for months, that she had disposed of much of his property and had sold his clothes to procure the poison. To show the personal degradation suffered by many of our fellow-citizens, a young white girl recently discovered in a Chinese resort so destitute as to be all but naked, her body pitted with the marks of the hypodermic needle. These are but single instances which could be multiplied from our records.⁹⁶

A great deal of Mountie anti-illicit drug rhetoric was couched in racial terms. The Opium and Narcotic Drug Act was the only category in the yearly RCMP reports which listed the racial background of those arrested. Those of Chinese background usually topped the list of arrests under the ONDA, which is not surprising considering they were the group targeted by the

⁹⁶"Report of the RCMP for the Year Ended September 30, 1921," *Sessional Paper* No. 28, 13-14.

law.⁹⁷ The equivalent of the ONDA for the Anglo-Canadian population would have been, according to criminologist Neil Boyd, a law targeting saloons.⁹⁸

Behind much of the anti-drug rhetoric of prominent citizens such as Emily Murphy, a police magistrate, author, and first-wave feminist, and Commissioner Perry was the perceived threat of drugs to the purity of Anglo-Canadian women. C.W. Harvison, a rank-and-file Mountie at the time, touched upon this fear in his memoirs:

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RACE OF THOSE ARRESTED UNDER THE ONDA

YEAR	CHINESE	WHITE	"COLORED"	JAPANESE
1924	158	117	14	0
1925	280	168	2	0
1926	187	175	9	0
1927	160	88	0	2
1928	107	77	3	2
1929	255	45	2	0
1930	190	59	3	2
1931	127	92	4	1
1932	110	80	3	2
1934*	184	104	8	0
1935	108	86	2	0
1936	47	74	0	3
1937	50	115	4	3
1938	31	93	3	1

Source: RCMP Annual Reports. This category ended in 1938. It may have been that Mountie attention was now directed at security measures connected with the war, or perhaps deportation of the Chinese had dealt with the perceived problem.

⁹⁸Boyd, "The Origins of Canadian Narcotics Legislation," 203

The Chinese opium smokers were, almost invariably, peaceful and docile. Many of them were older citizens who had had the habit for years and could not quite understand why, suddenly, a fuss was being made. The non-Oriental addicts were younger people, some of them teenagers. Most were males, but there was a smattering of women ... the majority, if left undisturbed, would increase the frequency of their visits, until before long they were firmly "hooked" and they too move on to the use of morphine.⁹⁹

Emphasizing the effect of drugs on white women also allowed the police to portray itself in the patriarchal role of protectors of innocent and helpless women and children.¹⁰⁰

The Mountie linkage between narcotics and Chinese-Canadians would continue into the 1930s. The *R.C.M.P. Quarterly* in 1935 carried a diagram that connected narcotics with a racist Chinese stereotype. Another issue included an article, entitled "The Criminal and His Face," which commented on the effects of opium upon the user:

In the confirmed white smoker of opium, changes in the face always take place. The skin becomes more adherent to the facial muscles, whose fat has been partly absorbed. It assumes a yellow, ivory-like colour, more pronounced about the cheek bones. These, because of the shrinkage of facial fat, appear accentuated. There is slowly developed Mongolian or Chinese expression that discloses to the informed the cause of such metamorphosis. The "opium look" often gives an insight to an otherwise unsuspected habit.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹Harvison, *The Horsemen*, 42.

¹⁰⁰Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 25.

¹⁰¹Dr. Carleton Simon, "The Criminal and His Face," *R.C.M.P. Quarterly*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1935), 22.

Finally, in a poem entitled "R.C.M.P.," reprinted from *Punch* and carried in the *R.C.M.P. Quarterly*, two lines made racist reference to the war on drugs: "White-skin, redskin, half-breed, Chink, Illicit dealers in drugs and drink."¹⁰²

The RCMP leadership freely offered advice to the politicians when it came to anti-drug legislation. The 1922 Commissioner's report advocated tough measures to check "the calamitous nature of the traffic."¹⁰³ One of the measures adopted by the Canadian Parliament was unique to the British legal system: those charged with crimes under the Opium and Narcotic Drug Act were considered guilty until proven innocent.¹⁰⁴

Legislation in the 1920s expanded the options available to the police in dealing with the drug trade. The results, however, were mixed. The expansion of powers included the authority to investigate doctors and druggists suspected of trafficking in narcotics.¹⁰⁵ Methods to deal with this group included surveillance and undercover purchases. In a period, then, when the security role of the RCMP was still developing, a detective might find himself spying on Communists one day, drug dealers the next.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰²"R.C.M.P.," in *R.C.M.P. Quarterly*, vol. 7, no. 3 (1940), 282.

¹⁰³"Report of the RCMP for the Year Ended September 30, 1922," 16.

¹⁰⁴House of Commons' *Debates*, 23 April 1923: 2117. section 14 of the Opium and Narcotic Drugs Act reads: "Where a charge is laid under either paragraphs (a), (d), or (e) of section four of this act, the onus shall be upon the accused to establish that he had lawful authority to commit the act complained of, or that he had a license from the minister authorizing such acts."

¹⁰⁵"Report of the RCMP for the Year Ended September 30, 1922," 16.

¹⁰⁶For example of this mixture of duties see Harvison, *The Horsemen*, 58-96.

In 1923 the force announced a policy change in the war on drugs. Its emphasis would now be on the kingpins of the drug trade, while the small operators would be left to provincial and municipal police forces. In part, this policy shift appears to have been an attempt to explain the declining number of cases being investigated.¹⁰⁷ RCMP records from 1923 and 1924 also demonstrate that, at least in Saskatchewan, less serious violators were still being charged. Examples included W.J. Morrison of Mossback arrested for possessing "tablets alleged to be half grain tablets of morphine sulphate"; Mack Hoy of Birch Hills picked up for possession of an "opium pipe"; Katie Hooper of Viceroy arrested for possession of "one small glass vial containing morphine"; Yu Lung Chuny of Swift Current charged for possessing "one tin of opium"; and Lu Bnos of Kindersley arrested for opium possession.¹⁰⁸ Many, if not most, of these people were addicted to the narcotics the RCMP charged them with possessing.¹⁰⁹ To historian Greg Marquis the addicts justified the government's drug policy: "[T]here was a touch of paranoia about these measures ... but these substances *were* harmful."¹¹⁰ Unfortunately, Marquis entirely misses the point. The Opium and Narcotic Drug Act and its enforcement were not guided by any altruistic concern for the addicts. The federal minister of Health conceded as much when he admitted in the

¹⁰⁷"Report of the RCMP for the Year Ended September 30, 1923," *Sessional Paper No. 21*, 16.

¹⁰⁸NAC, RG 18, Reel T-4511, "Arrests Under the Opium and Narcotic Drug Act," 270-332.

¹⁰⁹The federal minister of Health, H.S. Beland, stated in the House of Commons in 1923 that Canada had approximately 9,500 drug addicts. Canada, House of Commons' *Debates*, 27 February 1923: 698. This number, largely calculated from RCMP reports, might have been too high since it was to the benefit of the police to exaggerate the extent of the problem.

House of Commons in 1923 that the government had done virtually nothing to support addiction treatment because it considered the matter a provincial responsibility.¹¹¹ As the treatment of the Chinese in Canada demonstrated, the government and the RCMP had other reasons for pursuing a war on drugs. To put the situation simply, it was an expedient way of getting them out of the country.

The Chinese were not the only ones to experience the linking of ethnicity with a particular crime. The RCMP crackdown against illegal alcohol production, which one former Mountie described as an attempt to "maintain the government monopoly," became associated with ethnic minorities, specifically groups from central and eastern Europe.¹¹² There was validity to the association. That legitimacy, however, was not based on the inherent criminality of certain ethnic groups,¹¹³ but rather, as in the case of the Chinese, the different cultural practices of some groups—practices that Anglo-Canadian society had criminalized. Nevertheless, the RCMP made the link between "foreigners" and illegal alcohol production. In 1925, A.B. Allard, commander of the southern Saskatchewan District, called for more manpower "to stamp out this type of lawlessness," which occurred

¹¹⁰Marquis, *Policing Canada's Century*, 92.

¹¹¹House of Commons' *Debates*, 27 February 1923: 699.

¹¹²Interview with Staff Sergeant (Rtd.) Stan Wight, 29 March 1996.

¹¹³For example, George Smith, Chief of Detectives for the City of Winnipeg, made an explicit link in his paper "Keep the Criminal Out" between rising rates of crime and increasing levels of non-British immigration. Marquis, *Policing Canada's Century*, 153. In his 1931 study of Ukrainians, Charles H. Young wrote that "Germans are one of the most law-abiding people, but the Ukrainians are the worst," and that "Ukrainian children are deficient in a sense of moral responsibility." Charles H. Young, *The Ukrainian Canadians: A Study in Assimilation* (Toronto: Thomas Nelson & Sons, Ltd., 1931), 265, 197.

"particularly amongst the thickly foreign-populated settlements."¹¹⁴ Two years later, the report for the same district noted that foreigners continued to make alcohol "for their own use, chiefly because it is cheaper than the Government liquor and also because they have acquired a taste for home-brew and now prefer it to the lawfully manufactured liquor."¹¹⁵ This Mounted Police role continued well into the 1930s as former Mountie R.S.S. Wilson related in his book, *Undercover for the RCMP*.¹¹⁶ Enforcement was not as significant in Alberta because alcohol was readily available from government-run stores.¹¹⁷

What were the solutions to the alien menaces that threatened the purity of Anglo-Canadian women and the social and political stability of the nation? Those capable of being naturalized, after stringent background checks, should be assimilated—the rest deported. Naturalization investigations were an important role for the RCMP to play: the Mounties were making themselves useful to the government and, more importantly, were reassuring Anglo-Canadian society that "undesirables" would not attain Canadian citizenship, nor even be allowed to remain in Canada.¹¹⁸ The RCMP were called upon to investigate the

¹¹⁴Allard as quoted in "Report of the RCMP for the Year Ended September 30, 1925," 29.

¹¹⁵W.P. Lindsay as quoted in "Report of the RCMP for the Year Ended September 30, 1927," 33.

¹¹⁶R.S.S. Wilson, *Undercover for the RCMP* (Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1986).

¹¹⁷"Report of the RCMP for the Year Ended, March 31, 1935," 26.

¹¹⁸"Report of the RCMP for the Year Ended September 30, 1927," 28. An effort was made after the Winnipeg General Strike to construct a new Canadian citizenship, one that excluded radicals and those unwilling to be assimilated. See Tom Mitchell, "The Manufacture of Souls of Good Quality: Winnipeg's 1919 National Conference on Canadian Citizenship, English-Canadian Nationalism, and the New Order After the Great War," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 31, no. 4 (1996-97).

backgrounds of potential citizens, forwarding the information to government authorities who would make the final decision (see Table 3-3).¹¹⁹ Commissioner Perry described this role in his 1922 annual report:

No small labour is incurred in reporting for the Secretary of State upon applicants for naturalization. The policy has been adopted by that department, when aliens apply for the privilege of becoming British subjects and citizens of Canada, of procuring independent and disinterested examination of their character and conduct. In many cases applicants live in remote places, or in settlements exclusively inhabited by people of foreign birth or origin. ... In a number of cases it was ascertained that the applicants were not suitable for citizenship.¹²⁰

Those acceptable for naturalization were those that could be assimilated. By 1920, the newly-formed RCMP, both sensing and reflecting the mood among the Anglo-Canadian majority, increasingly reported on the process of assimilation among Canada's non-British ethnic groups, especially any resistance to it on their part. Resistance to assimilation was often linked with radicalism, both in reality and in perception. Education, a key tool of absorption, became a centre of Mountie concentration. The target of attention in this area tended to be Ukrainians because of their reputation for radical politics and the fact that many seemed determined to hold on to their ethnic identity. A weekly security bulletin in 1920 described a large meeting of Ukrainians at Red Water, Alberta where "speakers did not refer to the assimilation with the Canadian race or the fostering of Canadian ideas in the educating

¹¹⁹"Report of the RCMP for the Year Ended September 30, 1925," 16.

¹²⁰"Report of the RCMP for the Year Ended September 30, 1922," 15.

TABLE 3-3¹²¹RCMP ASSISTANCE TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE (NATURALIZATION)

YEAR	AS A % OF ALL ASSISTANCE TO OTHER DEPARTMENTS IN CANADA	ALTA.	AS % OF HELP TO OTHER DEPTS	SASK.	AS % OF HELP TO OTHER DEPTS
1921	—	852	71	903	57
1922	54	550	54	470	45
1923	49	327	34	361	33
1924	35	872	25	872	19
1925	36	825	25	1014	22
1926	39	1126	33	1115	22
1927	33	804	22	848	17
1928	42	698	34	846	37
1929	55	718	32	3103	55
1930	51	1132	45	1327	33
1931	63	1662	54	1965	48
1932	56	2733	25	3270	60
1934*	35	3044	14	3447	47

*covers eighteen months

¹²¹Source: RCMP Annual Reports.

of their children, advocating only Ukrainian Nationalism."¹²² The refusal by Ukrainian school children in Drumheller to salute the flag and carry on other nationalist trappings also ended up in an RCMP report.¹²³

Ukrainian schools, mainly those with supposed radical connections, but also the more benign variety, especially concerned the Mounted Police. A 1920 RCMP security bulletin made reference to a Ukrainian boarding school in Saskatoon, the Peter Mohyla Institute, affiliated with the University of Saskatchewan, and the establishment in Saskatchewan of a Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Theological Seminary. The report noted that the priest of the Seminary had earlier been involved in a dispute with younger men who were keen on maintaining Ukrainian cultural traditions, such as schools, the language, and the flag.¹²⁴

In 1923 Commissioner Starnes wrote to Premier J.E. Brownlee to warn of the danger of Ukrainian schools in Alberta. He included two RCMP memoranda, one from 1921 and the other from 1922.¹²⁵ In his 30 December 1922 memo to Sir Lomer Gouin, the federal minister of Justice, Starnes warned of schooling carried out during the students' free time and

¹²²As quoted in Security Bulletin No. 42, 23 September 1920, in Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker (eds.), *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Early Years, 1919-1929* (St. John's, Nfld.: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1994), 154-5.

¹²³CSIS Records, Spalding to O.C., "K" Div, Doc. No. 57, file 88-A-75, 23 January 1925.

¹²⁴Security Bulletin No. 44, 7 October 1920, in *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: 1919-1929*, 196.

¹²⁵Public Archives of Alberta (PAA), Accession no. 75.126, vol. 218, file 4618. Starnes to Brownlee, 1923.

designed by Communists to encourage revolutionary thought. One section was very explicit in advising of the danger of Ukrainian schools:

the principal subjects to be taught are the Ukrainian language, folk-songs, and revolutionary songs and music. Every effort is made to induce the children to hate religion, patriotism, and the government and social and economic system of Canada, and to desire and expect revolution, with its accompanying horrors. Great use is made of concerts; the elders are encouraged to attend entertainments at which the children furnish the programme, most of the recitations, songs etc. having revolutionary tendencies. Sometimes the children act revolutionary plays. The evidence is that these are attractive to the parents. Great hostility is shown to the public schools, which are incessantly denounced as designed to darken the understandings of the children, to teach militarism and religions, and to bolster up capitalism. Bitterness is shown towards those Ukrainians who imbibe Canadian ideals.¹²⁶

In the memo Starnes also reported that other "nationalities dabble in this activity from time to time, but not in so organized and systematic a manner as the Ukrainians."¹²⁷ He warned, in addition, that even the school activities of some non-Bolshevist groups were still hostile toward "Canadianization."¹²⁸ The commissioner advised against outright repression, observing that the schools operated outside public school hours, thus not affecting attendance which was governed by law.¹²⁹ Instead, demonstrating his support for the ultimate solution

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, "Revolutionary Schools"—Memo prepared by Starnes for Gouin, 30 December 1922.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

for those who refused to be assimilated, he advocated the deportation of the teachers who worked at the schools.¹³⁰

Ukrainian schools were still being reported on in 1926. The police were concerned, for example, with an increase in enrollment which occurred after the arrival of a teacher in the Edmonton area who was "unusually well educated" and had the respect of the Ukrainian community, so much so that the report noted he had to be considered a "dangerous man."¹³¹ (The RCMP would have a direct impact on this man's life in the 1930s when evidence they compiled led to his deportation.) The report compiler added that English was not taught: instead, students learned to despise the Canadian constitution and other national symbols and to view the "Red flag as the God of the workers."¹³² Security bulletin number 334 from 2 September 1926 reported that often schools were teaching illiterate Ukrainians of all ages to read so that they could absorb "revolutionary literature." The ultimate goal of the schools, the report added, was to prepare "the members thereof for a revolution, with the Soviet System of Government as their objective."¹³³

¹³⁰Carl Betke and S.W. Horrall, *Canada's Security Service: An Historical Outline, 1864-1966, Volume 1* (Ottawa: RCMP Historical section, 1978), 429-30.

¹³¹Security Bulletin No. 330, 5 August 1926, in *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: 1919-1929*, 316.

¹³²*Ibid.*

¹³³Security Bulletin No. 334, 2 September 1926, in *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: 1919-1929*, 343-51.

Attitudes had apparently not changed nine years later when the *R.C.M.P. Quarterly* carried an article, "Training Young Communists," that made an explicit link between education, ethnicity, and radicalism. The article listed five categories of schools:

- (a) Those conducted by the Young Communist League in conjunction with the Communist Party of Canada;
- (b) Those conducted by the Ukrainian Labour Farmer Temple Association;
- (c) Those conducted by the Finnish Organization of Canada;
- (d) Those conducted by the Jewish Canadian Workmen's Circle;
- (e) Those conducted by the Russian Workers' Clubs and other Communist foreign language mass organizations.¹³⁴

Ukrainian schools were "carried on in strict conformity with the general Communist scheme of education and propaganda," although the article noted that these schools differed from English-speaking ones in that "considerable time and attention is given to music and drama which constitute a principal feature of the curriculum."¹³⁵

As the last reference demonstrates, the cultural activities of ethnic minorities, specifically Ukrainians, also concerned Mounted Policemen because they demonstrated an unwillingness to assimilate. In a 29 January 1920 security bulletin, reference was made to the cultural practices of Ukrainians in Edmonton:

12. Ukrainian Propaganda

On 10th January in the Greek Catholic Home, Edmonton, the "Samo-Obrazowania Society", formerly the Ukrainian Socialist Party, performed a play, "The Thorny Wreath", of a revolutionary tendency. This is the fourth drama of this sort performed since November. Our informant (who is of Central European Nationality) described it as effective propaganda against

¹³⁴"Training Young Communists," *R.C.M.P. Quarterly*, vol. 3, no. 2 (1935), 185.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, 187.

religion and government. At ... the "Shewchenko" meetings of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Association at Edmonton 11th January a resolution was passed protesting against the assignment of Galicia to Poland. ... The general trend of the meeting was described as adverse to the Canadianization of Ukrainian immigrants."¹³⁶

Even the activities of an all-female Ukrainian mandolin orchestra touring western Canada found its way into a security bulletin.¹³⁷ At each stop in the west, reports or, more accurately, concert reviews, would flood in from RCMP informants and secret agents. One noted that while "O Canada" was sung at the beginning of the concert, it was skipped at the end.¹³⁸ An Edmonton-area Mountie undercover operative covered a Ukrainian concert in that city despite not being able to speak the language. Proving, however, that everyone is a critic, the spy still did not like what he or she heard:

The whole sentiment of the Concert was anti-Canadian and revolutionary in the extreme, dangerous to the peace of the country in as much as it was inciting the workers to revolution.

One deplorable and striking feature of the whole affair was the number of small children that took part and entered wholeheartedly into the seditious programme, their enthusiasm only being excelled by that of the younger members of the audience, who cheered and applauded in the wildest manner, the Chairman having to ask them to modify their applause. Most of the children present are all Canadian born, and speak English with no trace of a foreign accent, but the appalling fact as demonstrated above, is that they are being trained as REVOLUTIONISTS

The Concert was brought to a conclusion by the Ukrainian Mixed Choir singing the "RED FLAG", the audience rising. The Theatre was filled

¹³⁶Security Bulletin No. 9, 29 January 1920, in *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: 1919-1929*, 30.

¹³⁷Security Bulletin No. 332, 19 August 1926, in *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: 1919-1929*, 337.

¹³⁸Security Bulletin No. 331, 12 August 1926, in *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: 1919-1929*, 331.

to capacity, about eight hundred being present; over ninety percent of who were foreigners, mostly Ukrainians. The audience was orderly throughout, and paid the closest attention to all parts of the programme, but after certain red seditious songs, etc., applauded in the wildest manner, showing the spirit of the audience was revolutionary.¹³⁹

To many Anglo-Canadians some people were simply not assimilable no matter how much of an effort they made to fit in. On the prairies Chinese and Blacks topped this list. American Blacks had already been actively discouraged from coming to the prairies by Canadian immigration officials.¹⁴⁰ There were, however, groups of Chinese, almost exclusively male, across the prairies; many of them originally arrived as labourers.

Besides encountering Chinese through their work for the department of Health, Mounties in Alberta and Saskatchewan were also entrusted by the department of Immigration and Colonization with registering the Chinese in the mid-1920s. This work was carried out under the auspices of the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act, which required the registration of all Chinese residents in Canada.¹⁴¹ In Southern Saskatchewan in 1924, this meant the registration of 1,125 Chinese and, according to Superintendent A.B. Allard, "a great deal of careful work, each registration occupying approximately three-quarters of an hour. This was not the finish of it, as the certificates were returned to be handed back to the

¹³⁹CSIS, RCMP Records Related to the Communist Party of Canada in Edmonton, vol. 22, file No. 88-A-61, Doc. No. 22, pt. 7, Report of [deleted], "G" Division, 3 April 1923.

¹⁴⁰R.B. Shepard, "Plain Racism: The Reaction Against Oklahoma Black Immigration to the Canadian Prairies," *Prairie Forum*, vol. 10, no. 2, (1985).

¹⁴¹Barbara Roberts, *Whence They Came: Deportation from Canada, 1900-1935* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988), 108.

Chinamen, and also in several cases further information was asked for by the Chief Comptroller, when the Chinamen had to be interviewed again."¹⁴²

Naturalization and assimilation did not apply to the Chinese in Canada. Nor did it apply to those unwilling to accept the status quo of Canadian society, either culturally, economically, or politically. For these groups deportation increasingly became the final solution in the 1920s and 1930s. It was the ultimate tool for dealing with the unwanted Chinese, the troublemaking radical, and those unwilling to be assimilated.

In the case of the Chinese, the Opium and Narcotic Drug Act was designed not to imprison Canada's unassimilable Asians but to get rid of them. Under the ONDA the non-naturalized guilty could be deported, a point Superintendent Christen Junget of "K" Division in Southern Alberta understood perfectly when he noted in his contribution to the commissioner's annual report for 1925 that of the twenty-eight people convicted in his district under the ONDA, twenty-six were aliens.¹⁴³ The Mounted Police turned over the names of the Chinese convicted to the Chief Commissioner of Chinese Immigration, thus playing an important role in a system that the Health minister of Canada boasted in the House of Commons was "deporting Chinamen as fast as we can."¹⁴⁴

Deportation had already become a weapon in the war against radicals in 1919. In other less democratically-inclined nations an individual who challenged the political system

¹⁴²Allard as quoted in "Report of the RCMP for the Year Ended September 30, 1924," 27.

¹⁴³"Report of the RCMP for the Year Ended September 30, 1925," 25-9.

¹⁴⁴As quoted in Montserin, "Criminalization of Drug Activity in Canada," 58.

might end up imprisoned or with a bullet in the back of his or her head; the Canadian equivalent was deportation. The prosecution and conviction of radicals left in its wake a great deal of publicity and a warm body in a cell, ready to serve as a martyr to his or her people. Deportation excised the problem entirely, a reality the federal government recognized when on 6 June 1919, Parliament passed amendments to the Immigration Act that allowed for the detention and deportation, without trial, of everyone, except naturalized Canadians, who advocated the violent overthrow of the Canadian government.¹⁴⁵

The RNWMP in Alberta and Saskatchewan enthusiastically enforced the new rules. At the same time as the changes, the government appointed several senior RNWMP officers (Perry, C.H. West, W.H. Routledge, A. Demers, Horrigan, Newson, Starnes, Jennings, T.A. Wroughton, A.B. Allard, and P.W. Pennefather) as immigration officers to provide them with the necessary power to make arrests under the new amendments. An immigration official made it clear that it would not be difficult to appoint additional policemen in this capacity.¹⁴⁶

The effect of the amendment to the Immigration Act was immediately obvious in southern Alberta's "K" Division. The monthly reports Superintendent P.W. Pennefather filed

¹⁴⁵ F.A. Blair, an official with the Immigration Department, wrote in 1920 that many of the "Reds' floating about this country ... should be picked up and deported ..." NAC, Department of Immigration, RG 76, vol. 627, file 961162, reel c-10443, Blair to Under Secretary of State, 9 January 1920. Blair gained greater notoriety in the 1930s. See Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948* (Toronto: Lester & Orpens Dennys, 1982).

¹⁴⁶ NAC, RG 76, Department of Immigration Records, vol. 29, file 653, pt. 2, F.C. Blair to A.L. Jolliffe, 11 March 1920.

began to detail operations against immigrants and members of ethnic minorities. The first reference to the new law being used appeared in July 1919 :

On the 18th of the month we made our first arrest under the new Immigration Act, that of Romeo Albo charged under section 41 of the Act, with attempting to create public disorder by word or act. The Minister gave his sanction for the arrest and prosecution of this man, and much good work was done in securing evidence against him. Being a man of some education he was prone to writing letters for the public press, most of them of a very inflammatory nature, and these were heavy evidence against him. In addition to this we were able to produce witnesses of statements he had made. Altogether a most interesting case was brought to a most satisfactory conclusion by the order of the Board of Inquiry for his internment and deportation to Italy.¹⁴⁷

Pennefather moved against another perceived troublemaker the following year. The police arrested Sanna Kannasto, a Finnish Socialist, because of her political activities. Pennefather wanted her tried under section 98, but was instead ordered to turn her over to immigration authorities who held a Board of Inquiry, apparently to have her deported.¹⁴⁸ Out of sight, out of mind.

Such powers gave the Mounted Police a great deal of control over the lives of immigrants. "I am of the opinion," wrote Superintendent Pennefather, himself an Irish immigrant, "that the majority of these agitators have a deadly fear of being sent back to the countries they came from. The worst agitators in my District came from the slums and that is

¹⁴⁷NAC, RG 18, vol. 1933, file G-57-9-1, "K" Division, Lethbridge, Confidential Monthly report for July 1919. Pennefather was overly optimistic in his conclusion to the case. It is not clear if the individual was ever expelled from Canada.

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*, "K" Division, Lethbridge, Confidential Monthly report for February 1920.

where they should be sent back to."¹⁴⁹ Commissioner Starnes reiterated this point in 1929, when he forwarded a police report to the Department of Immigration. Spelled out in the report was the police interpretation that the majority of immigrants "are sympathetic towards Communism, but they are afraid to join ... [since] they may be deported."¹⁵⁰

Deportation became less important in the mid-1920s as the economy turned around. Revolution had not occurred. The Liberals, a party more sympathetic to immigrants and less favourably inclined to infringements on civil liberties, took power in 1921 and, except for a brief interregnum in 1925, held power for the rest of the decade. Still, much of Anglo-Canadian society was displeased with the 1925 Railways Agreement that once more opened Canada's doors to those considered undesirable. The Agreement allowed railway companies to conduct their own immigration policy; they desired a cheap supply of labour. Thousands of previously "non-preferred" immigrants once more began to enter Canada.¹⁵¹ As for the RCMP, they continued to worry about those that were different. Certainly deportation remained a weapon of choice--Starnes' recommendations that Ukrainian teachers and Doukhobors be deported are evidence of that.¹⁵² Eventually, the Conservatives under R.B.

¹⁴⁹*Ibid.*, "K" Division Confidential Monthly Report for June 1919. The Mountie's comment also reflected a linkage between class and ethnicity. The fact that a preponderance of newcomers were perceived to be at the bottom of society when it came to social class only reinforced in many middle-class Anglo-Canadians their inherent inferiority.

¹⁵⁰CSIS, RCMP Records Related to the Communist Party of Canada in Edmonton, vol. 7, file 88-A-61, Starnes to Department of Immigration, Department of Insurance, 9 January 1929.

¹⁵¹Avery, *'Dangerous Foreigners,'* 100-1.

¹⁵²McLaren, "Wrestling Spirits," 101.

Bennett, a party that shared the police's way of thinking, gained power. The arrival of both the Tories and the Great Depression made deportation a popular option once again.

Some Mounties wanted to make it even easier to deport undesirables. In 1933, S.T. Wood, at the time in-charge of Saskatchewan's "F" Division, urgently recommended to Commissioner MacBrien that sections 40 and 41 of the Immigration Act be changed to simplify deportation. Wood specifically objected to the fact that naturalized Canadians of at least five years were exempt from deportation and that it was up to the state to prove that an individual was an active Communist, not merely a member, before he or she could be deported. Wood wanted amended laws because "deportation is the one effective weapon against foreign agitators and one of which they are in continual fear. Communist Party directives stress the necessity of protecting foreign agitators by assuming English names and by other means."¹⁵³

Commissioner MacBrien himself had publicly called for the removal of radicals of foreign birth in a 1932 speech. His reference to expulsion as a solution to Canada's internal problems was not a rhetorical flourish; he worked to ensure that it became common practice. On 13 October 1931, MacBrien met in Ottawa with Major-General McNaughton, Chief of the General Staff, W.A. Gordon, the acting minister of Justice, the minister of National Defence and the commissioner of Immigration. The topic of discussion was deportation of unnaturalized Communists. It was decided that a military barracks in eastern Canada would be given to the RCMP for the creation of an "Emigration Station."¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³NAC, RG 76, vol. 738, file 513057, Wood to MacBrien, 3 March 1933.

RCMP work for the department of Immigration and Colonization had long involved collecting material in order to deport an individual. In his first annual report in 1923, Commissioner Starnes boasted of his organization's

close relation with the immigration authorities, a number of members of the force acting as special immigration officers. In addition, special inquiries are made, and a certain amount of detective work is done. Many undesirables are refused admission as a result of our activities, and we have obtained the evidence upon which a number of deportations have been made.¹⁵⁵

On occasion the initiation of a deportation came from the RCMP. In 1919, a Mountie detective in Calgary reported on two American labour organizers who he said should be arrested and deported.¹⁵⁶ In 1931, Superintendent T.S. Belcher wrote to the commander of "K" Division in Southern Alberta to inquire how long a particularly troublesome Communist had been in Canada. "If he has been here five years he cannot be deported," the Superintendent added.¹⁵⁷ A year later, the head of the Mounted Police detachment in Saskatoon wrote to his superior to report "of the 750 single unemployed receiving relief from the City, not more than 20% are residents of Saskatoon, the remainder are transients, a great number of which are foreigners, many of them not yet having established Canadian

¹⁵⁴NAC, A.G.L. McNaughton Papers, Manuscript Group (MG) 30, E133, Series II, vol. 10, file 46, Memorandum, 13 October 1931.

¹⁵⁵"Report of the RCMP for the Year Ended September 30, 1923," 21.

¹⁵⁶NAC, RG 146, RCMP Records Related to the Winnipeg General Strike, vol. 1, file 1025-9-9028, pt. 12, Report of Detective S.R. Waugh, 27 May 1919.

¹⁵⁷NAC, RG 146, RCMP Records Related to the National Association of Unemployed, vol. 21, file 92-A-00099, part 1, T.S. Belcher to O.C. "K" Division, 29 October 1931.

domicile." The clear message to his superior was that these unemployed men, who were beginning to challenge authority in the Saskatchewan city, were an exportable commodity.¹⁵⁸

The RCMP viewed deportation as a preventive measure, as punishment, or both. A violent riot had occurred in Estevan, Saskatchewan on 29 September 1931, two weeks before MacBrien met in Ottawa with other officials to discuss deportation. A local Mountie believed that non-British locals caused the violence: "The rioters consisted largely of Foreigners as very few English speaking people took an aggressive part in the riot." As a response he recommended "discriminate deportation of the radical foreign element."¹⁵⁹ Two months later, Superintendent J.W. Spalding, commander of the Southern Saskatchewan District, expanded on this idea when he supplied the officer in charge of the Estevan area with a list of names of possible Communists or at least men with "'Red' tendencies." He asked that the names on the list be "investigated with a view to their possible deportation."¹⁶⁰

The force was intricately involved in deportation operations in western Canada. Often it was evidence supplied by Mounted Policemen as to the radical tendencies of a particular individual which led to his or her expulsion from Canada. John Sembay (Symbay), a Ukrainian involved in the ULFTA in Edmonton, and mentioned in security bulletins in the 1920s because of his connection with Ukrainian schools, was ordered deported under section

¹⁵⁸NAC, RG 146, vol. 27, file 92-A-00123, pt. 2, Walter Munday, O.C. Saskatoon, to Superintendent J.W. Spalding, O.C. "F" Division, 5 November 1932.

¹⁵⁹NAC, RG 146, vol. 6, file 1025-9-91093, pt. 3, Insp. Moorhead to M.A. MacPherson, Attorney General of Saskatchewan, 15 October 1931.

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.*, Spalding to O.C., Weyburn Sub-District, 15 December 1931.

41 on 10 May 1932. The decision was based on the evidence of RCMP Secret Agent 125 (Jacob Tatko). Tatko specifically linked Sembay with "revolutionary utterances looking to the overthrow of our economic and governmental structure in Canada by the use of force or violence ." The final blow was testimony from Mountie Sergeant John Leopold, a famous infiltrator of the Canadian Communist Party, that the ULFTA was connected with the Communist Party.¹⁶¹ Gottfried Zurcher, on the other hand, was found to have contravened section 41 of the Immigration Act based on the evidence of RCMP constables—although in this case they neglected to find out the man's nationality.¹⁶² And a Finn faced deportation in 1933 because of the evidence supplied by Leopold that the Finnish organization the man belonged to was a "subsidiary organization of the Communist Party."¹⁶³

These are but a few examples of a regular tactic employed in the continual RCMP war against undesirables. The deportation of radicals, however, paled in comparison to the number of people deported in the 1930s because they had become unemployed or were on relief.¹⁶⁴ The Mounted Police played a role in arresting vagrants and others who could be deported because they had not been naturalized and thus lacked the protection of citizenship. Regardless of the reasons for removal, the common belief was that as people they were expendable and that Canada was better off without them.

¹⁶¹NAC, RG 76, vol. 738, file 513057, Assistant Commissioner of Immigration, R.L. Munroe to Jolliffe, Commissioner of Immigration, 10 May 1932.

¹⁶²*Ibid.*, Memo from Munroe, 25 May 1932.

¹⁶³*Ibid.*, Memo for Commissioner of Immigration, 26 May 1933.

¹⁶⁴Roberts, *Whence They Came*, 45.

Deportation was the final chapter of the Mounted Police's interaction with members of several of Canada's ethnic groups. The relationship began in the early days of the First World War as Mounties went out among enemy aliens to check on their allegiance to Canada. At the end of the war, enemy aliens became less important. Instead the attention shifted to ethnic radicals, particularly Finns and Ukrainians, who threatened revolution, or so the Canadian state feared. The RCMP, in addition, focused on "ethnic criminals," especially the Chinese, in their efforts to survive as an institution and protect Anglo-Canada. Naturalization investigations and reports on the failure of some immigrants to assimilate served a similar role. Finally, the Mounties helped remove undesirables from the land of the maple leaf and beaver.

The attention ethnic groups received in this period had one other ramification for the Mounted Police. The need to produce reliable and detailed information on the activities of non-Anglo-Saxons meant a different approach for the men in scarlet. It required recruiting personnel from the groups that one wished to collect information on. It also meant the use of undercover operatives and detectives, something at odds with both Mountie history and perceived British tradition. During the First World War, and in its immediate aftermath, the force underwent a radical transformation. That unnoticed change kept public the crime fighting role of the Mounted Police, but it added a secret intelligence gathering function that would eventually grow into the RCMP Security Service. Some of Mounties had shed their famous uniforms for more inconspicuous attire. The men in scarlet had become the men in secret.

CHAPTER FOUR

MEN IN SECRET

C.H. Cahan knew the truth. The Ottawa lawyer and long-time Conservative loyalist had been appointed by the government of Prime Minister Robert Borden to find out what was happening on Canada's streets, its factory floors, and in its meeting halls at the end of the First World War. It was, after all, a time of turmoil, of radicalism, of revolution. The Romanov dynasty had been toppled and eventually eradicated with bullets in Russia. Germany, meanwhile, seemed poised to fall beneath the wheels of the Red machine. South of the 49th parallel, Canada's giant sibling, the United States, had been experiencing industrial and political turmoil. The Borden government could not help but be frightened. At times the fear reached near paranoiac levels: the prime minister, in France to attend the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, received a frantic telegram from his cabinet requesting that a British cruiser be sent to Vancouver harbour as a tool of intimidation for those contemplating revolution right across Canada!¹

Cahan had an answer for the Canadian government. In a September 1918 report to the federal government, Cahan argued that the horrible and devious Huns, who had received a great deal of hostility and police attention during the war, were no longer the problem. Instead, "Russians, Ukrainians and Finns, employed in the mines, factories and other industries" represented the real danger since they were "thoroughly saturated with the

¹Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada, 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Inc., 1991 [1974]), 311.

Socialistic doctrines which have been proclaimed by the Bolsheviki faction of Russia."² Historian A. Ross McCormack has noted that Cahan's answer was not unique—rather, the importance of his report was that it "encouraged attitudes already developing and led the government to a perception of radicalism which justified the continuation of repressive measures after the war."³ The immediate response of the Borden government was to enact two orders-in-council that silenced foreign-language newspapers and eliminated several anarchist and socialist organizations.⁴

Cahan, however, spoke to an audience that included more than the federal government. Commissioner A.B. Perry heard his warning, and the veteran Mountie worked diligently to ensure his charges had the proper weapons to deal with the radical menace that so many believed threatened Canada and the western world. In early 1919, Perry prepared three memos that created a branch of the Mounted Police which lasted for nearly sixty-five years. His words detailed both the construction of a secret service and the targets of its operations. For the first time Mounties began to police on a regular basis what people said and thought instead of just what they did.

²Cahan to Borden, 14 September 1918 and 21 October 1918, as quoted in Donald Avery, *'Dangerous Foreigners': European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979), 75.

³A. Ross McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899-1919* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 151.

⁴Avery, *'Dangerous Foreigners,'* 75.

In his first memo, dated 6 January 1919, Perry warned of the growth of left-wing radicalism in Canada, specifically the increase in the "pernicious doctrines of Bolshevism." He also identified the geographic centre of radicalism, western Canada, and those prone to accepting such doctrines, chiefly residents in "foreign settlements."⁵ A second memo, prepared the same day, informed his subordinates of the coming battle with radicals over the soul of Canada: "one of the most important branches of our work will be that of the detective service and this service must receive your particular attention with the object in view of obtaining all possible information without in any way causing suspicion on the part of interested persons or associations."⁶

Perry clarified these points in a 5 February 1919 memorandum for his junior officers that was designed to offer "information and guidance in connection with Secret Service investigations re Bolshevism." Specifically, he listed three "classes" of individuals connected with labour and radicalism. First, there were the "responsible leaders of organized labour" opposed to Bolshevism. Next came workers "who express approval of Bolshevism in general, as they look upon it as the workers' Government in Russia without knowing or realizing what it really signifies and without knowing the crimes which are being committed in its name." Finally, and most importantly, according to the commissioner, came the "third class which is believed to constitute a very small minority." In advancing these views, Perry

⁵National Archives of Canada (NAC), Record Group (RG) 18, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Records, vol. 599, file 1309-1335, Circular Memo #807, Re: Bolshevism, 6 January 1919.

⁶*Ibid.*, Circular Memorandum No. 807A., "RE: Detectives and Bolshevism," 6 January 1919.

reflected the strong linkage in the minds of many in Canada between ethnicity and radicalism: "[This third class are] principally of foreign birth, who have imbibed the real Bolshevist Doctrine of a class war, and they believe in revolution as a method to obtain their ends."⁷

Perry offered a prescription for dealing with the three classes. The first group had to be dealt with carefully "so that proceedings ... not be taken against men who in spirit are thoroughly loyal to Canada." The second class was to be battled with "education and counter propaganda." The Mounties' focus would be on the third, and most dangerous, segment.⁸

In his first memo (6 January 1919) Perry had set out the tactics for dealing with such radicals. Of such things are security services made:

6. ... the R.N.W.M. Police is now the sole Federal Police force in Western Canada, and it is therefore our duty to actively enquire into and take such steps as may be legally possible to prevent the efforts of misguided persons to subvert and undermine the settled Government of Canada.
7. Officers Commanding should therefore keep themselves thoroughly informed of what is going on in their Districts and energetically deal with all unlawful and pernicious propaganda....⁹

Additional personnel would have to be recruited to perform the new work that Perry envisioned:

⁷*Ibid.*, Circular Memo No. 807B, 5 February 1919.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹*Ibid.*, Circular Memo #807, Re: Bolshevism, 6 January 1919. Emphasis in the original.

10. ... you will take steps to select some good trustworthy men whom you consider could be employed effectively as secret agents and submit their names records and qualifications for my approval.

11. Too much care cannot be exercised in making such selections upon whom a careful check should be kept with a view to removing the possibility of their purposely furnishing improper or incorrect information.

....

13. It will therefore be necessary to resort to the Criminal Code, dealing with them as treasonable and seditious offences.

14. In the matter of public speeches and addresses- very careful attention is to be given to them, and where a treasonable or seditious speech is anticipated, it should be taken down by a shorthand writer and in a case of great importance, two shorthand writers should be employed acting independently.

15. Attention is also to be given to street speeches more or less prevalent in large centres.

16. It is especially pointed out that investigations and enquiries must be conducted in such manner as not in any way to arouse suspicion or cause antagonism on the part of such associations or organizations.¹⁰

Finally, the commissioner indicated that this new intelligence function was a role being performed for the federal government. The government, Perry wrote, needed "the R.N.W.M. Police to keep it ... advised of any developments towards social unrest. It is extremely desirous that such unrest should not be permitted to develop into a menace to good order and public safety." He also emphasized that it was the duty of every officer in charge of a detachment "to be alert so that they will be the first to furnish any information which the Government expects and ought to receive."¹¹ With his words, Perry had, in effect, established the nature of the Mounties' relationship with left-wing radicals throughout the interwar period. The task of the Mounted Police was to keep

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹*Ibid.*

watch on those unhappy with the status quo, keep the government informed about their activities, and be prepared to act if so ordered by their political bosses.

Canada was certainly not unique in its approach to radicalism at the end of the First World War. The United States was in the midst of its own war against those deemed un-American. As in Canada, the primary targets were organizations on the political left, especially ones with foreign-sounding names and foreign members. Nativism was widespread in American society as the war in Europe bled to a halt. In the interwar period, however, Bolshevism, associated with anarchism and various acts of terrorism committed across the country, replaced enemy aliens as the primary menace to America. A dark star was born in the U.S. in this era; it marked the beginning of the career of a young radical-basher named J. Edgar Hoover, who eventually became arguably the most powerful man in the United States.¹² Of course, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the organization which eventually emerged as the top American law enforcement agency, did not have to perform day-to-day policing activities at a local level the way members of the Mounted Police did.

Britain, whose traditions Canada more closely mirrored, also experienced the development of a political police in this era. Even though it had secret police forces operating in Ireland and India, Britain had always prided itself on its lack of such institutions at home, viewing them as an infringement on civil liberties and more

¹²Richard Gid Powers, *Secrecy and Power: The Life of J. Edgar Hoover* (London: Hutchinson Ltd., 1992), 33-53.

symbolic of the continent.¹³ But in the years prior to the Great War, Britain began to take on many of the trappings of a security state. These developments were a response to both perceived external (the possibility of war in Europe) and internal events (labour unrest between 1911 and 1914). Those on the political right often linked internal problems, such as the unhappiness of British workers, to foreign agitators because, in the words of historian Bernard Porter, "the implication ... was that British workers would still be working happily if it were not for them."¹⁴ Similar attitudes among the powerful appeared in both Canada and the United States during periods of labour discontent at the end of the war and in the subsequent two decades.¹⁵

The climate for security operations in Canada differed from that of Britain and the United States in at least one respect.¹⁶ Canada's lack of a strong unifying identity created an environment of insecurity in which a security service could thrive. Historian

¹³Bernard Porter, *The Origins of the Vigilant State: The London Metropolitan Police Special Branch Before the First World War* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987), 4-16.

¹⁴Bernard Porter, *Plots and Paranoia: A History of Political Espionage in Britain, 1790-1988* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 121-2.

¹⁵One American newspaper editor wrote in this period that "[t]here is no such thing as an American anarchist. The American character has in it no element which can under any circumstances be won to uses so mistaken and pernicious." As quoted in Powers, *Secrecy and Power*, 34.

¹⁶Discussions did occur in 1919 between American, British, and Canadian representatives about sharing intelligence. NAC, RG 24, Department of National Defence Records, vol. 2544, file h.q. c-2051, pt. 5, "PROPOSALS FOR SYSTEM OF DIRECT CO-OPERATION BETWEEN U.S., CANADIAN AND BRITISH NEGATIVE INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATIONS," 1919.

Wesley Wark has described the nation as "a national insecurity state" that included characteristics such as

1. A record of government fears of external threats and internal conspiracies and subversion
2. A popular mentality that stresses insecurity at home, perhaps a product of an insufficiently strong or cohesive national identity.
3. The appearance of a national security force that sees itself as beleaguered and that privileges its expertise and unique understanding of threats. A security intelligence service, in other words, that is itself insecure.¹⁷

This environment made the Mounted Police a more powerful institution than its parallels in the U.S. and Britain.

How did an institution of the "national insecurity state" reach the point at the beginning of 1919 where the Mounted Police commissioner felt the necessity to dispatch memos detailing the creation of a security service? Widespread use of detectives and secret agents was new for the Mounted Police and Canada in general. At the beginning of the First World War, the Dominion Police, in effect Canada's security service, largely handled intelligence gathering through the use of various measures including the appointment of American Pinkerton detectives.¹⁸ The Mounted Police took over the intelligence gathering among enemy alien settlements in western Canada after the start of the conflict, relying on agents recruited for that task. Many of them were subsequently

¹⁷Wesley K. Wark, "Security Intelligence in Canada, 1864-1945: The History of a National Insecurity State," in Keith Nelson and B.J.C. McKercher (eds.), *Go Spy the Land: Military Intelligence in History* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1992), 157.

¹⁸Carl Betke and S.W. Horrall, *Canada's Security Service: An Historical Outline, 1864-1966, Volume 1* (Ottawa: RCMP Historical Section, 1978), 225.

dismissed when it became obvious that these settlements did not pose a major security risk.¹⁹

Times changed and attitudes hardened as the war dragged on. Turmoil began developing on the home front, and nativism increasingly thrived. To the state, especially in the aftermath of Cahan's report, there seemed an increasing need for Mounted Police intelligence gathering, especially among aliens in western Canada.²⁰ By 1919 Commissioner Perry was confirming the development of a Mounted Police security service. Within a few months, the service would be busy. In its early years there was a tremendous overlap between regular police functions and security work. Regular detectives of the Criminal Investigation Branch (CIB), such as C.T. Hildyard in Saskatoon, spent one day conducting narcotics investigations, while the next day they would be spying on a local meeting of the Communist Party or receiving the report of someone they had hired to do that job instead. It was not until the mid-1930s that a clear division appeared within the RCMP between those who worked in security intelligence and those who did regular policing. This lack of a rigid division has incorrectly led some to label intelligence work as not as significant as other police duties.²¹

¹⁹Bill Waiser, *Park Prisoners: The Untold Story of Western Canada's National Parks, 1915-1946* (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1995), 6.

²⁰Labour and political radicalism drove the backlash. See Gregory S. Kealey, "The Surveillance State: The Origins of Domestic Intelligence and Counter-Subversion in Canada, 1914-21," *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 7, no. 3 (1992), 182-3. Also see McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries*, 131. McCormack cites opposition to conscription and the Russian Revolution as the two key events in making the state more aware of radicalism.

²¹R.C. Macleod, "How They 'Got Their Man'" *Literary Review of Canada*, vol. 5, no. 8 (1996), 21. For a spirited response to Macleod's argument, see Gregory S. Kealey

What was the framework of the Mounted Police security operations that allowed it to monitor radicals in Alberta and Saskatchewan? Or, in other words, how did it operate? There were three types of personnel involved in intelligence gathering: regular members of the force, secret agents, and informants. First, there were the regular members of the Mounted Police, often detectives, who went undercover for various periods of time; on other occasions they directed the operations of subordinates. The best examples of such personnel from Alberta and Saskatchewan were T.E. Ryan, who did undercover work in the Regina area at the end of the First World War, and Frank Zaneth active in the Drumheller area and Calgary in the immediate aftermath of the First World War.²² The most famous undercover Mountie in the history of the force, however, was John (Johann) Leopold, who in the persona of Jack Esselwein, a Regina house painter, infiltrated the Communist Party in the 1920s. The use of regular members, especially in undercover work, was a difficult option for the force, especially since its identity was so closely connected with the famous scarlet uniform.²³ In addition, British tradition, which heavily influenced the Mounted Police,

and Reg Whitaker, "The RCMP and the Enemy Within," *Literary Review of Canada*, vol. 5, no. 10 (1996), 22.

²²The American-born Zaneth became a Detective Sergeant in 1920 and a Detective Staff Sergeant in 1932. He would reach the position of Assistant Commissioner before his retirement in 1951. His career is chronicled in James Dubro and Robin Rowland, *Undercover: Cases of the RCMP's Most Secret Operative* (Toronto: Octopus Publishing Group, Toronto, 1991).

²³In 1915 an undercover Mountie was actually fined for failing to salute a superior officer. Horrall and Betke, *Canada's Security Service*, 237-8.

equated surveillance and espionage with underhandedness and skullduggery—not the sort of role for the noble Mounted Policeman.²⁴

Leopold's activities proved both useful and troublesome for the RCMP. The diminutive Mountie—at five foot four, well below the force's minimum height requirements—came from a non-traditional background and spoke English with an accent. He did not conform to the Mountie image constructed at the time. Such characteristics, however, made him ideal for undercover work. Using his alternative identity, Leopold joined the One Big Union (OBU) in Regina in 1919 and became an official of the Worker's Unity Party in 1921.²⁵ Yet these undercover activities by someone who was a regular member of the Mounties created certain problems. First, there was a question of legality. How far could Leopold go as his alter ego, Jack Esselwein, in an effort to discover subversion? This aspect worried his handlers even as he wormed deeper into the radical left in Regina. After all, this experience was new for the Mounted Police, and even in the 1990s questions of entrapment continue to trouble police forces. In July 1921, Leopold's main contact in the force, Detective Sgt. E.C. Salt, relayed a conversation with his spy to A.B. Allard, in-charge of the Southern Saskatchewan Detachment of the RCMP. The topic of discussion was how active a role

²⁴When it was revealed in the aftermath of the 1933 Saskatoon Relief Camp Riot that a Mounted Policeman, Constable H.M. Wilson had infiltrated the Saskatoon unemployed, the Regina *Leader-Post* ran an editorial critical of the police methods: "... it should be recognized that Canadian public opinion is strongly against what might be referred to as secret police. The tradition of the country is against it, as also is the British tradition." NAC, RG 146, RCMP Records Related to the Estevan Strike and Riot, vol. 27, file 92-A-00123, pt. 3.

²⁵*Ibid.*

Leopold should play in the fledgling Communist Party, since he had been approached by a party official to organize a branch in Regina:

Should he take an active part, presumably that of leader or organizer, he would be liable to most severe punishment when the final break comes, as it would be out of the question to uncover him and even if uncovered he would still be liable, as it would be impossible for him to carry on without doing criminal actions occasionally. On being questioned, he assured me that he would never in any way promote the Communist Party unless forced to do so by circumstances and that he would use every discretion in the matter.

He further informed me on being questioned that he was willing if necessary and if in the interests of the work, to go to gaol and serve any term which might be imposed upon him, rather than be uncovered, if of course, he was still carried in the strength of the force. No. 30 is prepared to go to any length the Service requires.²⁶

Salt assured his superior that any activity on the part of Leopold would be to the detriment, not the benefit, of the Communists. In Regina Leopold had already destroyed party flyers, wasted funds, and sabotaged party meetings; the sergeant now sought approval for the infiltrator to continue and extend his activities.²⁷ The official blessing was not long in coming. Four days later, Commissioner Perry wrote that the "opportunity offered of gaining access to Communist plans must not be allowed to escape us." At the same time, he cautioned, "[i]t is undesirable that No. 30 should actually commit illegal acts himself, or should incite others to commit them."²⁸

²⁶RCMP, Personnel Records Related to John Leopold, D/Sgt. Salt to Allard, RE: SA 30, 2 July 1921.

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸RCMP, Personnel Records Related to John Leopold, Commissioner Perry to Allard, 6 July 1921.

In return, Leopold promised that if "pressed to organize the Regina Branch of the Movement, I will do so with the least amount of effect as possible, and endeavour to get someone also to do the actual work or appear to do it. I will be on my guard against doing anything which could be brought home to me individually."²⁹ And, of course, anything which might be traced back to the Mounted Police. There was, however, some question as to how passive a role the secretive Mountie played. Once his identity was revealed publicly in 1931, two members of parliament, J.S. Woodsworth and M.J. Coldwell, criticized Mounted Police security intelligence activity in the House of Commons. In 1937 Coldwell recalled his contact with Leopold in Regina and how hard the Mountie had worked on behalf of the Communist Party, even urging a Coldwell acquaintance to join the illegal organization. The veteran of numerous political skirmishes, reflecting popular sentiments of the time, derided such work as "unBritish."³⁰ Woodsworth questioned the government in 1934 about whether the Mounted Police still had police officers spying on the legal activities of unions. He noted that Leopold had worked as an official in a trade union as part of his undercover identity.³¹ The member of parliament also recalled a meeting of his own with Leopold at which the latter invited him home for

²⁹*Ibid.*, Leopold to Allard, 17 July 1921. There may have been another Mountie active in the Communist Party at the same time as Leopold. In November 1922 Leopold wrote his superiors to warn that Communist activist Becky Buhay had singled out a member of the English branch of the Worker's Party for exposure because of the belief that he was an undercover agent. NAC, RG 146, RCMP Records Related to Rebecca Buhay, vol. 10, file 92-A-00012, pt. 1, Report of No. 30, 21 November 1922.

³⁰Canada, House of Commons' *Debates*, 5 April 1937, 2571 to 72. In 1966 Coldwell became one of three appointed to a Royal Commission on Security. Ironically he proved the most conservative of the three. John Sawatsky, *Men in the Shadows* (Toronto: Totem Books, 1983), 194.

dinner; always the gentleman, the socialist member of parliament kindly refused the generous invitation.³²

Eventually the Mounted Police itself questioned the effectiveness of Leopold. The Mountie revelled in his undercover role, especially the freedom he enjoyed as Jack Esselwein.³³ He began to act in a manner outside the control of his Mountie handlers, many of whom were still uncomfortable with the nature of undercover activity. In 1926 Leopold, much to the surprise of his superiors, made a trip to Winnipeg. This unexpected sojourn prompted Commissioner Cortlandt Starnes to wonder if "this man is getting somewhat disposed to work upon his own, with insufficient consultation and direction from his superiors."³⁴ Leopold also appears to have begun to crack under the stress of living a life of deception. In 1927 his superiors received a report of binge drinking on the part of their undercover Mountie. He also failed to make regular reports.³⁵ Finally, in 1928, the CPC discovered his true identity and expelled him from the party. Headquarters advised him to quietly accept the expulsion so as not to give "the radicals any material for propaganda."³⁶

³¹Leopold headed the Regina Trades and Labour Council in 1925.

³²Canada, House of Commons' *Debates*, 20 March 20 1934, 1663-5.

³³Such a transformation is not unique among undercover officers nor among Mountie undercover operatives. For a contemporary example of a Mountie who was unable to handle a dual role, see Michael Harris, *The Judas Kiss: The Undercover World of Patrick Kelly* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Inc., 1995).

³⁴*Ibid.*, Starnes to Knight, 18 October 1926.

³⁵*Ibid.*, Newson, O.C. "O" Division, to G.S. Worsley, Asst. Comm. 23 June 1927.

³⁶RCMP, Personnel Records of John Leopold, G.L. Jennings to Starnes, 18 May 1928.

John Leopold, however, did not quietly disappear. Transferred to the Yukon and regular duty after his exposure, he reappeared in 1931 to testify in the trial of the "Toronto Eight," eight members of the leadership of the Communist Party of Canada who had been arrested under section 98 of the *Criminal Code*. His personal behaviour also remained troublesome for the Mounted Police. First, there was a bout of venereal disease while in the Yukon. Other discipline problems in the early 1930s, including continued trouble with alcohol, led to a reduction in his rank.³⁷ When Leopold was involved in the botched attempt to arrest the leaders of the On to Ottawa Trek in 1935, a cartoon in the University of Saskatchewan student newspaper, *The Sheaf*, mocked him as a drunk.³⁸ In early 1936, Leopold was reprimanded for being intoxicated on duty, for possessing liquor on duty, and insubordination.³⁹ The Communists had great sport with Leopold's trouble.⁴⁰ In fact, the only thing that kept him in the Mounted Police, where he remained until his death in 1958, was the fear of an even greater Communist propaganda victory over his dismissal.⁴¹

³⁷Gregory S. Kealey, "The Early Years of State Surveillance of Labour and the Left in Canada: The Institutional Framework of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Security and Intelligence Apparatus, 1918-26," *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 8, no. 3 (1993),145

³⁸*The Sheaf*, 26 November 1935. For more details see Steve Hewitt, "Spying 101: The RCMP's Secret Activities at the University of Saskatchewan, 1920-1971," *Saskatchewan History*, vol. 47, no. 2, 20-31.

³⁹RCMP, Personnel Records Related to John Leopold, Leopold's Record-Defaulter Sheet.

⁴⁰NAC, RG 146, RCMP Records Related to the On to Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot, vol. 26, file 93-A-00086, Wood to Commissioner MacBrien, 25 January 1936.

⁴¹Kealey, "The Early Years of State Surveillance of Labour and the Left in Canada," 145.

Leopold was not the only Mountie operating undercover in Alberta and Saskatchewan at the end of the war. Frank Zaneth also had a lengthy undercover career; but unlike his more famous colleague, he managed to keep his record clean and spent the western Canadian part of his secret career in Alberta. Zaneth, of Italian-American background, and thus capable of blending in with those targeted by the Mounted Police for surveillance, joined the force in December 1917. Three months later the rookie police officer appeared before the commissioner in Regina. Perry informed the new Mountie of his designation as the first member of the fledgling security service a few months before the commissioner codified the operations of the branch.⁴² Zaneth would report directly to the top Mountie. In September 1918 Perry sent Zaneth, posing as an enemy alien named Harry Blask, to Drumheller to keep watch on disgruntled coal miners. The undercover Mountie infiltrated the labour and radical scene before having his real identity revealed when he was required to testify at the Winnipeg General Strike trials.⁴³ Having to expose a valuable operative like Zaneth irritated upper echelons of the RCMP. That experience helps explain the subsequent reluctance of the police to encourage the prosecution of radicals. The better approach was to watch quietly and wait.

⁴²In December 1918 the RNWMP had eight secret agents and six detectives in the entire force. S.W. Horrall, "The Royal North-West Mounted Police and Labour Unrest in Western Canada, 1919," *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 61, no. 2 (1980), 174.

⁴³Dubro and Rowland, *Undercover*, 24 -73.

Constable T.E. Ryan was another Mountie active in an undercover role in Saskatchewan. Ryan was a colleague of Leopold, once aided his bedridden and very ill colleague in 1919 while the two were but mere rookies in the big league of spying. The young constable managed to infiltrate the local chapter of the One Big Union (OBU) and filed several reports before the past enveloped his career.⁴⁴

Several Mounties went undercover for short periods during their careers. Constable H.M. Wilson infiltrated the relief camp in Saskatoon just prior to the 1933 relief camp riot.⁴⁵ "I have," he reported, "firmly established myself as a radical."⁴⁶ Constable Harold Philip Keeler, a former member of the London Metropolitan Police, entered the Communist Party in Alberta between October 1930 and May 1931 before once again donning the scarlet to testify against party members in court.⁴⁷ Corporal R.C. Rathbone had undercover periods in his career first in Winnipeg in 1922 and then in Edmonton in 1932, where he worked at a relief office and made regular reports on the unemployed.⁴⁸

⁴⁴Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), RCMP Records Related to J.S. Woodsworth, Report of Cst. T.E. Ryan, 19 September 1919. The RCMP deemed the personnel records of Ryan as not of historical value and destroyed them. His medical records, however, still exist.

⁴⁵For more information about the riot see Glenn Makahonuk, "The Saskatoon Relief Camp Workers' Riot," *Saskatchewan History*, vol. 37, no. 2 (1984), 55-72.

⁴⁶NAC, RG 146, RCMP Records Related to the Saskatoon Relief Camp Riot, vol. 27, file 92-A-00123, pt. 3, Report of Const. H.M. Wilson, 26 April 1933.

⁴⁷Helen Potrebenko, *No Streets of Gold* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1977), 210.

⁴⁸NAC, Prime Minister R.B. Bennett Papers, Reel M-1453, CIB Confidential Monthly Report on Edmonton Unemployed, 493667-772. Mounties Joseph Bordeau and one by the last name of Upton also went undercover at various points in Edmonton, a city with a large immigrant population and the reputation as a centre of Alberta radicalism.

The second component of Mounted Police security operations in Alberta and Saskatchewan was secret agents.⁴⁹ The prime qualification to be a secret agent, reflecting the nature of the work or more accurately the targets of their work, was linguistic skill. Secret agents, because of the distaste society felt about their work and the desire of the force to distance itself should an operation go awry, had even less job security than regular members of the force.⁵⁰ In the nature and the low status of the work, the position had, in effect, been ethnicized. Specific guidelines for the use and handling of secret agents developed through trial and error; after all, much of this was new to the Mounted Police, as 1919 instructions regarding the activities of agents in "K" Division indicate:

Confirming the instructions given you today you will arrange to meet our Secret Agents at appointed place, and in this connection, so far as possible, it will be well not to have all together at one time. The matter in hand is more or less connected, still they can be given work to do that will avoid their doubling up on same, and in reports submitted. Corroboration of certain information, is of course, useful in many instances.

Barbara Roberts, *Whence They Came: Deportation from Canada, 1900-1935* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988), 156.

⁴⁹Gregory S. Kealey supplies a partial list of secret agents from 1919-20 in "The Surveillance State." 1. F.E. Reithdorf, SA #50 a.k.a. Frederick Edwards; 2. Roth, SA #6; 3. Dourasoff, SA #14; 4. Jones, SA #58, Vancouver; 5. A.B. Smith SA #61, Victoria; 6. F.H. Colam; 7. F.W. Zaneth; 8. George C. Evans; 9. R.M. Gosden; 10. Devitt, Vancouver; 11. W.P. Walker, Edmonton; 12. Eccles, Vancouver; 13. Spain, Vancouver; 14. Orton Hall, Vancouver; 15. Davies, Vancouver; 16. Wilkie, Vancouver; 17. Lawrence, Vancouver; 18. Kobus; 19. Kyzlick; 20. Harry Daskaluk, SA #21; 21. Gore Kaburagi or Goro Karbarugi; 22. John Leopold; 23. T.E. Ryan; 24. John Veloskie; 25. Julius Chmichlewski; Gregory S. Kealey, "The Surveillance State," 205. Leopold specifically told his employers that he did not wish to become a secret agent (RCMP, Personnel Records for John Leopold, Leopold to Allard, 17 July 1921), in part, no doubt, because such a job carried poorer benefits than a regular position.

⁵⁰RCMP, Personnel Records of Mervyn Black, 1935.

The important point to have these men apply themselves in the obtaining of inside information from the Strikers, particularly the Red element, of moves they are likely to make, so that we will know in advance, and as early as possible, of any contemplated action on their part likely to cause serious trouble.⁵¹

⁵¹NAC, RG 146, RCMP Records Related to the Winnipeg General Strike, vol. 1, file 1025-9-9028, pt. 12, Spalding to Staff Sergeant Hall, 30 May 1919. Not surprisingly for an institution concerned with its place in the world, very specific guidelines covering the salaries of agents and the expenses they could claim appeared very early in the history of the security service operations:

SECRET SERVICE EXPENDITURE

1. A Contingent Account for the above expenditure will be opened on the 1st., April 1919, and will be kept in the C.I.B. Office at Regina.
2. In order to segregate this expenditure, the following procedure in connection with Pay and Expenses is to be adopted, commencing with the 1st., April 1919.
3. PAY

A special Pay List for Secret Agents is to be prepared monthly, as per specimen attached, such pay list is to be rendered promptly at the end of each month, in quintuplicate, supported by a voucher on Form 5, as per sample, appended to Pay List. Cheque for the total amount will be remitted you from the C.I.B. Office, Regina, and payment is to be made by you to these men in CASH, taking receipts in each case in quadruplicated, one of which you will retain, the others to be sent here for record.

4. TRAVELLING EXPENSES

Travelling Expenses of Secret Agents and regular detectives on Secret Service, in the first instance, be advanced from the District Contingency Accounts, but, vouchers in connection with such advances must not appear in District Contingency Accounts.

5. Vouchers covering advances under this head, shall be forwarded to the C.I.B. Office, Regina, confidentially, rendered on Form 93, in triplicate, (as per specimen copy attached) supported by the Agent's expense statement in triplicate. After the vouchers have been audited at C.I.B. Office, a cheque for the amount of same will be forwarded to the Officer Commanding to reimburse his District Contingency Account.
6. The Secret Agent will receipt for the amount of travelling expenses advanced to him and included in vouchers with his name and ordinary signature.

7. PURCHASE OF INFORMATION

In cases where it is found absolutely necessary, information may be purchased, if of vital importance; reasonable economy must be observed. If possible, a receipt should be procured from the payee, in case this is impractical, a witness should be present, and the voucher in support be certified by both the official making payment and the witness.

8. In case this is impossible, a voucher, Form 5, will be submitted by the Officer Commanding personally for the expenditure, bearing his certificate, with a statement attached covering the facts.
9. Officers Commanding must closely supervise this class of expenditure and they must exercise extreme care with the object of preventing unnecessary expenditure under this head.
10. GENERAL

The Mounted Police's experience with secret agents in Alberta and Saskatchewan was a mixed one. The employment of non-Anglo Saxons could on occasion unleash Mountie prejudice. In 1919 Superintendent P.W. Pennefather of "K" Division derided the work of two of his secret agents and complained of the difficulty of training "foreigners" for secret agent work.⁵² The nature of the work, as well, could lead to distrust. If a secret agent was willing to lie, cheat, and betray to collect information, how could such an individual be truly trusted? In Calgary in 1919, Detective S.R. Waugh informed his superiors that he did not have faith in one of the secret agents working under him; the Mountie feared that the agent might either be lazy, simply passing off Frank Zaneth's work as his own, or actually a double agent who was feeding the Mounted Police disinformation.⁵³ Mervyn Black, recruited in Saskatchewan in the early 1930s as a secret agent, later took a desk job and exercised a great deal of power in handling agents. At the same time, his bosses received criticism from their superiors because they considered Black too much of a security risk to be handling sensitive operations.⁵⁴ One Mountie warned Commissioner MacBrien in 1934 that secret agents

These instructions will necessarily countermand those included in Circular Memos. Nos. 790A and 790B...." NAC, RG 18, vol. 592, file 1072-1084, 18 March 1919.

⁵²*Ibid.*, vol. 1933, file G-57-9-1, "K" Division Confidential Monthly Report for February 1919.

⁵³NAC, RG 146, vol. 1, file 1025-9-9028, pt. 12, Report of Det. S.R. Waugh, 29 May 29 1919.

⁵⁴Gregory S. Kealey, "Introduction," in Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker (eds.), *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Depression years, Part I, 1933-1934* (St. John's: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1993), 12-15.

needed to be closely monitored: "This cannot be properly judged from their reports coming into Headquarters. It is found that some secret agents have been taken on without very careful examination in regard to them and their work has been of little or no value."⁵⁵

Agents came from many different backgrounds. W.H. Balsinger, a French-Canadian, was sent out among French communities in Saskatchewan in 1916 and 1917 to listen to opinions related to conscription. In 1916 Perry authorized the hiring of Joseph E. Ruepp, familiar with German, French, and Italian, as a secret agent in Edmonton, specifically to ensure that "enquiries [into radical activity] may be promptly and speedily made and thus [the RNWMP would] not be dependent upon outside assistance."⁵⁶

Not only did the use of secret agents remove the necessity of relying on individuals from outside agencies, but they were also much more effective for a police force becoming increasingly concerned about the opinions and words of citizens. Historian Bernard Porter's definition of a political police is applicable to the Mounted Police: "a body of men and women whose duty is to keep tabs on the political opinions, activities and intentions of the subjects of a state."⁵⁷ Commissioner Perry had instructed

⁵⁵NAC, RG 18, 85-86/574, Box 9, G-537-1, "Organization of the CIB," H. Darling, Assistant Superintendent for DCI, to Commissioner MacBrien, 22 May 1934. As quoted and cited in Kealey, "The Early Years of State Surveillance of Labour and the Left in Canada," 144.

⁵⁶NAC, RG 18, vol. 511, file 306. Perry's comment was an obvious reference to the use of American detectives by the Dominion Police.

⁵⁷Porter, *Plots and Paranoia*, 8.

in 1919 that "[a]rrangements must be made whereby detectives are able to supply their Officers Commanding with a complete report as to what transpires at every meeting of these [radical] organizations.⁵⁸ Agents and informants served as additional sets of ears to hear what was said and as added witnesses to testify about activities or statements in court.⁵⁹ Often what they heard was in a language other than English. T.A. Wroughton, in-charge of "G" Division which covered part of Alberta, including Edmonton, lamented in July 1917 that none of his detectives understood German or "Austrian." He suggested that two agents who spoke the languages of sedition and radicalism be transferred for his use.⁶⁰

Nineteen-nineteen became the key year for the use of Mounted Police secret agents in Alberta and Saskatchewan. In Alberta, the men in scarlet targetted Edmonton and mining areas. Perry, however, informed the chairman of Alberta's Board of Police Commissioners that secret agents were operating in every part of Alberta.⁶¹ "G" Division's monthly report for January 1919 noted that an attempt was being made to recruit secret agents in an effort to gather inside information on J.A. Knight, a local radical and head of Edmonton's Trades and Labour Council. Unfortunately, the report

⁵⁸NAC, RG 18, A1, vol. 599, files 1309-1335, "Circular Memorandum No. 807A.: RE: Detectives and Bolshevism," 6 January 1919.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, vol. 519, file 11 pt.1, Superintendent T.A. Wroughton to Perry, 31 October 1917. Wroughton lamented that a plain-clothes Mountie lacked another witness to corroborate a particularly seditious speech.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, vol. 537, file 409, Wroughton to the Commissioner, 31 July 1917.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, vol. 2169, file 16/1-16/15, Perry to Chairman, Board of Police Commissioners.

author added, finding qualified men was extremely difficult. In Edmonton, William Walker, a returned soldier, was taken on as an agent and seemed promising. The recruitment of Walker also suggests that the Mounted Police recognized that it was not only non-English speaking radicals who might prove a threat.⁶²

By August 1919 Superintendent P.W. Pennefather, the head of "K" Division which included the mining districts of Southern Alberta, was complaining about the volume of material flooding in from agents; he requested an additional stenographer to handle the correspondence.⁶³ That material would continue to flood in from secret agents throughout the interwar period. There can be no exact account of the actual amount or the number of agents employed in the field. The only such information available is for 1923-24, undoubtedly a slow year in the war against radicalism. During that period the Mounted Police budgeted \$130 per month each for thirty agents at a total of \$46,800 for the year. Twenty agents received a subsistence allowance and travelling expenses of \$3 per diem or a total of \$21,900 for the year. Six more agents were employed part time at \$3,240 for the year (or \$45 per agent per month). Detectives of the force and the CIB's stenographers received \$28,060 for the year. The total of the secret service operations for

⁶²*Ibid.*, vol. 1931, file no.2, pt.2, 31 January 1919. On 4 February 1919 Perry gave Wroughton permission to employ "such special agents as might be found necessary to cope with these elements." *Ibid.*, vol. 572, file 52-19, Perry to McLean, 4 February 1919.

⁶³*Ibid.*, vol. 1943, file 82, Pennefather to Perry, 9 August 1919; *Ibid.*, 8 September 1919. Det. S.R. Waugh, who handled Zaneth, made a similar complaint noting that he was confined to his office more than he would like because he had to transcribe every report. NAC, RG 146, vol. 1, file 1025-9-9028, pt. 12, Report of Det. S.R. Waugh, 29 May 1919.

the 1923-24 year was \$100,000, out of the RCMP's total budget of \$2,587,999.11 or four percent.⁶⁴

Records from 1933 indicate a wide variance in salaries for agents working for Saskatchewan's "F" Division, which in 1932 had its boundaries adjusted to include all of the province (see Table 4-1). This list does not include all of the agents operating in Saskatchewan in the 1930s. At least two others, Secret Agents 942 and 950, were active. In the fall of 1933 they were working in the MacKenzie constituency where a federal by-election was to occur, and where Communist organizers sought support. During the subsequent winter they covered relief camps around Saskatoon.⁶⁵ In 1935, Secret Agent 942 worked his hours in the mining districts of Estevan and Bienfait.⁶⁶ Where agents spied (mining districts, urban centres, relief camps) speaks to the sectors given security priority by the Mounted Police. The 1930s was a decade of record unemployment, and various levels of government viewed the victims of the economic calamity, the unemployed, as a direct threat to social peace.

In 1936 Secret Agent 942 was still employed, having been joined by Secret Agent 983.⁶⁷ Former secret agent and now Special Constable Mervyn Black handled both

⁶⁴NAC, RG 18, vol. 3173, file G1030-1-23, RCMP Spending Estimates for 1923-24.

⁶⁵RCMP, Personnel Records of Mervyn Black, Wood to MacBrien, 16 October 1933.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, Wood to MacBrien, 8 October 1935.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, Wood to MacBrien, 16 October 1935.

TABLE 4-1⁶⁸

SALARIES OF RCMP SECRET AGENTS IN SASKATCHEWAN
("F" DIVISION), 1933

Agent	Salary
Secret Agent 849 (J.L. Eberhardt)	\$4.00 per day
Secret Agent 895	\$35.00 per month
Secret Agent 871	\$50.00 per month
Secret Agent 881	\$3.50 per day
Secret Agent 909	\$2.50 per day
Secret Agent 923	\$35.00 per month
Secret Agent 935 (Mervyn Black)	\$80.00 per month

⁶⁸RCMP, Personnel Records of J.L. Eberhardt, Report of S/Sgt. B.H. James, 28 February 1933.

them.⁶⁹ Carl Betke and S.W. Horrall, in their official history of the security service, cite "F" Division as a particularly efficient operation when it came to intelligence gathering. They also point to the fact that Saskatchewan was the first province to receive the Mounted Police back as a provincial police force, thereby providing a much wider RCMP presence and thus greater opportunities for collecting information. Stuart Taylor Wood led "F" Division for several years in the 1930s; the future commissioner had a better appreciation of the importance of intelligence gathering than many of his contemporaries.⁷⁰

Records related to secret agents in Alberta are not as detailed as those for its eastern neighbour.⁷¹ One agent active in the province was Jacob M. Tatko, who served as Secret Agent 125 in Alberta between April 1921 and February 1932. His top salary as a secret agent was \$125 per month.⁷² Roy Koyich infiltrated the Communist Party in the 1930s. He was responsible for the internment of several individuals during World War Two under the Defence of Canada Regulations; once his identity was exposed, Koyich became a special constable.⁷³

⁶⁹For a more detailed description of Black's career see Kealey, "Introduction," in *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Depression Years, Part I, 1933-1934*, 12-15.

⁷⁰Betke and Horrall, *Canada's Security Service*, 395-6

⁷¹Detailed records of secret agents which remain, or are at least accessible, are of those agents who also served part of their duty as special constables in the RCMP.

⁷²RCMP, Personnel records of Jacob M. Tatko, Memo to the Adjutant from J. Stevens, Chief Treasury Officer, 13 September 1938; *Ibid.*, W.F. Hancock to the Commissioner, 21 November 1938.

⁷³William Repka and Kathleen M. Repka, *Dangerous Patriots: Canada's Unknown Prisoners of War* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1982), 64. Koyich had worked as treasurer for a Communist Party club in Edmonton.

The final human resource of the developing RCMP security service was informants or, perhaps more accurately, part-time spies. Mounties used informants on occasion to cover meetings or to supply information on a particular organization or individual. They were also employed because Mounties, even in plain clothes, could be recognized at meetings, especially in small centres—a reality acknowledged in a 1919 report from the Saskatoon detachment:

No member of this detachment attended this meeting [at which J.S. Woodsworth spoke] as there were a number of foreigners present, also it was deemed advisable to keep away as labour men have been kept in close touch with and recognition was a thing to avoid, however the meeting was covered fully by previous arrangement.⁷⁴

Often the value of an informant depended on his or her position in relation to the organization or individual he or she was being asked to supply information about. In Saskatoon in the early 1920s, for example, the local Mountie secured information from an individual named Mill (possibly Walter Mill upon whom the Mounties also had a file), a local organizer for the Trade Union Educational League and the Workers' Party of Canada.⁷⁵ In Edmonton in 1928 an informant was high enough in the local party to be asked by prominent Communist activist A.E. Smith, head of the Canadian Labour

⁷⁴CSIS, RCMP Records Related to J.S. Woodsworth, Saskatoon Detachment, re: Woodsworth, 30 May 1919.

⁷⁵RCMP, Personnel Records of C.T. Hildyard, Hildyard to O.C., Prince Albert, 5 September 1923.

Defence League (CLDL), about the activities of the Edmonton branches; in turn, the informant queried Smith on his party work.⁷⁶

Informants were usually paid a fee for their work. In a 1925 Saskatoon example, one informant received five dollars for reports on two meetings.⁷⁷ Sometimes the Mountie handlers employed more than one source at a meeting,⁷⁸ the testimony in court of two reporters carried more weight than one. Having two in attendance at gatherings also allowed the Mountie handler to use each source as a check on the veracity of the other.⁷⁹ "[B]e constantly on their guard against being purposely misled by the informants," Commissioner Perry had warned detectives.⁸⁰

Occasionally, the Mounted Police had good reason to be suspicious of the information they received. In 1924 word came from an informant that an important Communist, Malcolm Bruce, was carrying the "plans of Lenine [sic] and Trotzky [sic] for

⁷⁶CSIS, RCMP Records Related to the Canadian Labour Defence League and A.E. Smith, vol. 19, Report of [deleted], Regarding A.E. Smith in Edmonton, 18 April 1928. The informant reported having known Smith since the latter was attempting to establish a labour church in Vancouver in 1920; *Ibid.*, Report of [deleted], 16 January 1928. In 1920 in Edmonton an informant or secret agent reported on his work on a labour committee. NAC, RG 146, vol. 1, file 1025-9-9028, pt. 6, Report of anonymous, Edmonton, 26 April 1920.

⁷⁷CSIS, RCMP Records Related to Malcolm Bruce., vol. 87, file 117-89-57, Report of Hildyard, 3 February 1922.

⁷⁸CSIS, vol. 19, file 1, Smith, Report of C. Hildyard, 17 June 1925.

⁷⁹In Calgary in 1920 the report of one informant left his handler wondering if the individual had actually attended the meeting or simply read the description of the meeting in the local newspaper. NAC, RG 146, vol. 1, file 1025-9-9028, pt. 6, Hall to Spalding, 17 April 1920. The informant demanded \$10 for his work. *Ibid.*, Pennefather to Commissioner, 10 May 1920.

⁸⁰NAC, RG 18, A1, vol. 599, files 1309-1335, "Circular Memorandum No. 807A: RE: Detectives and Bolshevism," 6 January 1919.

the world revolution."⁸¹ At his first opportunity John Leopold searched Bruce's suitcase in Regina; he found only ordinary party documents.⁸² The world was once again safe for democracy.

Taken together, these various Mountie sources generated tens of thousands of pages of records on organizations, events, and individuals. The main division in record keeping was between organizations and individuals. In the case of the latter, the process of developing Personal History Files (PHFs) began in 1919. These were detailed records on who the Mounties considered particularly troublesome or dangerous. Commissioner Perry had ordered that a file be kept "for each leader or official of any [radical organization] ... and as the information is gathered from time to time regarding these men it should be placed on the individual's file. By this means a complete history of these men and their doings to date will be available at any time."⁸³ The files usually began with a description of the individual, including a ranking of the person's success as an agitator. A picture often accompanied the reports along with any subsequent records. The decision to start a PHF was usually predicated on the involvement of the individual in any hint of radical activity. Chairing a 1920 labour meeting in Carievale, Saskatchewan, a small

⁸¹CSIS, vol. 87, file 117-89-57, Report of Det. Sgt. Moss, 14 November 1924.

⁸²*Ibid.*, Report of Leopold, 5 December 1924.

⁸³NAC, RG 18, A1, vol. 599, files 1309-1335, "Circular Memorandum No. 807A: RE: Detectives and Bolshevism," 6 January 1919.

town in the southern part of the province, was all that it took for the Mounted Police to create a PHF for Reverend H.D. Ranns, a Methodist minister.⁸⁴

Who and what were the Mounted Police collecting files on in Alberta and Saskatchewan and, more importantly, why? The targets can be broken down in the following ways. First, there was the radical left, the main and consistent target from the end of the First World War to the beginning of the next. Other individuals and organizations also contained in the category of "left," specifically those of a social democratic nature, occasionally drew police interest. Gathering information on these organizations occurred almost exclusively in the early 1920s when the Mounted Police security role was still in its infancy. The force, for example, collected files on William Irvine and J.S. Woodsworth, two labour members of parliament. The other political groups which interacted with the RCMP in Alberta and Saskatchewan were organizations on the political right. In the 1920s this category was represented by the Ku Klux Klan; in the 1930s fascist and Nazi organizations carried the banner.

Some groups tarred with the label of radicalism received only brief attention before being dismissed. In their haste in the aftermath of the First World War to collect information on any group outside the mainstream, the Mounties reached for restraint and found an empty holster. In a series of raids across Western Canada to collect evidence for the Winnipeg General Strike trials, for example, underlings were instructed to seize

⁸⁴CSIS, RCMP Records Related to J.S. Woodsworth, vol., file Report of Crpl. W.J. Barker, 17 May 1920.

"Anything of a Socialistic or Revolutionary character."⁸⁵ It was up to individual officers to determine what constituted such definitions.

Besides demonstrating a lack of sophistication, such an approach created the potential for excess. In one case Mounted Policemen collected information on a Jehovah's Witness organization.⁸⁶ A security bulletin for October 1920 reported on a meeting of the International Bible Student Association in Prince Albert and the fact that the main speaker had declared that a religious revolution was at hand.⁸⁷ Reports on Witnesses had turned up in "K" Division the previous year, when the police charged several with possession of restricted literature. Superintendent Pennefather commented that "[o]nly nominal fines were imposed as it was plain that these people were not propagandists, but simply religious fanatics."⁸⁸ The selection of Witnesses for repression in the immediate aftermath of the First World War demonstrated that during periods of turmoil the net of the state was often cast wide. The Mounties sought radicals of all stripes, and a religious group which viewed the state as satanic seemed, at least initially, an ideal candidate for repression. This is a reality the Witnesses would experience again

⁸⁵NAC, RG 146, vol. 1, 1025-9-9028, pt. 7, Asst. Commissioner. W.H. Routledge to Insp. C. Prime, 27 June 1919.

⁸⁶For a study of state persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in Canada see William Kaplan, *State and Salvation: The Jehovah's Witnesses and Their Fight for Civil Rights* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989).

⁸⁷Security Bulletin No. 45-14 October 1920 in Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker (eds.), *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Early Years, 1919-1929* (St. John's: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1994), 205-36.

⁸⁸NAC, RG 18, vol. 1933, file G-57-9-1, "K" Division Confidential Monthly Report for November 1919.

during the Second World War when they would be banned as a subversive organization and compared by the commissioner of the Mounted Police to "poison toadstools."⁸⁹

There was one Mounted Police enemy, however, that could not be rehabilitated, nor shown moderation under any circumstances. That villain was the revolutionary left, represented over the years by different organizations but chiefly by the Communist Party of Canada (CPC). This group would be the primary target of the RCMP security operations until the rise of Quebec separatism in the 1960s. The priority toward the radical left was evident in January 1919 when Commissioner Perry ordered Mounted Police detectives to investigate every organization in their district for the following things:

- (A) The purpose and object of the organization
- (B) If the organization is one which could possibly be influenced by Bolsheviki propaganda in order to gain its ends
- (C) Has the organization Bolsheviki tendencies at the present time.
- (D) Is it a Bolsheviki organization.⁹⁰

Why did the RCMP become obsessed with the radical left—an obsession that on occasion bordered on outright hatred? First, communists in Canada were intimately connected with the Bolsheviks in the Soviet Union, a party which advocated the worldwide overthrow of capitalism. The Soviets made efforts in other countries, including Canada, to promote revolution, providing both financial and ideological guidance through the

⁸⁹S.T. Wood, "Tools for Treachery," *R.C.M.P. Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 4 (1941), 394.

⁹⁰RG 18, A1, vol. 599, files 1309-1335, "Circular Memorandum No. 807A: RE: Detectives and Bolshevism," 6 January 1919.

Communist International (COMINTERN). The fact that much of this revolutionary activity was conducted in secret only drew greater attention from the police.⁹¹

Another important factor that made the Communist Party so threatening to so many was its "foreign" component. Regardless of how small its membership was or how divided the party was, both realities that applied for a good portion of the interwar period, the fact that the group challenging the status quo seemed both controlled and populated by outsiders, especially those considered beneath the majority because of prevailing prejudices, made the threat of the CPC that much greater. Communists appeared to be both un-Canadian and un-British since the movement had no Anglo roots;⁹² it was an alien growth on Canadian soil. Historian Ivan Avakumovic described the two solitudes well: "To a native Canadian a Communist was someone who spoke English with an accent, used jargon incomprehensible to most Canadians, read newspapers in what seemed to be exotic languages, and who lived in parts of the town that go-ahead Canadians were only too eager to leave."⁹³ In his study of anti-Communist campaigns in Toronto in the late 1920s Michiel Horn noted that the "overt issue was whether Communists had the right to speak in public. This barely masked more

⁹¹Ivan Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada: A History* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), 22-3.

⁹²Except, of course, for the fact that Marx did much of his writing and research in London.

⁹³Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada*, 36.

important questions: who or what was a Canadian? What kind of country was Canada? What impact was immigration having on it?"⁹⁴

Mounted Policemen, of course, were not immune to such perceptions. Superintendent Jas. Ritchie reported in 1925 that while English Communists were not particularly active in the "G" Division area of Alberta, foreigners were "unceasing in their efforts at organizing the so-called proletariat [sic] against the great day of emancipation, and the downfall of the Capitalist system, when they will take the power of Government, etc. into their own hands."⁹⁵

Being "foreign" was not just about ethnicity. Communists were often atheists, completely rejecting the trappings of Christianity, a fact constantly emphasized in RCMP security bulletins. One from 1926 described Communist funerals in Drumheller involving "Communist priests" who replaced religious ritual with political ones. The same report also noted that members of the Ukrainian Labour Farmer Temple Association (ULFTA) were virtually forbidden to attend religious services, children were not baptized, and marriages were based solely on law and not religion.⁹⁶ It was also in Drumheller that a local Communist, Lewis MacDonald, made disparaging comments about the Union Jack and the

⁹⁴Michiel Horn, "Keeping Canada 'Canadian': Anti-Communism and Canadianism in Toronto, 1928-29," *Canada: An Historical Magazine*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1975), 35.

⁹⁵CSIS, RCMP Records Related to the CPC in Edmonton, vol. 22, file no. 88-A-61, Ritchie to the Attorney General of Alberta and the O.C., Military District No. 13, 15 May 1925.

⁹⁶Security Bulletin No. 332, 19 August 1926, in *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Early Years*, 337-8.

King. His activities among local youth were especially worrying to the local Mountie since "he is attempting, with some degree of success, to copy the Boy Scout movement but with the reverse objective."⁹⁷ A 1935 article in the *R.C.M.P. Quarterly* picked up on the Communist threat to children. It noted that Reds taught children "to hate capitalism and its institutions. Religion, being, according to the Marxian theory, a stupefying drug--the opium of the people--is treated accordingly."⁹⁸ "It is in keeping with the teachings of Communism," warned the author of another article in the same publication, "that Patriotism and anything that makes for love of Country, should be subject to attack whenever possible; the idea, of course, being to weaken such a spirit against the day of revolution."⁹⁹

Finally, the CPC seemed to make hay while times were tough, especially during the 1930s. Superintendent F.J. Mead observed in the *R.C.M.P. Quarterly* that

[a] member of the Communist Party must always adopt a militant attitude towards authority when acting as a leader of some delegation. His requests are usually put forward in the form of demands and this attitude ... has caused some surprise to local Town Councils and to others who have no understanding of Communist organization and propaganda. These persons, in many cases, imagine that they are dealing with unemployed or workmen on strike, with whom they are often in sympathy. They fail to realize that they are dealing with fanatical agitators who are using those who follow them to attain their own end.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷CSIS, RCMP Records Related to the CPC in Drumheller, vol. 57, file 88-A-75, Spalding to Corporal. Taylor, Drumheller, 15 January 1925.

⁹⁸"Training Young Communists," *R.C.M.P. Quarterly*, vol. 3, no. 2 (1935), 185.

⁹⁹F.J. Mead, "Communism in Canada," *R.C.M.P. Quarterly*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1935), 45.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 44.

A Communist-front organization, the Workers' Unity League (WUL), was active in organizing workers that other unions would not touch. The WUL was also not afraid to mix it up by encouraging strikes, including one involving furniture workers in Stratford, Ontario that led to the Canadian military being sent in to maintain order.¹⁰¹ Even more worrisome to the Canadian state was Communist activity among the unemployed. The federal government, terrified at the threat single, homeless unemployed posed to order, had wholeheartedly endorsed a Canadian military plan to establish relief camps in remote areas to prevent the men from gathering in the cities. In fact, the camp system made the Communist job easier by bringing large numbers of unemployed together in one place, and a not particularly happy location at that.¹⁰² The Relief Camp Workers' Union eventually organized a general strike of camp members in British Columbia. Then, a Communist activist, Arthur Evans, led the men "On to Ottawa."¹⁰³ In the 1930s, such Communist organizational activity among desperate young men made Reds an even more inviting target for RCMP attention than in the

¹⁰¹Desmond Morton, "Aid to the Civil Power: The Stratford Strike of 1933," in Irving Abella (ed.), *On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada, 1919-1949* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1975), 79-91.

¹⁰²For a description of the relief camp system see James Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983). Also see Lorne Brown, *When Freedom Was Lost: The Unemployed, the Agitator, and the State* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1987).

¹⁰³Victor Howard, *"We were the salt of the earth!" A Narrative of the On-to-Ottawa Trek and the Regina Riot* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1985).

previous decade. The fact that the Bennett government felt the same level of dislike for the CPC as did the Mounties only reinforced the focus of police attention.¹⁰⁴

In Alberta and Saskatchewan, CPC activities were largely centred in non-Anglo-Saxon communities, not surprising considering the high percentage of Ukrainians and Finns in the party in the 1920s. The police attention that this work received had a tradition; it was in ethnic communities in Alberta and Saskatchewan that the Mounted Police first began surveillance operations in 1914.¹⁰⁵ By 1917, however, the police focus began to shift in the two provinces. Sedition became less about loyalty to enemy nations and more about left-wing radicalism. "Bolshevism" and "socialism" became the new buzz words as the whole world watched the dramatic events in Russia. In Alberta, the ever watchful eyes of the scarlet-clad men were drawn to Edmonton and the surrounding area because of its large Ukrainian population. The state still considered Ukrainians to be dangerous, but they were now also believed to be potential Red recruits. In July 1917, for example, the local Mounties reported that a socialist meeting to be held in Vegreville, Alberta had been advertised.¹⁰⁶

Those with obvious radical inclinations, whatever their nationality, became the first police targets. Joseph Clarke, an Edmonton socialist, publicly opposed the war. The Mounted Police quickly concentrated resources on him in an effort to collect enough information to

¹⁰⁴It was the Bennett government that ordered the crackdown against the CPC leadership in 1931. John Herd Thompson and Allen Seager, *Canada, 1922-1939: Decades of Discord* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985), 228-9.

¹⁰⁵NAC, RG 18, vol. 469, file 456, Perry to Fortescue, 24 August 1914.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, vol. 537, file 3939, RNWMP Comptroller to Col. Clark, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, 9 July 1917.

have him charged with sedition.¹⁰⁷ Again, this was the beginning of a pattern which would continue over the next few decades. The Mounties, with a few exceptions, never moved directly to silence those on the radical left. Their job, at least in the way they approached it, was to accumulate evidence and then turn it over to their political masters who made the decision as to whether charges should be laid. Then, the Mounties would do the politicians' or bureaucrats' bidding. Cortlandt Starnes, nicknamed "Little Bull" by a group of Indians he once policed, may not have been as keen as Perry, MacBrien, and Wood when it came to laying charges, but the information-gathering continued all the same, although at different rates depending on the government in power and the time period.

In Joseph Clarke's case, Secret Agent 50 was actually sent to meet him in an effort to trip him up. The agent advised that Clarke would eventually incriminate himself, opening the way for his prosecution. In preparation for this eventuality, the RNWMP sent two detectives and a stenographer to Clarke's next public speech in order to collect detailed evidence.¹⁰⁸ Again this pattern of collecting detailed transcripts of radical speeches would characterize Mountie-radical interactions in the subsequent years. In this case, however, Clarke was too

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, vol. 524, file 453, Perry to Comptroller, 10 December 1917. Perry wrote that "I think it would be inadvisable, at present, to submit the case to the Attorney General of Alberta. We will however continue to watch Clarke until sufficient evidence is obtained to warrant our proceeding against him." Perry was responding to a 4 December 1917 report from a Mounted Police detective in Edmonton: "Clark [sic] made a violent speech against the Union Government, although he did not actually utter sedition, one sentence that I took particular note of was, when J. Clark [sic] ... said 'R.B. Bennett has stolen \$5,000,000 from the people since 1911.' *Ibid.*, Report of S.L. Warrior, 4 December 1917.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, Report of Secret Agent 50 (F.E. Reithdorf), 10 November 1917; *Ibid.*, Report of S.L. Warrior, 13 November 1917.

clever. As Superintendent T.A. Wroughton, the Officer Commanding "G" Division in Edmonton, reported, probably with some disappointment, "[t]he whole gist of his tirades seem to be to influence the minds of the ignorant, foreign element ... [such words] hardly come within the scope of sedition."¹⁰⁹ Apparently the public was less troubled by Clarke's activities; they later elected him mayor of Edmonton.¹¹⁰

In filing reports in Alberta and Saskatchewan, the Mounties expressed concern about two things: the actual content of the speeches, specifically any mention of Communism or seditious behaviour, and the impact the words were having on the audience. Frequent references were made to the extent of applause, the amount of currency dropped in the hat that was invariably passed around the rented hall, and whether the audience seemed pleased with a particular speech (pleasure apparently demonstrating potential support). The composition of an audience was also significant to the RCMP. Comments related to the ethnic component of a crowd were recurrent, but so were other observations such as the apparent occupations of audience members or the presence of women and children.¹¹¹ At the end of the First World War, the concern was with returned soldiers and policemen in the

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, Wroughton to Commissioner, 16 November 1917.

¹¹⁰NAC, RG 24, vol. 2544, file H.Q. c-2051, Bolsheviki Conditions/Edmonton, 25 March 1919. The Mountie report noted that "Mayor Joe A Clarke who has been somewhat unrestrained in his utterances is more and more feeling the responsibilities of his official position and is assuming a more dignified position."

¹¹¹Sometimes descriptions of audience reactions would go to ridiculous extremes. An informant covering an address by A.E. Smith in Regina in 1919 noted that "Dr. & Mrs. Stapleford, who left at the conclusion of Smith's main address and looked upset. J.B. Musselman was also there. Two or three times he wanted to get up, but his wife put her hand on his shoulder, shook her head and held him back. However, he asked a question at one time." CSIS, vol. 19, file 1, Report of [deleted], 7 May 1919.

audience,¹¹² since one was beneficial to those seeking revolution and the other was what the Canadian state needed to put down revolutions.¹¹³

In writing on the situation in Edmonton and all of western Canada, Commissioner Perry offered a cautionary approach to observing and collecting information. He sought "accurate and complete information on the whole subject in Western Canada. When this information has been secured, then it ought to be considered whether vigorous prosecutions should not take place everywhere about the same time."¹¹⁴ He and his successor, Starnes, recognized that the prosecution of radicals simply created martyrs while at the same time exposing Mounted Police intelligence operations as had happened during the Winnipeg General Strike trials.¹¹⁵ As Perry himself had noted, the Mountie approach was one of

¹¹²NAC, RG 24, vol. 2544, file H.Q. c-2051, A.A. McLean to Col. F.E. Davis, Asst. Director of Military Intelligence, 6 May 1919. McLean forwarded a report by a secret agent on "Returned Soldiers and agitators: Southern Saskatchewan" dated 28 April 1919; *Ibid.*, Bolsheviki Conditions-Edmonton, 25 March 1919.

¹¹³The police force in Winnipeg had joined the strikers during the General Strike. Shortly thereafter an order-in-council was passed prohibiting the unionization of the Mounted Police. For a discussion of the significance of returned soldiers to any revolutionary movement, see *Ibid.*, "Memorandum on Revolutionary Tendencies in Western Canada", no date. In 1926 Starnes wrote to MacBrien, still in the military at the time, to notify him that four members of the Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry were spotted at a Becky Buhay rally. NAC, RG 146, RCMP Records Related to Rebecca Buhay, vol. 10, file 92-A-00012, pt. 2, Letter to Major General J.H. MacBrien, Chief of the General Staff, 23 November 1926. In a confidential memo entitled "Revolutionary Tendencies in Western Canada," Perry discussed the potential of returned soldiers siding with revolutionaries. A report from Edmonton on soldiers involved in Bolshevism describes them as "neurasthenics" or mentally ill. NAC, RG 24, vol. 2544, file H.Q. c-2051, pt. 5, "Bolsheviki Conditions—Edmonton," 25 March 1919.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, Perry to McLean, 18 February 1919.

¹¹⁵NAC, RG 146, vol. 1, file 1025-9-9028, pt. 1, Spalding to Pennefather, 24 September 1919; *Ibid.*, Pennefather to Perry.

prevention: collect information and be ready for any major displays of protest or subversion.¹¹⁶

Occasionally, once the Mounties had collected information, they did seek prosecutions. In Saskatchewan in 1932 Superintendent R.R. Tait forwarded a copy of the Communist paper, *The Worker*, to the deputy attorney general of Saskatchewan in an effort to get A.E. Smith charged with sedition for an article he had written. The provincial bureaucrat said the evidence was not strong enough.¹¹⁷ The RCMP in Alberta and Saskatchewan continued to target Smith, an important Communist, whenever he appeared in the west.¹¹⁸ In 1934, S.T. Wood ordered two Mounties to closely cover Smith's speaking engagements in Saskatchewan so as to be able to testify in court to any seditious outbursts.¹¹⁹

The horsemen quickly recognized what areas of Alberta and Saskatchewan were centres of radicalism. The prime focus of the security forces in Alberta would be urban centres, especially Edmonton, and mining areas such as Drumheller and the Crow's Nest

¹¹⁶Protection would be used by politicians as a justification for Mounted Police Security Service activities such as mail openings, break-ins, and buggings well into the 1970s. Sawatsky, *Men In Shadows* 191-266.

¹¹⁷NAC, RG 146, RCMP Records Related to A.E. Smith, vol. 4157, file 94-a-00014, pt. 1, Tait to Deputy Attorney General of Saskatchewan, 11 April 1932; *Ibid.*, Deputy Attorney General of Saskatchewan to Tait, 14 April 1932. For more on the career of A.E. Smith and the RCMP's interest in him see Tom Mitchell, "From the Social Gospel to 'the Plain Bread of Leninism': A.E. Smith's Journey to the Left in the Epoch of Reaction After World War I," *Labour Le Travail*, vol. 33 (1993), 125-51.

¹¹⁸A Mountie in Alberta described Smith as "by far the most capable and aggressive platform speaker who has visited this district on behalf of the extreme radical section of the labour movement, during the last four years at least. All the others who have been here are faded into insignificance by comparison." *Ibid.*, Report of Cpl. J.J. Weaver, I.C. Blairmore, Alta., 19 November 1930.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, Wood to N.C.O., Regina Town Station, 25 June 1934.

Pass. In Saskatchewan the two main urban centres, Saskatoon and Regina, and the mining areas in the southeastern part of the province received a large measure of police attention.

In the case of Saskatchewan, Communist organizers often chose Regina and Saskatoon as stopping off points for the outlying areas.¹²⁰ The justification for keeping John Leopold in Regina was, according to Cortlandt Starnes, "that it makes a good listening post, because travelling agitators when they visit it take pains to post No. 30 [Leopold]."¹²¹ Saskatoon served a similar role for the surrounding area. Mervyn Black was transferred there in the 1930s to handle agents and other incoming reports, specifically because the city was in the centre of a region where Communist activity occurred.

There was not always a consistent pattern to Communist activity, and this obviously affected Mounted Police coverage; it certainly did not stop it, however. Inconsistency of activity or a complete lack of it could also mean that Communists were not always easy to find. A member of a rural detachment in Kipling seemed bewildered when asked to report on Communist preparations for the arrival of A.E. Smith in 1930: "I beg to report that a care-ful [sic] watch has been kept at all times as to any sign of Cummunism [sic] at or around Kipling and in fact through all this detachment area, so far we have failed to find any trace of workers

¹²⁰NAC, RG 146, vol. 27, file 92-A-00123, pt. 3 Munday to Commissioner MacBrien, 9 April 1933.

¹²¹RCMP, Personnel Records of John Leopold, Starnes to R.S. Knight, Asst. Commissioner. Regina, 31 August 1926.

or members of the party above mentioned, with the exception of one."¹²² Kipling was not the only Saskatchewan detachment to have trouble finding Communists in the 1930s.¹²³

If Communists could not be found, it was either the case that they did not exist or that they remained undiscovered either because of Mountie incompetence or Communist trickery. To Superintendent A.B. Allard in southern Saskatchewan, it was just a matter of digging a little deeper. He informed the commissioner that while there were no Communists in his area there were "several persons who lean towards Communism and although they are not members or directly connected with the Communist Party of Canada they have on occasion identified themselves with the aims, objects and fundamental principles of the Party in question."¹²⁴ To Superintendent Jas. Ritchie in Alberta, no activity simply confirmed that Communists were the ultimate "opportunists." "Personally I think that good mottoes to adopt are 'Be Prepared' and 'Always Ready,'" he reported in his best Boy Scout tones.¹²⁵

Where was the best place to find Communists in rural areas of Alberta and Saskatchewan, two largely agrarian provinces? Besides areas populated by foreigners, farm organizations appeared the best place to spot Reds. In fact, Communists did carry out organizational activity among farmers.¹²⁶ The RCMP in Alberta and Saskatchewan

¹²²NAC, RG 146, vol. 4157, access no. 94-a-00014, pt. 1, Report of Cpl. A. Batos, I.C. Kipling, Sask. detachment, 9 December 1930.

¹²³*Ibid.*, Report of Cst. J. Hudz, 9 December 1937.

¹²⁴CSIS, vol. 87, file 117-89-57, Allard to the Commissioner, 16 March 1921.

¹²⁵CSIS, vol. 22, file 88-A-61, Ritchie to the Attorney General of Alberta and the Officer Commanding Military District No. 13, 15 May 1925.

¹²⁶David Monod, "The Agrarian Struggle: Rural Communism in Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1926-1935," *Histoire sociale-Social History*, vol. 18, no. 35, 99-118; Ivan

submitted numerous reports on radical activity among farmers and farm organizations. Leopold covered a 1926 meeting at which the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association amalgamated with the Farmers Union of Canada to give birth to the United Farmers of Canada. He reported on the activities of agrarian utopian E.A. Partridge.¹²⁷ The undercover Mountie filed an additional report on the "left-wing" in attendance at the meeting, represented by the Progressive Farmers Education League.¹²⁸ A memo from the period, entitled "Special Report on Communism Amongst Saskatchewan Farmers," reported on Communist influence in the Farmers' Union of Canada:

the Communists exercise considerable influence within the organization, in fact constitute a dominating factor. Their propaganda has penetrated the Union to such an extent that there was, for instance, not one delegate at the Farmers' Union convention who did not know that there was such a thing as a Communist Party. ... The Poor farmers, of the ignorant type more or less, predominate in the Farmers' Union, and if they show radical tendencies the result usually is that some of the moderate leaders swing in line with the sentiment in order to save their positions.¹²⁹

Avakumovic, "The Communist Party of Canada and the Prairie Farmer: The Interwar Years," in David J. Bercuson (ed.), *Western Perspectives I* (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston of Canada, Limited, 1974), 78-87.

¹²⁷For more on Partridge see Murray Knuttila, "E.A. Partridge: The Farmers' Intellectual," *Prairie Forum*, vol. 14 (1989), 59-74.

¹²⁸NAC, RG 146, RCMP Records Related to the National Farmers Union of Canada, vol. 2015, file 94-A-00090, pt. 1, , Report of No. 30 (Leopold), 19 July 1926.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, "Appendix No. 1: Special Report on Communism Amongst Saskatchewan Farmers," no date. Emphasis in the original.

Mounted Police reports, one of which used red type to indicate "extremist talk,"¹³⁰ on CPC involvement in agrarian organizations such as the Ukrainian Labour-Farmers' Temple Association, the Farmers National Union, and the Farmers' Unity League, continued throughout the interwar period.¹³¹ In 1935 a Mountie warned in the *R.C.M.P. Quarterly* that the "Farmers' Unity League embraces what is known to the Party as the 'poor farmer class' ... The Party carries on propaganda in agricultural districts through this league, which aims at disorganizing rural Municipal Governments as much as possible."¹³²

In general, the force was content to collect information on groups and individual Communist members, such as Tim Buck, Becky Buhay, and Tom McEwen, often passing it on to government bodies simply to keep the political masters informed, but, on occasion, to elicit an opinion as to whether enough evidence had been collected to make charges stick. In 1932, the RCMP asked the Attorney General of Alberta if a statement by Communist Harvey Murphy, "I don't worry about my tea & sandwiches, I get mine direct from Moscow," was grounds for a sedition charge; the answer was no.¹³³

¹³⁰NAC, RG 146, RCMP Records Related to the National Farmers Union, vol. 2023, file 94-A-00090, pt. 1, Report on United Farmers' Convention, North Battleford, 17 June 1931.

¹³¹In 1939 a report to Commissioner Wood noted that "It appears quite likely that the Communist Party intends to utilize the United Farmers of Canada as a means of drawing the farming population into the radical movement." NAC, RG 146, vol. 2015, file 94-A-00090, pt. 1, Superintendent R.E. Mercer to Commissioner, 23 August 1939.

¹³²Mead, "Communism in Canada," 44.

¹³³NAC, RG 146, vol. 27, file 93-A-00087, pt. 1, Report of Cst. G.M. Elder, Blairmore Detachment, 6 May 1932.

Rarely, however, did the RCMP take direct action against individual Communist members.¹³⁴ The experiences of activist Jeanne (Jean) Corbin exemplified what would have been labelled as an anti-Communist witch hunt in the 1950s.¹³⁵ The Mounties began a file on Corbin in 1925; it described her appearance as “slovenly” and noted that while she frequently attended Young Communist League dances she never danced herself. More importantly to the Mounties, the PHF listed her as “a good agitator,” and in training to be a school teacher.¹³⁶ Several factors made Jean Corbin appear particularly dangerous. First, there was the obvious: she was a Communist. But, she was also a woman involved in an activity, political radicalism in the public sphere, that was perceived as a non-traditional female activity, a point which must have influenced the male Mounties. A Mountie had warned publicly that “[n]o sphere of society, thought fruitful, escapes the Party policy of subversion—even women and children are brought within its influence. ... It is from these ranks the militant females are drawn who are so prominent at the time of disturbances in making demands from local authorities.”¹³⁷ Then, there was Corbin's occupation; of all of the careers for a radical to select, school teacher would have topped the Mountie list as most dangerous. She would have had access to developing young minds and hence an opportunity

¹³⁴NAC, RG 146, vol. 2015, file 94-A-00090, pt. 1, "Appendix No. 1: Special Report on Communism Amongst Saskatchewan Farmers," no date.

¹³⁵For the post-World War Two anti-Communist campaigns see Reg Whitaker and Gary Marcuse, *Cold War Canada: The Making of a National Insecurity State, 1945-1957* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Len Scher, *The Un-Canadians: True Stories of the Blacklist Era* (Toronto: Lester Publishing Ltd., 1992).

¹³⁶CSIS, RCMP Records Related to the Political Activities of Jeanne Corbin, vol. 7, file 88-A-20, Personal History file Re: (Miss) Jean Corbin, 30 December 1925.

¹³⁷Mead, "Communism in Canada," 45.

to indoctrinate children with her pernicious beliefs. "Would" is the operative word here since the RCMP never gave her the chance. In September 1926 Commissioner Starnes asked the commander of "G" Division: "has any hint been given to the Educational authorities that she [Jean Corbin] is a dangerous person to be trusted with the teaching of Canadian children?"¹³⁸ At this point no "hint" had been given; that silence, however, soon ended. Ritchie met with an Alberta department of Education official who assured him that Corbin would not be allowed to teach in any schools in the province.¹³⁹ Through a bureaucratic blunder, she did end up with a teaching job in Alberta; when the department of Education realized its mistake, she was quickly dismissed.¹⁴⁰

A similar fate befell another Albertan Communist. Norwegian born, Jan Lakeman was only a part-time radical. His day job involved working for the Canadian National Railway in Edmonton. In 1926 Starnes wrote railway officials about Lakeman's extra-curricular activities.¹⁴¹ The Communist activist was dismissed from his job the following year.¹⁴²

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, Starnes to Ritchie, 19 September 1926.

¹³⁹*Ibid.*, Ritchie to Starnes, 28 October 1926.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*, Ritchie to Starnes, 10 September 1928.

¹⁴¹CSIS, RCMP Records Related Jan Lakeman, vol. 101, file 117-89-57, Starnes to Page, Chief of Investigations, CNR, 9 February 1926.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*, Report of [deleted], 22 April 1927. The Mounties also had others to perform such tasks. In 1931 Premier J.T.M. Anderson wrote Prime Minister Bennett to say that the Mounted Police had informed him that two Communists in the Saskatoon area worked for the CNR and a third was employed at a government elevator. Anderson intended to relay the information to Robert Manion, the Minister of Railways. NAC, Bennett Papers, Reel M-988, Anderson to Bennett, 30 April 1931.

Individual Mounted Policemen considered even dirtier tricks. In 1919 Const. T.E. Ryan advocated breaking into the house of a Regina radical, described by the Mountie as one well-versed in the teachings of the "I.W.W. and Carl [sic] Marx."¹⁴³ When dealing with Communist Jack McDonald in Alberta, Superintendent J.W. Spalding instructed a subordinate to dig up McDonald's war record, apparently in the belief that something might be found to discredit the radical in the eyes of his audience.¹⁴⁴ And, in the most ludicrous example of the tactics the force considered in its war against the far left, a Mountie proposed searching asylum records after one Communist, in the heat of an internal party dispute, labelled his opponent as crazy.¹⁴⁵ Of course, all of these actions would pale in comparison to the "dirty tricks" carried out by the RCMP Security Service in the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁴⁶

The Communists were not the only groups targetted on the political left. Many individuals found themselves under Mountie scrutiny, chiefly in the early 1920s. Two of the most prominent were J.S. Woodsworth and William Irvine. Both came to the attention of the RCMP because of the important role they played in the Winnipeg General Strike.¹⁴⁷ A Mountie covering a 1919 Woodsworth speech spoke of the danger the politician posed:

¹⁴³CSIS, vol. 87, file 117-89-57, Report of T.E. Ryan, 24 November 1919.

¹⁴⁴CSIS, RCMP Records Related to the Communist Party of Canada in Drumheller, Alberta, vol. 57, file 88-A-75, Spalding to Corporal. Taylor, Drumheller, 15 January 1925.

¹⁴⁵CSIS, vol. 22, file 88-A-61 Ritchie to Starnes, 14 March 1925.

¹⁴⁶See Sawatsky, *Men in the Shadows*.

¹⁴⁷Woodsworth had been arrested during the strike for printing the strikers' newspaper. The passage that led to his arrest was reprinted from the *Bible*.

there is no doubt that Woodsworth is an advocate and upholder of Bolshevism, and is incidentally proselytising for the O.B.U. and the sympathetic strikes at present in force. I consider this man an extremely dangerous character, a most significant statement to my mind was the following, and on the 1st inst., "we don't want a revolution, but if there is one, the authorities will be to blame" this view of Woodsworth's coupled with a statement he made while speaking at Saskatoon on the 29th.... goes to show the trend of this man's mind.¹⁴⁸

Other reports, however, offered a more accurate appraisal of his message and place on the left side of the spectrum. T.E. Ryan, Leopold's undercover colleague, noted in September 1919 that "this man's speech was a very poor one and it did not suit very many of the Red Class who were at that meeting, as they claim he was too damn afraid to say anything."¹⁴⁹

Even with a growing realization that Woodsworth did not fit into the radical left-wing revolutionary mode, extensive watch was kept on his activities in Alberta and Saskatchewan throughout the early 1920s.¹⁵⁰ Whenever he spoke at gatherings in the provinces, his

¹⁴⁸CSIS, RCMP Material Related to J.S. Woodsworth, Report of Sgt. W.J. Kempson, 8 June 1919.

¹⁴⁹*Ibid.*, Report of T.E. Ryan, 22 September 1919. Ryan's view was confirmed by an informant a few months later: "There was absolutely no taint of a revolutionary thought or inciting to any kind of violence." *Ibid.*, Report of Informant, 4 July 1920. Superintendent J.W. Spalding offered a similar viewpoint in a May 1920 letter to Starnes although he promised to keep Woodsworth under surveillance. *Ibid.*, J.W. Spalding to Commissioner, 3 May 1921.

¹⁵⁰Woodsworth, like any other radical under surveillance, had his own Personal History file:

PHF ON J.S. WOODSWORTH

"Age.	34
Nationality.	Canadian (English descent)
Associations affiliated with.	Federated Labor Party of Canada
Influence & standing in same.	Good.
Intimate associates.	[deleted]

speeches would be covered and detailed reports filed on their content. An address to an economics class at the University of Saskatchewan in 1920 filled the heart of a Mounted Policeman with fear; he proceeded to interview students to discover if the labour activist's talk had negatively influenced impressionable young minds.¹⁵¹ John Leopold met Woodsworth in Regina that year. The labour politician confided to No. 30, performing in the role of Jack Esselwein, that "he is trailed by Detectives of the Mounted Police wherever he goes. He asked me whether there were any spies present at the Ukrainian Labour Temples. I informed him that I noticed one City Detective and two City Constables. On this he said, I think I fooled them tonight, they surely didn't expect me there (Ukrainian Labour Temple)."¹⁵²

William Irvine received similar treatment.¹⁵³ His connection with labour churches helped ensure that they were spied upon as well.¹⁵⁴ In June 1919 the RNWMP

Ability and influence as agitator.

Good. ...

General Remarks.

A strong labor man, whose speeches are along the usual socialistic lines; was reported to have used seditious language at a meeting held at Gibson's Landing B.C. early in 1919, but I consider him too clever to leave himself open to such a charge." CSIS, RCMP Records Related to J.S. Woodsworth, 18 June 1919.

¹⁵¹Hewitt, "Spying 101," 22.

¹⁵²CSIS, RCMP Records Related to J.S. Woodsworth, Report of D/Const J. Leopold, 4 July 1920. Leopold seemed to take pleasure in having fooled Woodsworth. He later reported on correspondence he had with Woodsworth as he sought information requested by the commissioner. Woodsworth had taken his mailing address while commenting that "It is a good thing to have the addresses of reliable men here in Regina." *Ibid.*, Report and letter of John Leopold, 24 July 1920.

¹⁵³For more on the career of Irvine see Anthony Mardiros, *William Irvine: The Life of a Prairie Radical* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1979).

¹⁵⁴Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914-28* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 170-3..

Comptroller received a police warning that "this man Irvine is a most dangerous Agitator and I trust it will be possible to deal with him under the amended Immigration Act,"¹⁵⁵ an indication that the English-born Irvine would be deported. In November of that year "K" Division's Pennefather counselled the commissioner that should Irvine take over editorship of the *Farmer's Sun* "he will do his utmost to convert it into a strictly labour and possibly a Bolshevistic agitating journal."¹⁵⁶ Such a comment again displayed the Mounted Police's lack of sophistication at being able to distinguish between the form of radicalism represented by individuals like Irvine and his colleague Woodsworth and those farther to the left such as the CPC, an organization often at war with social democrats. But again, these events occurred in the immediate aftermath of the Winnipeg General Strike and before the fledgling Mounted Police security service had much experience. Seven years later, Irvine would be rehabilitated in the eyes of the Mounted Police to the point where Superintendent Jas. Ritchie, commander of "G" Division in Alberta, wrote to the commissioner praising speeches by Irvine which "do much to combat Communism."¹⁵⁷

Clearly by the mid-1920s, the Mounted Police was more discriminating when it came to targets for its intelligence operations. The final report on Woodsworth appeared in November 1925 and brought a quick response from Commissioner Starnes:

¹⁵⁵CSIS, RCMP Records Related to William Irvine, vol. 81, file 117-89-27, Asst. Comm. J.A. McGibbon to the Comptroller, 17 June 1919.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*, Pennefather to Commissioner, 20 November 1919.

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*, Jas. Ritchie to Starnes, 5 April 1926.

With reference to [deleted] secret report of 16th November, regarding the meeting of 15th November, I am removing it from the file. I do not wish such reports to be made upon Mr. Woodsworth; he is a member of Parliament, his attitude is before the public and it is not for us to interfere with him. You will remember that some time ago he charged in the House that the police were watching him, and that our Minister stated that this was not the case. Please see that he is not the subject of reports of this nature.¹⁵⁸

Further Mountie sensitivity about targets was evident in the response to a 1922 Leopold report. Leopold informed his superiors back in Regina that while covering the District Convention of the Workers Party in Winnipeg he overheard a conversation in which one of the participants described Henry Wise Wood, the president of the Farmers of Alberta and an important figure in the Progressive Party, as a reliable ally of radicalism.¹⁵⁹ The initial response to Leopold's report came from the top man in Regina, A.B. Allard: "Forwarded for your information [Leopold's March 30 report]. I think that Mr. Wood's actions should be kept under close observation; he is the President of the United Farmers of Alberta, living in Calgary."¹⁶⁰ Allard had never been one to distinguish between groups

¹⁵⁸CSIS, RCMP Records Related to J.S. Woodsworth, Stames to Duffus, 27 November 1925. Even then, however, when Woodsworth addressed a convention of the Canadian Labour Party a year later, included among the records of the convention was a detailed description of his speech. NAC, RG 146, vol. 27, file 92-A-00123, pt. 5, 16 August 1926.

¹⁵⁹Leopold wrote, "Scott asked us if inroads could be made into the S.S.G.A. and stated that as far as the Farmers of Alberta are concerned, they are O.K. He informed us that Mr. Wood, the president of the United Farmers of Alberta when approached made that following statement: 'Any time you are ready, I'll be ready; I have my machine functioning'. When asked if he thought that Wood is really a reliable man Scott said: 'In every respect.' CSIS, RCMP Records Related to the Worker's Party and Communist Party - Regina, Sk., vol. 135, file no. 117-91-87, pt. 1, Report of No. 30 [Leopold], 30 March 1922.

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.*, Allard to the Commissioner, 30 March 1922.

challenging the status quo. In 1919 he had forwarded a report on the fledgling Progressive Party to Commissioner Perry with the comment that "Although this is purely Political I consider it advisable to cover all meetings held by this party until their main object is definitely established."¹⁶¹ In this case, however, Starnes would not hear of such action: "Our practice is not to concern ourselves with persons or parties only concerned in reputable politics or normal labour movements."¹⁶²

Starnes' handling of political targets was more moderate in comparison to other commissioners of the period. He cautioned the government, for example, against using charges of sedition in an effort to thwart the Communists because of the publicity such an event would provide the CPC leadership.¹⁶³ The arrests of the "Toronto Eight" in 1931 and the publicity surrounding their trials and imprisonment proved Starnes right.¹⁶⁴

In Alberta and Saskatchewan the attention of the Mounted Police security operations was not solely focused on those of the political left. The right wing of the spectrum did come in for occasional scrutiny, although the haphazard nature of this attention is instructive in itself. Former Mounties and those close to the force have taken great pride in the Mounted Police's work against fascism prior to World War Two. In *Without Fear, Favour or Affection* former Assistant-Commissioner Vernon Kemp boasted that before the war the RCMP "had

¹⁶¹CSIS, vol. 87, file 117-89-57, Allard to the Commissioner, 7 January 1919.

¹⁶²*Ibid.*, Starnes to F.A. Acland, 4 April 1922.

¹⁶³Betke and Horrall, *Canada's Security Service*, 430.

¹⁶⁴On the other hand, Starnes did occasionally favour the use of deportation as a discriminate tool of repression. In this area the philosophy of the commissioner seems to have been: out of sight, out of mind. *Ibid.*, 429-30.

for years maintained a close supervision over Nazi activities in Canada and were well informed on developments."¹⁶⁵ Former Commissioner C.W. Harvison remembered that in 1936 the Mounted Police had suddenly realized that Nazis and fascists in Canada posed more of a threat than Communists.¹⁶⁶ Betke and Horrall in their official history of the RCMP Security Service used 1928 as the date by which the Mounties were well aware of the activities of members of Canada's extreme right.¹⁶⁷ The most dramatic account of the RCMP's war against fascists in the 1930s, however, appeared in *Pursuit into the Wilderness*, the memoirs of Charles Rivett-Carnac. Rivett-Carnac, who served in Ottawa as intelligence officer from 1935-1939, left little doubt that the RCMP was on the ball when it came to dealing with the threat posed by Nazis and fascists:

In 1935, the drums of the Nazis were already beating, their cadence muffled it is true, but nevertheless strong enough to give cause for apprehension. We in the Intelligence Branch began- as the months went on- to form an estimate of the danger to Canadian institutions if war should break out, and to ascertain the identity of possible enemy agents and potential saboteurs ...¹⁶⁸

These respective views represent historical revisionism. Right-wing organizations were simply not a priority for the Mounted Police until the end of the 1930s. In fact, the *R.C.M.P. Quarterly* in January 1937 carried an article entitled "Peace, War, and

¹⁶⁵Vernon A.M. Kemp, *Without Fear, Favour or Affection: Thirty-Five years with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police* (Toronto: Longmans, Green and Company, 1958), 202.

¹⁶⁶C.W. Harvison, *The Horsemen* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1967), 86.

¹⁶⁷Betke and Horrall, *Canada's Security Service*, 465.

¹⁶⁸Charles Rivett-Carnac, *Pursuit in the Wilderness* (Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1965), 294.

Communism" by Colonel C.E. Edgett that portrayed Communism as being part of a nineteenth-century Jewish conspiracy. The piece also contained a weak criticism of fascism:

The typical Fascist is not perfect by any means nor very admirable from the standpoint of the normal Democrat. But at least he has applied his violence and ferocity to the enemies of traditional family life—to the enemies of religion—and the Fascist states, as now established, are ruled neither by mere businessmen nor yet by fanatical revolutionaries.¹⁶⁹

In 1939, Rivett-Carnac, chronicler of the force's heroic battle with the far right, wrote a lengthy memo in response to a report by a civil servant that had dealt with the threat posed to Canada by Nazism, Fascism, and Communism. Rivett-Carnac argued that the threat from Nazis and fascists had been exaggerated and that Communists were still the main threat.¹⁷⁰

Even in 1941, nearly two years after the Second World War had started, Commissioner S.T. Wood publicly argued that the biggest threat to Canada came not from the Nazi whom the nation was at war with, but from the "radical" or "Red" at home who "has the protection of citizenship, his foreign master is not officially an enemy and, unless he blunders into the open and provides proof of his guilt, he is much more difficult to suppress."¹⁷¹

Accordingly, the RCMP work on the right in Saskatchewan and Alberta in the 1920s and 1930s was not particularly thorough. The right simply did not appear to pose the same

¹⁶⁹C.E. Edgett, "Peace, War and Communism," *R.C.M.P. Quarterly*, January 1937, as quoted in Lorne and Caroline Brown, *An Unauthorized History of the RCMP* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1978), 82.

¹⁷⁰NAC, Manuscript Group (MG) 30 E163, Norman Robertson Papers, vol. 12, file 137, Charles Rivett-Carnac, Memorandum Regarding Information Received from Mr. A.L. Lawes, January 1939.

¹⁷¹Wood, "Tools for Treachery," 394.

level of a threat to Anglo-Canadian hegemony as did the far left. It is also fair to say that right-wing organizations often espoused values similar to the official ideology of the force and ones much closer to those held by members of the Mounted Police.

The most active right-wing organization in Alberta and Saskatchewan in the 1920s was the Ku Klux Klan, with several thousand members in Saskatchewan. The RCMP did take an interest in the activities of the Klan in Saskatchewan as early as 1924. Files related to Klan activities in Prince Albert and Saskatoon appear in the RCMP Subject Files Register.¹⁷² In some cases references to the Klan in the RCMP Security Bulletins Mountie appear because left-wing radicals under surveillance made mention of the organization.¹⁷³ In 1927, Mounted Police reports to Lucien Cannon, the acting minister of Justice, described the spread of the Klan from southern Saskatchewan to the north.¹⁷⁴ The same Mountie officer reassured the King government in June 1927 that "the agitation now in progress in Southern Saskatchewan probably is one of the dying flickers of this movement." He based his judgement on the incompetence of some of the initial organizers.¹⁷⁵ Superintendent Worsley, however, was premature in his judgement. The Klan did not simply disappear in 1927. In

¹⁷²Kealey and Whitaker (eds.), *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Early Years, 1919-1929*, 622.

¹⁷³*Ibid.*, 305-6.

¹⁷⁴CSIS, RCMP Records related to threats to the security of Canada by Right-Wing Extremists, vol. 109, file 88-a-34, pt. 1, Superintendent G.S. Worsley to Lucien Cannon, Acting Minister of Justice, 25 June 1927.

¹⁷⁵*Ibid.*, Worsley to Under Secretary of State, 20 June 1927. Worsley made reference to one of the Klan organizers having been in the Mounted Police at some point although he was dismissed because of being mentally unbalanced. Several of the initial organizers would eventually abscond with Klan funds. Martin Robin, *Shades of Right: Nativist and Fascist Politics in Canada, 1920-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 34-5.

fact, with new organizers it grew in strength over the next three years to the point where 25,000 people belonged to the KKK, a membership comparable with other Saskatchewan organizations, such as the Grain Growers' Association.¹⁷⁶

It appears that the RCMP virtually ignored the KKK after 1927. Even when the Klan first appeared in Moose Jaw in January 1927, the local Mountie was instructed not to investigate the organization since it was being covered from Regina. Virtually no information, however, appeared in Mountie records regarding the Klan. When Premier James Gardiner sought details on the KKK, he did so through private detectives and sources in other provinces.¹⁷⁷ The absence of material may reflect a similar situation in Ontario where the head of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) stated that the Klan would be left alone until it broke the law and then a crackdown would occur.¹⁷⁸

There is a deeper reason, moreover, why the RCMP did not take a greater interest in the activities of the Klan. When it railed against foreigners from continental Europe and anyone who was not an Anglo-Canadian, the Klan represented the opinion of many in Saskatchewan even though not every person who held these views joined the KKK. Klan leaders skillfully tailored their message of traditional values, such as law and order, to pre-existing prejudices.¹⁷⁹ Many Mounted Policemen shared such nativist sentiments; even Commissioner Perry used his annual report in 1919 to call for an all-out government effort to

¹⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 62-3.

¹⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 15-6.

¹⁷⁹Robin, *Shades of Right*, 50-2; David E. Smith, *Prairie Liberalism: The Liberal Party in Saskatchewan, 1905-71* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 144.

assimilate enemy aliens.¹⁸⁰ The fact that members of the Klan were citizens of similar backgrounds to those who belonged to the RCMP, not "foreigners" who were members of the Communist Party, meant that the KKK did not challenge British-Canadian traditions and institutions to the same degree as did the CPC. In Saskatchewan two dozen Protestant ministers belonged to the Klan. Provincial Conservatives had memberships in the Klan and even forged alliances behind shut doors.¹⁸¹ Fine upstanding citizens wore the hoods. Klan messages which mentioned patriotism and white manhood were things the Mounted Police could understand and relate to, not fear.

The Mounties' reaction to other right-wing groups demonstrated a similar delayed reaction. The RCMP did not investigate Nazi and Fascist organizations in Saskatchewan in any systematic way until 1938, not earlier as some of the revisionist literature suggests. In September of that year, and twelve months before the beginning of the war, Vernon Kemp, the officer in charge of "F" Division's Saskatoon division, sent a report on the activities of Fascists and Nazis in his area. He made few observations because little work on these groups had been done:

I have not been in a position so far to explore the machinations of these organizations, but I think some such investigation should be made. If we find ourselves with the serious problem of war conditions again prevalent, there is the likelihood, even remote, of a problem being on our hands to check-up on the activities of Nazi sympathisers here in Canada. Presumably this condition is not restricted to Saskatoon, but if we are able to [delete] explore the activities of these organizations, we should be able to determine if any subversive elements existed.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰Commissioner A.B. Perry, RNWMP Annual Report for 1919, .

¹⁸¹Robin, *Shades of Right*, 56, 61-84.

¹⁸²CSIS, RCMP Records related to the National Unity Party and Fascists, vol. 7, pt. 4, V.A.M. Kemp, IC Saskatoon, to O.C. "F" Division, 27 September 1938.

Brief reports on the activity of Germans in Saskatchewan had been filed a year earlier but that appears to have been the extent of the coverage.¹⁸³

One example of the Mounties' lack of interest in the right was its treatment of Alberta's Social Credit party. A party that in the run-up to its election openly questioned the political and economic status quo might have been expected to garner some attention from the Mounted Police. In fact, one scholar has speculated that the Mounted Police might have spied on the Social Credit Party.¹⁸⁴ No evidence exists, however, to support this view.¹⁸⁵ Nor would such activity have been consistent with Mounted Police operations in the 1930s. The force had refined its selection of targets by the 1930s, and became even more fixated on the Communist Party than it had been in the 1920s. The Social Credit movement also swept to power rather quickly and, as in the case of J.S. Woodsworth and Henry Wise Wood, the Mounted Police security service demonstrated an aversion to spying on democratically-sanctioned groups or individuals. Besides, the party's leader, William Aberhart, was a God-

¹⁸³For a study of Nazis in Saskatchewan see Jonathan F. Wagner, "Heim ins Reich: The Story of Loon River's Nazis," *Saskatchewan History*, vol. 28, no. 1 (1976), 41-50 and Jonathan F. Wagner, *Brothers Beyond the Sea: National Socialism in Canada* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1981), 85-94.

¹⁸⁴Larry Hannant, "The Calgary Working Class and the Social Credit Movement in Alberta, 1932-35," *Labour-Le Travail*, vol. 16 (1985), 116. For more information on the Social Credit in this era see Alvin Finkel, "Alberta Social Credit Reappraised: The Radical Character of the Early Social Credit Movement," *Prairie Forum*, vol. 11, no. 1 (1986), 69-86.

¹⁸⁵In March 1940 Commissioner Wood wrote Premier William Aberhart to offer copies of the RCMP's weekly security bulletins. Public Archives of Alberta (PAA), Premier's Papers, accession no. 69.289, file 707, Wood to Aberhart, 26 March 1940.

fearing man, having made a name for himself through his Christian radio program. Finally, while the Social Credit Party wanted to tinker with capitalism, chiefly in the area of banking, its adherents readily accepted the status quo of the capitalist economy. One reference to the Social Credit Party does appear in 1938, but once again it was in the context of the activities of the CPC. The officer in charge of "G" Division commented upon the strange behaviour of the Communist Party in his province, since it apparently had "no desire to embarrass the Provincial Government, in the form of any violent or subversive demonstrations, due to the fact that the Communist Party is aligned with the Social Credit Party, temporarily at least."¹⁸⁶ Although some have argued that the Social Credit phenomenon is better situated on the political left, that movement simply did not represent the challenge to the status quo of capitalism that the CPC did.

Ultimately what united all of these groups, left or right, was that the RCMP paid attention to them on the basis of the threat they posed to Anglo-Canadian social structures; the further to the left, the stronger the threat, both real and imagined. And the CPC, more than any other radical organization, did offer a challenge to the status quo. The threat was in the form of inspiring others, hence the Mounties' interest; they had no interest in Communist rhetoric that escaped into a vacuum. Their interest was in the effect the words had on others: the young, immigrants, ethnic minorities, farmers, and employed and unemployed workers. Of these groups, it was Communist work among the working classes that concerned

¹⁸⁶NAC, RG 146, vol. 27, file 92-a-000123, pt. 1, W.F. Hancock, O.C. "K" Div, to Commissioner Wood, 21 July 1938. This, of course, was the era of Stalin's "united front" as the communist parties of several countries sought to connect themselves with previous political opponents in the face of the growing strength of the fascist threat.

Mounties the most. Agitation among workers and the unemployed created the potential for both rampant disorder and a tremendous challenge to the Canadian state. Arthur Evans, a frequent target of surveillance operations, warned, as he led young Canadians on a journey of protest to their nation's capital, that the streets of Canada would run red with blood. Blood would indeed be shed in the 1930s on the streets of Estevan and Saskatoon and Regina—blood of workers and of the men in scarlet.

CHAPTER FIVE
POLICING WORKERS

It was James Bryson's eyes that the informant noticed. "Dull and fishy looking at times" was the description that appeared in his Personal History File (PHF). Perhaps it was an indication of drug use. More likely the writer believed that the eyes were a window to the subject's work. Bryson was an agitator. He plied his trade among the unemployed in southern Alberta in the 1930s. Under the PHF category of "Ability and influence as an agitator" came the warning that he "will cause [a] riot, if allowed to carry on as he has a most insidious way of creating trouble, always urges others on."¹

Agitators worried the Canadian state. The work of these individuals threatened the status quo of society. The agitation was particularly troublesome because of the groups and individuals being targeted for Communist attention: members of the working class--both the employed and unemployed. A strong middle class bias existed in Canada and in other nations in the Western world that associated members of the working class with criminality, immorality, and violence.² The fact that so many of the working class seemed to be non-

¹National Archives of Canada (NAC), Record Group (RG) 146, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Records Related to the National Association of Unemployed, vol. 21, file 92-A-00099, pt. 1, Personal History File- James Bryson.

²Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Inc., 1991), 129-55.

British only reinforced negative stereotypes and encouraged a belief in their collective inferiority.

The state feared the disorder that large numbers of employed and unemployed workers under the influence of agitators represented. The British traditions of Canada emphasized the need for an ordered society. There could be no justice without order. There could be no peace without order. There could no Anglo-Canadian hegemony without order. Conversely, maintenance of order was a Mounted Police specialty.³ Workers encompassed all of the various groups the Mounties policed in this period, including radicals and ethnic minorities. The force worked to maintain order in the face of strikes, protests, hunger marches, and demonstrations. Ironically, it was the RCMP on repeated occasions in the 1930s that ignited violence that forever shattered the image of Canada as a “peaceable kingdom.”

Agitation does not exist in a vacuum. If it did, no one would possibly care. Agitators find work in times of unhappiness. Therein lies the rub. Governments believe that agitators stir up trouble where otherwise there would be none, or at least not to the same degree. The counter argument put forward by Communists and labour activists is that they are simply performing a function that workers themselves are demanding because of inequality and dissatisfaction with the status quo. Agitators and activists found plenty of work in Canada between 1914 and 1939. This period included both labour calm and widespread worker discontent in Canada; it also embraced the decade with the highest level of unemployment in

³“Order” here is narrowly taken to mean the status quo of Canadian society in the period under examination.

Canadian history. Although both Alberta and Saskatchewan were still largely rural provinces, labour discontent and high levels of unemployment still occurred. Both provinces had urban areas where workers lived and where the unemployed gathered. Each province also had a mining district where the level of industrial disputes was high.⁴

Labour peace generally characterized the first few years of the Great War. By 1917, however, discontent on the home front grew. The rise of worker unhappiness led the federal government to seek scapegoats since the alternative was to accept some responsibility for conditions; it had a ready supply available. Enemy aliens headed the list; labour activists came a close second. Organizations such as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) had begun to make inroads in Canada, although never to the extent that the government feared.⁵ This was an era of menaces. The IWW menace, which after the war would be replaced by the One Big Union (OBU) menace, and then in the 1920s and 1930s by the Communist menace, supplied the Canadian government with a convenient source on which to place the blame for worker unhappiness.⁶

⁴For a study of the Prairie working class at this time, see Joe Cherwinski, "Early Working-Class Life on the Prairies," in R. Douglas Francis and Howard Palmer (eds.), *The Prairie West: Historical Readings* (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1992), 544-56. Also see Cecilia Danysk, *Hired Hands: Labour and the Development of Prairie Agriculture, 1880-1930* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Inc., 1995); and Glen Makahonuk, "The Labouring Class in Saskatchewan's Economy, 1850 to 1912," *Saskatchewan History*, vol. 46, no. 1 (1994), 22-34.

⁵David J. Bercuson, *Fools and Wise Men: The Rise and Fall of the One Big Union* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1978), 88.

⁶In 1917 a Mountie investigated reports of IWW agitation amongst harvesters in the Vulcan area of Alberta. The Mountie interviewed the individual making the complaint who pointed at a group of men and called them I.W.Ws. Industrial Workers of the World, the Mounted queried? "No. I mean "I won't works," was the reply. NAC, Records of the RCMP, RG 18, vol. 537, file 439, Report of Waugh, 25 August 1917.

From the perspective of the Canadian state, including the upper echelons of the Royal North-West Mounted Police (RNWMP), the initial rise of worker discontent came at a particularly awkward time. Anything that detracted from the war effort was downright traitorous in the eyes of many.⁷ What better justification for spying on those active in unions and for cracking down on participants in strikes, than to view such actions as unpatriotic. When nation-wide labour problems occurred in 1919, shortly after the end of the war, the connotation of treason-like activity continued, heightened by the threat of Soviet Communism. For the force, the rules of dealing with worker unionism and strikes remained the same in peacetime as in war.

There was not much doubt of what role the state and senior members of the force intended for the newly-created RCMP. The police were to be a more subtle tool for dealing with disorder than the other alternative, the military or local militia. Nor was this only the case in Canada. During a huge coal strike in Britain in 1910, Home Secretary Winston Churchill ordered a large contingent of police into the strike area in the hope that "the action of police [would] ... avert the necessity for using the military."⁸ The equation was simple: military intervention equalled bloodshed. In Canada the use of the military for domestic disputes declined precipitously, and not accidentally, with the birth of the modern RCMP in 1920.⁹ Other Canadian police forces also performed such a role although because of

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸As quoted in Jane Morgan, *Conflict and Order: The Police and Labour Disputes in England and Wales, 1900-1939* (London: Oxford University Press, 1987), 43.

⁹Desmond Morton, "Aid to the Civil Power: The Canadian Militia in Support of Social Order, 1867-1914," *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 51, no. 4 (1970), 407-425.

unionization and other factors they were not always as reliable as the Mounted Police. In the United States a similar historical trend occurred in the first half of the twentieth century. When it came to dealing with labour disputes national guard units were replaced by state police forces so that by mid-century military units were only used in particularly serious disputes. Historian Gerda Ray has called this evolution "an important development in the changing role of the state in labor relations which has largely gone unstudied."¹⁰

In Alberta and Saskatchewan Mounted Policemen were secondary to their colleagues in the provincial and city police forces in policing disturbances between 1917 and 1928 (Saskatchewan) and 1932 (Alberta). Once the provincial police forces disbanded, the RCMP played a secondary role only in major urban centres. The deputy attorney general of Saskatchewan informed the chief constable of Saskatoon, a seeker of Mountie assistance, of the reality of this status in 1933: "The R.C.M. Police force is an auxilliary force and is available at all times in cases of emergency, and in such cases [it] is willing to co-operate with the police force of the said cities when requested to do so."¹¹ In 1932, Superintendent J.W. Spalding had assured the attorney general of Saskatchewan that the RCMP in Saskatchewan was quite prepared to handle any outbreak of disorder:

Morton identified the dramatic decrease in the use of the military internally although he never suggested plausible reasons for the shift.

¹⁰Gerda Ray, "'We Can Stay Until Hell Freezes Over': Strike Control and the State Police in New York, 1919-1923," *Labor History*, vol. 37, no. 3 (1995), 404.

¹¹NAC, RG 146, RCMP Records Related to the Saskatoon Relief Camp Riot, vol. 27, file 92-A-00123, pt. 4, Alex Blackwood, Saskatchewan deputy attorney general, to G.M. Donald, Chief Constable - Saskatoon, 29 April 1933.

For your confidential information, may advise that on consulting the Officer Commanding, "Depot" Division he states he could in an emergency turn out 75 or 80 men, fully armed and equipped. We also have two machine guns, two riot guns throwing gas shells, a supply of hand gas grenades and necessary billies for the use of men on foot and suitable batons for mounted duty. We also have arrangements whereby a special train at Regina will be placed at our disposal and I judge that if an emergency arose we could leave here with forty or more men and if necessary horses as well, in two hours times, and I judge the time of a special train from Regina to Saskatoon would be in the neighbourhood of five hours. We are thus prepared to meet an emergency with men, horses and train, for rioting and trouble such as may be anticipated or develop at Saskatoon or elsewhere in the Province.¹²

The military would now be used only in situations that proved beyond the capabilities of the RCMP.¹³

The very name "Mounted Police" is suggestive. After all, horses have no role in urban policing—except to entertain schoolchildren and for use in crowd control. As future commissioner S.T. Wood noted in the aftermath of the Regina Riot, mounted members were effective at dispersing protesters.¹⁴ Starting in the last two years of the First World War, a large reserve of Mounties was kept in Regina on Perry's recommendation, specifically to be used to quell disturbances.¹⁵ With the return of the RCMP to regular policing duties in

¹²*Ibid.*, pt. 2, J.W. Spalding to MacPherson, Sask. A.G, 3 November 1932.

¹³For example, in the cases of the On to Ottawa Trek and the Estevan Strike and Riot the military was the next option had the RCMP proved incapable of dealing with the disturbances. NAC, RG 146, vol. 26, file 93-A-00086, pts. 1-3, MacBrien to Wood, 15 June 1935; Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), RCMP Records Related to the Estevan Strike and Riot, vol. 94, file 88-A-60, H.H. Mathews, Deputy Minister of National Defence, to Belcher, 30 September 1931.

¹⁴NAC, RG 146, RCMP Records Related to the Regina Riot, vol. 26, file 93-A-00086, pts. 1-3, Wood to MacBrien, "Re: Training," July 1935,.

¹⁵NAC, RG 18 A-1, vol. 517, file no. 1, pt. 4, Memorandum on redistribution of Force, 6 January 1917.

Alberta during the Depression, riot control became an increasingly important function of the RCMP.¹⁶ One Mountie recalled being transferred to Edmonton in 1932 solely for riot duty. Part of his work involved training the horses not to be frightened by angry, shouting crowds.¹⁷ Another Mounted Policeman remembered serving in the RCMP riot squad in southern Alberta and being sent wherever disorder seemed imminent during the 1930s.¹⁸ In 1937, the federal government passed legislation creating an official RCMP Reserve force. One of the justifications for this body was to provide a pool of potential Mounties. The other, wrote Commissioner MacBrien in his annual report, was "[t]o have a 'Reserve' strength upon which to draw in times of emergency." Two hundred and eighty men were signed up; forty percent went to "Depot" Division in Regina.¹⁹

The type of training was illustrative of the role the state and senior Mounted Policemen envisioned for the rank-and-file. In his December 1918 memo calling for the amalgamation of the RNWMP and the Dominion Police, Commissioner A.B. Perry advised the government that this new outfit "should be armed and trained as a military body so that it can act effectively should it be required to do so."²⁰ Accordingly, military skills such as

¹⁶Report of "K" Division, "Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for the Year Ended March 31, 1932," 54.

¹⁷*The Way It Was: Fifty Years of RCMP Memories* (Victoria: RCMP's Veterans Association, Victoria Division, 1990), 30-1.

¹⁸Donovan T. Saul (ed.), *Red Serge and Stetsons: A Hundred Years of Mountie Memories* (Victoria: Horsdal and Schubert, 1993), 36.

¹⁹"Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for the Year Ended March 31, 1932," 32.

drilling and equitation, were emphasized. Mounted Police recruits were, and still are, organized in troops.²¹ Cliff Harvison, who signed up in 1919, remembered well one important aspect of his training:

We started our "riot" training Riot training is designed to accustom the horses to noise, shots, quickly moving figures, and obstacles on the ground. It achieves this purpose but only after several sessions of lessening bedlam. Dummies with bells attached were suspended from the ceiling of the riding school so that they hung just above ground level. Logs and strips of white cloth were placed at various angles on the tanbark. A squad of men, carrying shotguns, tin pans, drums and umbrellas, took up position in the centre of the menage. When a mounted troop entered the riding school, the doors were firmly closed, and the troop in single file was given the order to trot around the school.

... just as the troop was getting into some semblance of order, the dummies started swinging, shotguns blasted off, tin cans clanged, and men rushed toward the horses raising and lowering umbrellas and waving white cloths. ... Surprisingly, the horses became accustomed to the clatter and moving objects after a few sessions.²²

Some specific examples illustrate the militaristic nature of the Mounted Police. The April 1919 report for "G" Division (Edmonton and the surrounding area of Alberta), a period which included the Winnipeg General Strike, mentioned that a machine gun section had formed and was training with a Lewis machine gun.²³ In 1931, two weeks after the Estevan

²⁰RG 18, vol. 572, file 52-19, Memo on "the constitution and organization of a Police Force for General Duty in Canada," 3 December 1918.

²¹See James McKenzie and Lorne McClinton, *Troop 17: The Making of Mounties* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1992).

²²C.W. Harvison, *The Horsemen* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1968), 19.

²³NAC, RG 18, vol. 1931, file no. 2, pt. 2, Monthly Report for "G" Division, 30 April 1919.

Riot, during which the RCMP shot and killed three miners, the government convened a special meeting in Ottawa. In attendance were the chief of the Canadian General Staff, A.G.L. McNaughton, and a former colleague, Commissioner J.H. MacBrien. Events in Estevan convinced MacBrien that his charges were ill-equipped to deal with such large-scale protest; he also seemed to believe that violent clashes could become a regular occurrence. Accordingly, MacBrien requested that the Canadian Army immediately send 300 bayonets, 30,000 rounds of .303 ammunition, and bayonet and physical training instructors to Regina for two months of service.²⁴ He also asked that a military detention centre in Halifax be turned over to the force "temporarily for other purposes."²⁵

After another major police-worker clash, this time in Regina in 1935, the RCMP senior command did not fundamentally question police tactics that had led to the violence, but rather sought to make the RCMP a more efficient instrument for handling disorder. S.T. Wood, the individual primarily responsible for the bloody riot, filed an extensive report on how to improve RCMP crowd-handling capabilities. His words read like an analysis after a military clash. Members he surveyed opted for a hardwood baton over leather ones. Wood suggested acquiring an armoured car and riot guns, including sawed-off shotguns and Thompson machine guns, capable of firing widely dispersed shot. Tear gas grenades had been found to be ineffective in Regina because the rioters were not concentrated. Wood advised that grenades that shattered or exploded on contact would be more efficient since

²⁴NAC, Manuscript Group (MG) 30 E133 Series II, A.G.L. McNaughton Papers, vol. 10, file 46, Memorandum, 14 October 1931.

²⁵*Ibid.*, Memorandum for the Honourable Minister, 16 October 1931.

they "would prohibit the return of these grenades into our own ranks."²⁶ He also reported on the success of steel helmets at preventing serious head injuries. Shields were another necessary acquisition. Finally, Wood noted that the use of a dummy machine gun had been a useful tool of intimidation. He suggested others be used in the future in order to achieve the "desired effect."²⁷

All of these RCMP tactics and plans were developed in response to actual strikes and disturbances. But even peaceful labour activity came under scrutiny. In fact, historian Greg Kealey has argued that responding to the "labour revolt" was at the heart of the Mounted Police transformation between 1914 and 1939:

The Canadian state found itself unprepared initially to deal with labour radicalism in the late years of the First World War, but the solutions it devised, building on the mechanisms of repression developed for other purposes early in the war and on the similar experience of other Allied countries, proved successful and durable. When similar crises arose later during the Great Depression and the Second World War, the state would turn again to measures initiated in the years 1914-20 and to the institution, such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.²⁸

Some of the "measures" for dealing with labour problems included surveillance and intelligence gathering. After all, labour disturbances indicated to the Mounted Police that agitators had stirred up trouble where none had existed, hence the need for vigilance even

²⁶NAC, RG 146, vol. 26, file 93-A-00086, pts. 1-3, Wood to MacBrien, "Re: Training," July 1935.

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸Gregory S. Kealey, "State Repression of Labour and the Left in Canada, 1914-20: The Impact of the First World War," *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 73, no. 3 (1992), 288.

when the labour scene was peaceful. Since the Mounted Police usually had no direct role in policing strikes in Alberta and Saskatchewan between 1917 and 1928, they took a preventative approach. Part of that role involved spying on workers, labour unions, and labour activities.

Spying on workers is an old habit of governments and governmental agencies. Historian E.P. Thompson addressed the topic in *The Making of the English Working Class*. He noted the propensity of such espionage operations to sow distrust among workers and radicals, since one never knew the identity of the informant or spy. Then, there was the possibility of an individual serving as an agent provocateur. Thus, those who generated the most suspicion about their trustworthiness were those who made the most radical suggestions: "If a Citizen made a Motion which seemed any way spirited he was set down as a Spy sent among them by Government. If a Citizen sat in a Corner & said nothing he was watching their proceedings that he might the better report it Citizens hardly knew how to act."²⁹ The modern drive toward intelligence gathering against labour began in Britain during the First World War. In 1916, Lloyd George, then minister of Munitions, instructed the head of Special Branch to form an "intelligence service on labour matters for the whole country."³⁰ Nor was this kind of policing peculiar to Britain. Since the nineteenth century in

²⁹As quoted in E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin Books, 1980), 539-40. In 1932, J.S. Woodsworth, during a debate on changes to the RCMP, told the House of Commons that "[a]gain and again visiting in the mining camps in the west I have had labour people come to me and say: If there is any suggestion made in the way of provoking trouble be careful, because that suggestion comes from an agent of the government." J.S. Woodsworth, "Statement Re: Changes to the Force," Canada, House of Commons' *Debates*, 3 May 1932, 2591-2.

³⁰As quoted in Morgan, *Conflict and Order*, 65.

the United States, police forces and private detective agencies had made a regular habit of performing surveillance activities against workers.³¹ And in France, the police spied on workers as part of their regular policing duties prior to the twentieth century.³²

In Canada, as elsewhere, part of the need for Mounted Police intelligence operations was due to the belief that outsiders, even foreign powers, were the cause of discontent within Canadian labour circles. Commissioner Perry had instructed his detectives in 1919 to keep special watch on labour organizations because "[i]t has been found that this class of organization is particularly susceptible to Bolsheviki teachings."³³ Vigilance was ever needed so the government could be made aware of the extent of these outsiders' influence. This was a constant theme throughout the 1920s and 1930s. As early as 1919, a Mountie report from Maple Creek, Saskatchewan noted that A.E. Smith, a future member of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC), was extremely dangerous and needed to be watched because he "tells people that if they are hungry or want anything they see, go and take it, it is as much theirs as anyone else's, and this man being a very fluent speaker and holding a responsible position, his words will have a strong effect on a mob of uneducated people."³⁴ Commissioner

³¹Sidney L. Haring, *Policing a Class Society: The Experience of American Cities, 1865-1915* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1983), 145-6; Elizabeth Grace and Colin Leys, "The Concept of Subversion and its Implications," in C.E.S. Franks (ed.), *Dissent and the State* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1989), 66.

³²Clive Emsley, *Policing and its Context, 1750-1870* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1983), 86.

³³NAC, RG 18, series A1, vol. 599, file 1309-1335, "Circular Memorandum No. 807A.: RE: Detectives and Bolshevism," 6 January 1919.

³⁴CSIS, RCMP Records Related to the Canadian Labour Defence League and A.E. Smith, vol. 19, file 1, S/Sgt. J.J. Wilson to O.C. Maple Creek, "A" Div, 23 June 1919.

MacBrien demonstrated similar thinking in a 1934 letter to the Mayor of Winnipeg: "[t]hrough the selling of strikes and creating discontent in many lines of industry, the Communists are really doing more harm now than they did parading the streets."³⁵

Of course, spying on workers did not begin in the 1920s and 1930s. By at least 1916, the Mounted Police in Alberta targetted workers and worker organizations. In December of that year, during a coal mine strike a Mountie reported that once things had been settled "personal enemies may be found willing to inform on these men at a later day."³⁶ 1919, however, was the big year for strikes and an even larger year for RCMP intelligence gathering.³⁷ Alberta and Saskatchewan experienced sympathy strikes in the wake of the Winnipeg General Strike.³⁸ In Calgary, a secret agent working for "K" Division, and apparently a long-time labour activist, wrote a lengthy report on how to deal with the nation-wide labour disturbances:

If a programme could be announced which would meet with the approval of the Conservative Labour element, aiming at the elimination of basic grievances and a satisfactory financial settlement to the Returned men, and simultaneously the wholesale deportation of the alien trouble makers, the decisive and concerted arrest of the leaders of the movement and a quick trial, with a sentence making their release or confinement dependent upon

³⁵CSIS, RCMP Records Related to Mathew Popovich, vol. 77, file. 1, MacBrien to Winnipeg Mayor Ralph Webb, 27 October 1934.

³⁶NAC, RG 18, vol. 525, file 494, Report of Sgt. McLauchlan, 1 December 1916.

³⁷For more information on strikes in 1919 see Gregory S. Kealey, "1919: The Canadian Labour Revolt," in Bryan D. Palmer (ed.), *The Character of Class Struggle: Essays in Canadian Working-Class History, 1850-1985* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), 90-114.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 96.

their future policy, this movement could be headed off with little or now [sic] violence, and the ground would be cleared for a more intelligent form of general industrial reconstruction.³⁹

At the end of 1919, "K" Division headquarters in Lethbridge reported that "[a]ll [OBU] agitators are kept under close surveillance and many reports have been forwarded during the month on their various activities. [indent] Our Agents are gaining good information, generally."⁴⁰

There was a constant drive to discover information on unions and labour activists, and not just during strikes. Again the effort was a preventative one, since the common belief was that agitators, often Red ones, were behind outbreaks of labour discontent. In 1920 a Mountie reported that Arthur Evans, later to be famous as the leader of the On to Ottawa Trek, had convinced strikers to stay off the job in Drumheller.⁴¹ This tactic led the commander of southern Alberta to advise the commissioner that if Evans could be removed through arrest and prosecution "the morale of the rank and file of the O.B.U. would undoubtedly be shaken."⁴² By November 1920, the author of a weekly RCMP Security

³⁹NAC, Sir Robert Borden Papers, MG 26 H1, vol. 112, reel c-4340, Secret Agent report, 7 June 1919: 60970. The report was from a secret agent with a long connection with the IWW; *Ibid.*, Lea to Yates, 19 June 1919.

⁴⁰NAC, RG 18, vol. 1933, file G-57-9-1, Confidential Monthly Reports-- "K" Division, Lethbridge December 1919.

⁴¹CSIS, RCMP Records Related to Arthur Evans and the One Big Union, Report of D/Sergt. F. Lobb, 8 October 1920, Report of Cpl. Paris, 4 March 1920. Paris had been ordered to find evidence linking Evans with the OBU. He acquired a copy of Evans's signature and other evidence to establish the link.

⁴²*Ibid.*, Insp. A. Mellor, Superintendent Commanding Southern Alberta District, to the Commissioner, 6 October 1920.

Bulletin reported that enough evidence had been collected to convict Evans on a charge of spreading false information.⁴³ A court later convicted the labour activist on an unrelated charge.⁴⁴

Other labour activists also drew Mountie attention. Communist Malcolm Bruce made a visit to Saskatoon in 1922 that happened to coincide with a strike by printers at the Saskatoon *Daily Star*. Headquarters was assured that Bruce had not actually caused the strike, only that he made the printers "feel a little more hostile to the Employers."⁴⁵ Stacks of files exist on various other Communist and labour activists (7,000 individuals had RCMP files on them by 1929). Even if they lived outside of Saskatchewan and Alberta, records on their sojourns to these provinces appeared in their files.

Individuals in Alberta and Saskatchewan who received extra police attention usually worked for radical organizations such as the OBU, IWW, Mine Workers Union of Canada (MWUC), and the Workers Unity League (WUL).⁴⁶ Certain groups received more concentration than others depending on the particular time and external events. The IWW received attention during the First World War and then was largely ignored by the police,

⁴³Security Bulletin No. 48-4 November 1920, in Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker (eds.), *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Early Years, 1919-1929* (St. John's: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1994), 260.

⁴⁴He was convicted of misappropriating union funds, a conviction R.B. Bennett would remind him of in their infamous meeting in 1935.

⁴⁵CSIS, RCMP Records Related to Malcolm Bruce, vol. 87, file 117-89-57, pt. 1, Report of Hildyard, 11 November 1924.

⁴⁶CSIS, RCMP Records Related to the Mine Workers Union of Canada, vol. 84, file 88-A-60, H.M. Newson, Assistant Commissioner, Commanding "K" Div., to MacBrien, Re: Mine Workers Union of Canada, 4 January 1935.

although as late as 1926 the RCMP reported that an IWW organizer had been appointed in the U.S. to work among harvesters in western Canada.⁴⁷ RCMP security bulletins from 1920 carried regular updates on the OBU's progress in gaining new members. A certain pleasure seems evident when police reports noted OBU failures, dissension within the ranks, and splits among the leaders. By the early 1920s it was evident that the OBU was going nowhere.⁴⁸ Many Mountie detachments, especially those in rural areas, could discover no activity on the part of this organization.⁴⁹

Eventually a new menace came along to replace the IWW and OBU bogeymen. A RCMP report from Alberta in 1922 noted that the Workers Party of Canada

is working along the same lines and principles as the O.B.U. formerly did, but having learned a lesson by the fate of the O.B.U. are proceeding more skillfully and cautiously by educational methods, their ultimate aim however being the same, that is direct action and control of the Government and Country by force if necessary.⁵⁰

By the end of the 1920s, Communists became actively involved in front organizations, including labour and eventually unemployed organizations. Joseph Stalin,

⁴⁷Security Bulletin No. 330 - 5 August 1926 in *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins, The Early Years*, 314. The Mounted Police frequently kept an eye on the activities of American IWW agitators among harvesters. Danysk, *Hired Hands*, 108, 127-8.

⁴⁸NAC, RG 146, vol. 27, file 92-A-00123, pt. 4, Insp. F. Humby to the Commissioner, 25 April 1922.

⁴⁹NAC, RG 18, vol. 603, file 24/1920, pt. 1, Report of Cst. W. Craig, "Re: MAPLE CREEK AND ASSINIBOIA DISTRICTS PATROL," 27 September 1920. No. 36- 12 August 1920 in *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Early Years*, 33.

⁵⁰NAC, RG 146, vol. 10, file 92-A-00012, pt. 1, Report of Det S. Sgt. S.R. Waugh, 28 December 1922.

leader of the Soviet Union, had ordered a shift in 1928 when he called for workers to form their own revolutionary organizations rather than work within existing reformist ones. The "united front" of Communist and other leftist organizations was dead. The so-called "united front from below," really the CPC taking a unilateral approach, was in. Communists now reviled social democrats like J.S. Woodsworth as "social fascists."⁵¹ They also took their war against capitalism to another level when they organized their own unions, including the Mine Workers Union of Canada. This activity made RCMP work among mining unions in Alberta and Saskatchewan even more important, especially since the mining sector had a history of labour disputes.⁵² Part of keeping watch on union activities involved intelligence gathering. The 1935 MWUC convention report, for example, was forwarded to headquarters by the commander of "K" division.⁵³ James Sloan, the union head, became a Mounted Police target because of his reputation as a radical. Headquarters ordered detachments in southern Alberta to monitor Sloan's statements in the hope that he might incriminate himself.⁵⁴

⁵¹Ian Angus, *Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada* (Montreal: Vanguard Publications, 1981), 265-9.

⁵²NAC, RG 146, vol. 13, file 92-A-00056, S.T. Wood to O.C. Weyburn, 25 October 1934. Wood requested detailed information on the activities of mining unions in the Estevan area. In Circular Memorandum #787 (1917), Perry instructed all division commanders in the west to ensure that frequent patrols were made to mining areas. NAC, RG 18 series A-1, vol. 519, file 11, pt. 1, 15 October 1917.

⁵³CSIS, RCMP Records Related to the Estevan Strike and Riot, vol. 84, file 88-A-60, H.M. Newson, Assistant Commissioner, Commanding K Div. to Commissioner, 4 January 1935.

⁵⁴NAC, RG 146, RCMP Records Related to the Estevan Strike and Riot, vol. 6, file 1025-9-91093, Spalding to O.C. Southern Alberta District, Re: James Sloan, 12 February 1932.

Although there is no evidence that in Canada the RCMP shared its intelligence with private companies, the Mounties did regularly keep departments of both the provincial and federal government informed about the activities of the employed and unemployed. For example, a confidential Criminal Investigation Branch (CIB) Monthly Report for "K" Division sent to the deputy attorney general of Alberta in 1932 included unemployment figures for the previous month, strikes currently underway, and a category entitled "Activities of Radical or Revolutionary Organizations."⁵⁵ On occasion, government agencies of various stripes requested Mountie reports on unions or individual workers.⁵⁶ Often, the RCMP would send an uninvited report to a government minister or bureaucrat. The favourite destinations for such reports were the federal department of Labour, and Justice departments at both the federal and provincial level.⁵⁷

In 1924, J.S. Woodsworth raised in the House of Commons the issue of RCMP surveillance against organized labour. His query forced minister of Justice Ernest Lapointe to admit that some Mounties had been at a labour meeting addressed by Woodsworth. In a

⁵⁵Public Archives of Alberta (PAA), Premiers' Papers, accession no. 69.289, file 108, Confidential. Report from Newson to Alberta Dep. Attorney General., re: Confidential C.I.B. Monthly Report, "K" Division-October, 1932.

⁵⁶CSIS, vol. 84, file 88-A-60, Private. Sec, Dept. of Trade and Commerce to MacBrien, 4 July 1934; NAC, RG 146, RCMP Records Related to A.E. Smith, vol. 4157, file 94-A-00014, pt. 2, William Dickson, Deputy Minister of Labour, to MacBrien, 18 April 1934. Dickson requested RCMP reports on the leading members of the Workers Unity League; NAC, R.B. Bennett Papers, reel M-988, William Dickson to Gideon Robertson, 10 October 1931, 92760. Dickson sought information on a particular labour activist.

⁵⁷NAC, RG 146, vol. 13, file 92-A-00056. Starnes forwarded several secret police reports to H.H. Ward, deputy minister of Labour. In one case Ward wrote back for a clarification and to note that the minister of Labour at the time was seeking clarification about a matter.

memo prepared for Lapointe, however, the RCMP argued that it was up to the force to keep the government informed of such happenings in communities. The memo contained the unequivocal assurance that the "Royal Canadian Mounted Police scrupulously avoids interference with trade unions or legitimate labour organizations." Later in the same document, though, the RCMP hinted at the nature of most of its work—simple intelligence gathering that left no trail to the local police station: "It is to be observed that no interference is alleged. No prosecutions have been entered, no threats have been made, no pressure has been exerted on any persons as a result of such attendance."⁵⁸

While Woodsworth's complaint led to the end of surveillance against him, RCMP spying against labour continued unabated. A sergeant in Prince Albert reported in 1925 that plain clothes men had covered a local labour meeting; he also warned that once it was realized the Mounties were covering the meetings, "it may have the effect of making labour men very much more careful in what information is passed on to us."⁵⁹

As this last report suggests, it was usually ordinary Mounties who dealt with labour and political activists, workers, and the unemployed. For a regular cop, policing labour was not the world of absolutes that it was for his boss and the state. Workers who policed workers experienced a much more complex environment. There is a certain irony in this policing equation. It is an irony that is too often ignored by those seeking to castigate the

⁵⁸CSIS, RCMP Records Related to J.S. Woodsworth, Memorandum for the Honourable Minister, 28 May 1924.

⁵⁹CSIS, RCMP Records Related to Sam Scarlett, vol. 78, file 117-89-57, Sgt. Drysdale to O.C. Prince Albert, 29 September 1925.

RCMP--Mounties were workers too.⁶⁰ "Working men in uniform" was historian Greg Marquis' turn of phrase to describe the Toronto police;⁶¹ it is also applicable, without the class implications present in Marquis' work, to Mounted Policemen. They worked long hours, in lousy conditions, for a low rate of pay, and without the job protection that belonging to a union might have offered.⁶² Unlike other workers who freed themselves from their job when they went home at night, a Mountie could literally be on duty around the clock. Ordinary employees also did not have a boss interfering with their social life the way a Mounted Policeman did, telling him when he could marry and where he could live and how he was to behave in public. The job of a Mounted Policeman was not a pleasant one. Certainly, it accorded the wearer of the uniform a certain amount of social prestige, especially in small towns.⁶³ On the other hand, it also meant long, hard hours dealing with aspects of life, such as the deaths of children, that the remainder of society had no wish to encounter. One Mountie, recalling his years in red serge in Saskatchewan while tears collected in his eyes, confessed that if he had it to do over again he would not: "the force

⁶⁰This is not to suggest, of course, that rank-and-file Mounties were themselves from a working-class background. A generalization about the class background of Mounted Policemen in this era cannot be made. The values of the RCMP as an organization were clearly middle-class ones.

⁶¹Greg Marquis, "Working Men in Uniform: The Early Twentieth-Century Toronto Police," *Social History*, vol. 20, no. 40 (1987), 259-77.

⁶²The federal government passed an order-in-council in October 1918 which prohibited the Mounted Police from unionization. This restriction remains controversial to this day. NAC, RG 18, vol. 1003, file "Personnel," order-in-council of 7 October 1918.

⁶³Interview with Staff Sergeant (rtd.) Stan Wight, 29 March 1996.

asked too much of me."⁶⁴ The point remains, however, that while Mounties did not identify with other groups, such as ethnic minorities or radicals, they were workers. This reality created a more complex policing situation than existed when Mounties dealt with radicals and non-Anglo-Canadians.

Work meant many things to Mounties. For one, it meant being aware that the world, like the atmosphere they toiled in, was a hierarchical one.⁶⁵ Police comments regarding class appear in reports, mostly in the 1910s and the 1920s. Sometimes the comments represented class snobbery, notions influenced by ethnicity. Workers of British heritage were considered a step above their foreign compatriots. In Alberta, when Constable Frank Zaneth referred to the "honest working class," and Inspector J.W. Spalding mentioned "the better class of labour" they did not have eastern and central Europeans in mind.⁶⁶ Similarly when an RCMP security bulletin in 1920 described One Big Union members in Saskatoon as being of "an inferior class of labour," there was little doubt as to their ethnic background.⁶⁷

One would never be aware of the intricacies of the relationship between Mounties and workers by reading much of the existing literature on the RCMP. The Mounties in the

⁶⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁵Class here is taken to mean broad social and economic divisions within a society.

⁶⁶NAC, RG 146, RCMP Records Related to the Winnipeg General Strike, vol. 1, file 1025-9-9028, pt. 12, Report by Zaneth, 3 June 1919; *Ibid.*, Spalding to Pennefather, 30 May 1919.

⁶⁷As quoted in Security Bulletin No. 46- 21 October 1920, *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Early Years*, 229.

area of labour relations have been portrayed as either angels or devils.⁶⁸ As a contrast is the work of William Baker on the 1906 Lethbridge coal mine strike. Baker found that depending on how one viewed the evidence either a "class conflict" or a "functionalist/pluralist" model could explain the interaction between Mounties and strikes.⁶⁹ This suggests a more complex situation than many writers have previously acknowledged.

A possible explanation for the lack of nuance in the relevant literature is that on several occasions in the interwar period the results of RCMP contact with labour have been tragic. Watching and observing was not always sufficient. On occasion, Mounted Policemen were required to back up their policing of labour with force, usually against a group of striking workers or protesting unemployed. Such tactics became increasingly prevalent in the 1930s because discontent increased during the Depression. And with the RCMP's return to regular policing in Alberta and Saskatchewan, it was once more the first line of defence against any form of disorder. The leadership of the RCMP had no qualms about which side to take in a dispute or, if push came to shove, about using violence. For those who actually had to deal with a strike or protest, such decisions were not as easily made.

In Alberta and Saskatchewan, mining districts were the centres of industrial disputes. The Mountie goal became to ensure that social peace was maintained. Social peace

⁶⁸Lorne and Caroline Brown, *An Unauthorized History of the Mounted Police* (Toronto: James Lorimer Company, 1978); William and Nora Kelly, *The Royal Canadian Mounted Police: A Century of History, 1873-1973* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1973); R.C. Macleod, *The North West Mounted Police and Law Enforcement, 1873-1905* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976).

⁶⁹William M. Baker, "The Miners and the Mounties: The Royal North West Mounted Police and the 1906 Lethbridge Strike," *Labour/Le Travail*, vol. 27 (1991), 63.

frequently translated into the successful operation of the mines. This policy put the RCMP squarely on the side of the mine-owners and against the interest of the miners, especially striking ones, who sought to disrupt the operations of the mines and the use of "scab" workers. Taking sides in industrial disputes has led many to criticize the police as an instrument of class oppression. Sidney Haring, for example, in discussing the role of police in strikes in the United States, noted that the police had two choices when facing a dispute: side with the workers or side with the owners. By siding with the owners, Haring argued, the police became "enforcers of class-biased law" and a "class-biased institution."⁷⁰

What was the character of the Mountie role in policing strikes? According to historian William Baker, the nature of Mounted Police work meant that its members were not always the most sympathetic parties to strikers. After all, policemen often made less than the workers they policed, worked longer hours, and received no union protection.⁷¹ The temper of Mountie policing of strikes differs depending on whose history one reads. Historian R.C. Macleod argues that members of the Mounted Police prior to the First World War were neutral in their dealings with strikers:

while the police spent much of their time dealing with problems which arose from labour disputes they did not think of it as a special problem apart from the other problems of maintaining peace and order. ... It did not occur to any of the parties involved in labour disputes that the police by intervening could be considered to be helping one class exploit another. ... The police were effectively neutral in almost all labour disputes. They acted as honest brokers to the general satisfaction of both sides and as often took the part of labour as of management.⁷²

⁷⁰Haring, *Policing a Class Society*, 103.

⁷¹Baker, "The Miners and the Mounties," 90-1.

⁷²Macleod, *The NWMP and Law Enforcement*, 157.

In their hagiographic account of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, written to celebrate the centenary of the force, Nora and William Kelly offered a brief comment on the relationship between the Mounted Police and labour, in the context of the Winnipeg General Strike:

Most of the western press spoke proudly of the Mounted Police, but the western labour press labelled them "strikebreakers." Yet they had only acted on government orders to prevent a forbidden parade and had gathered evidence against certain men, not because they were labour leaders but because they were plotting to overthrow the government, by force if necessary.⁷³

Other writers are far more critical in their appraisal of Mountie strike work. Leading the way is *An Unauthorized History of the RCMP* by Caroline and Lorne Brown. The Browns viewed members of the force as simply stooges for business and as a group quite willing to use violence to quell a strike.⁷⁴

The actual Mounted Police record in policing strikes in Alberta and Saskatchewan was a mixed one. From 1917 to 1928 the men in scarlet served as an instrument of last resort. In Edmonton in 1923 the RCMP, backing up the Alberta Provincial Police and the Edmonton City Police, became involved in a violent clash that earned it the enmity of a great number of workers. The police had been protecting mine property, ironically owned by the provincial

⁷³Kelly and Kelly, *The Royal Canadian Mounted Police*, 151.

⁷⁴Brown and Brown, *An Unauthorized History of the RCMP*, 71-6, 85; Allen Seager, "A History of the Mine Workers' Union of Canada," (M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1978), 260.

government, against trespass by the strikers.⁷⁵ In Drumheller in 1923, two members of the Alberta Provincial Police ran into difficulties with a group of 250 strikers. When the mine manager called upon the local RCMP contingent for assistance, he was told that "it was none of their business [and] that the A.P.P. would have to look after their own affairs."⁷⁶ The response of the mine owners was to ask the federal government to have the RCMP replace the APP, because, in the words of the Commissioner of the APP, "they [the owners] evidently want to show force and to intimidate the miners."⁷⁷

Even in 1919, the year of widespread labour unrest, evidence exists of a mixed Mounted Police reply to discontent and strikes. The usual response was to blame problems on outside agitators. The head of "G" Division described a 1919 Edmonton strike this way:

There is no doubt in the minds of the general public that the strike has been engineered in the interests of some agitator, who were [sic] working hard to bring about a chaotic state of affairs, I presume in the hope of getting office in the general struggle. There is little doubt that the Unions were stampeded by cajoling and sophistry ...⁷⁸

A whole cast of characters fit the radical agitator description: socialists, anarchists, communists, IWWers, OBUers, or just plain foreigners.

⁷⁵"RCMP Annual Report for the Year Ended September 30, 1923," 24.

⁷⁶PAA, Records of the Alberta Provincial Police, accession no. 75.126, vol. 218, file 4598, APP Report, "C" Division, 5 September 1923.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, APP Commissioner to Premier Brownlee, 7 September 1923.

⁷⁸NAC, RG 18, vol. 1931, file 2, pt. 2, Monthly report for "G" Div., 7 July 1919.

Still, some of the Mounties who dealt with worker unhappiness displayed a degree of subtlety that was absent in the higher ranks; they were aware, for example, that it was not entirely the fault of agitators. The "G" Division writer, when discussing the 1919 Edmonton strike, had to admit that workers were receptive to the siren call of agitators because of "the high cost of living and the lack of employment in certain lines."⁷⁹ A November 1920 Security Bulletin contained a warning that agitators would attempt to take advantage of already existing distress.⁸⁰ Corporal Charles Paris, in-charge of the local detachment, remarked on a proposed coal miners' strike in Drumheller in 1919: "I really believe that the majority of the people are sound, and from the most recent reports that I have rendered, it would seem that the men are not very anxious to strike." He added that "[t]houghtless and rash actions on the part of any operators (especially these, when are not over popular [sic]) can only tend to aggravate a situation, which if handled carefully will eventually right itself."⁸¹ C.T. Hildyard reported from Saskatoon in 1922 that farmers had little problem in hiring men for thirty-five dollars a month, "but the feeling is undoubtedly growing that this wage is completely insufficient, as after six months work, a man would only draw \$210 which in case of his being out of work during the coming winter would force him on relief." As if to reinforce the validity of his observation, Hildyard added, "[t]his opinion is held by many sound and respectable citizens."⁸²

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

⁸⁰Security Bulletin No. 49 - 11 November 1920, in *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Early Years*, 273-94.

⁸¹CSIS, RCMP Records Related to Arthur Evans and the One Big Union, Report of Cpl. Paris, I.C. of Drumheller, 24 October 1919.

There is no question that on occasion Mounties sympathized with workers, or at least managed to observe that there were two sides to disputes. The 1931 Estevan Coal Strike serves as a textbook example in Saskatchewan of the complex events that made up a labour dispute with a tragic ending. In this case, many of the officers "on the ground" attempted to be balanced in their assessment of the reasons behind the strike and the course of action to be taken. In fact, some openly sympathized with the striking miners, despite their own class and ethnic prejudice. Inevitably, however, in a hierarchical institution like the Mounted Police, the rank-and-file followed the orders of the senior officers, a group that strongly espoused the anti-Communist rhetoric of the RCMP's political master, the Conservative government of R.B. Bennett. In the end, the RCMP pleased no one. Three miners were left dead; police, miners, and citizens were injured. Today, the dead lie buried in a cemetery on the outskirts of nearby Bienfait, Saskatchewan. The caption on their common grave reads, "Murdered by R.C.M.P."⁸³ Although exonerated at the time, the judgement of historians has been much harsher on the actions of the RCMP.⁸⁴

⁸²NAC, RG 146, vol. 27, file 92-A-000123, pt. 4, Report of C. Hildyard, 20 April 1922.

⁸³This caption was subsequently ordered removed by the local town council. Since then, however, it has been restored.

⁸⁴In his 1978 thesis on the Mine Workers' Union of Canada, Allen Seager simply describes the RCMP's policing of the strike as a "terror campaign." Lorne and Caroline Brown's *An Unauthorized History of the RCMP* also offers a harsh assessment of the Mounties' role at Estevan and their activities in dealing with labour in general: "The events surrounding the Bienfait-Estevan strike were not at all atypical. ... Governments and police and especially the RCMP automatically sided with the employers. The RCMP were used mainly to protect company property and scabs, but they were also often used to intimidate strikers by means of legal or violent acts." Seager, "A History of the Mine Workers' Union of Canada," 260; Brown and Brown, *An Unauthorized History of the RCMP*, 71-6.

The earth beneath Estevan, a small town in southeastern Saskatchewan, contained an abundance of lignite. Working without a union, coal miners in Estevan received lower wages than their counterparts in Alberta and British Columbia. They also experienced seasonal employment and injuries on the job, all the while working for employers who at the slightest complaint could tell a worker "if you don't like it, pack your tools and get out."⁸⁵ The lack of representation for the miners had long been a source of grievance. And when the Mine Workers Union of Canada attempted to fill this void, the mine owners refused to recognize the union, ostensibly because of its links with the Communist Party of Canada. But as writer S.D. Hanson argued and as one Mountie later admitted, the mine owners would undoubtedly have refused to recognize any union, whatever its political affiliation.⁸⁶ Several hundred miners joined the Communist-affiliated union, and on 7 September 1931 they walked off the job.

The local Mounted Police contingent quickly became concerned about the possibility of violence as tension grew in early September. The highest ranking Mountie on the scene at Estevan, Sergeant William Mulhall, in-charge of the local detachment, had no doubt as to where the fault for the coming strike lay. He also had the ability to see through the anti-Communist rhetoric being put out by local business interests, various levels of government, and the upper echelons of the Mounted Police. On 5 September 1931, the fifty-five-year-old native of Liverpool, England reflected on the approaching dispute:

⁸⁵As quoted in S.D. Hanson, "The Estevan Strike and Riot, 1931," (M.A. thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1971), 32-49, 80.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 79.

It would appear that a strike in this district would not be so disadvantageous to the mine owners as at first sight and it would seem that they are purposely avoiding a meeting with the miners. The most energetic personality in this is Mr. Moffat [sic], who is interested in the Western Collieries and apparently in favour of forcing a strike. Information from a reliable source is to the effect that this man is using his influence with the rest of the mine operators to prevent them meeting the miners and coming to a mutual agreement to avert a strike. ... The number of miners in the Estevan district will be approximately one thousand of mixed nationalities, in favour of a strong foreign element. The majority of these miners are not in favour of communism, though they believe they have had unjust treatment and need a leader to guide them and air their grievances. If these had been adjusted the present situation would have been avoided.⁸⁷

It was an incisive analysis of the situation. Even before the miners left the pits, the mine owners and managers began to call for an armed presence to deal with any potential strikers. Undoubtedly the owners planned on employing "scab" workers and recognized the conflict this might cause. The force they wanted to perform their bidding was the RCMP. On 3 September 1931, eleven-year veteran Constable F.H. Steele met with a mine manager, who requested that at least five men, armed with shotguns, be stationed around the Truax-Traer mine property. Steele could discover nothing to "substantiate [the manager's] fears and it would appear that any outside interference would only tend to increase the ill-feeling against this company and thus cause trouble rather than further any amicable agreement."⁸⁸ In fact, the local Mounties did not, as Lorne and Caroline Brown stated, "automatically side ... with the employers." Nor were they simply there "to protect company property and scabs," or be

⁸⁷NAC, RG 146, vol. 6, file 1025-9-91093, pt. 1, Report of Sgt. W. Mulhall, 5 September 1931.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, Report of Cst. F.H. Steele, 3 September 1931.

employed as a tool to "intimidate strikers by means of legal or violent action."⁸⁹ When, for example, Sergeant Mulhall encountered a group of striking miners on 11 September, he attempted to discover their grievances and even tried his hand at mediation.⁹⁰

Mulhall's superiors, however, envisioned a more sinister agenda behind the miners' strike, especially since the new union was linked with the Communist Party of Canada. Mulhall was advised by a colleague to place the union president and Communist, James Sloan, and another organizer under surveillance.⁹¹ Reinforcements from Regina also arrived. A Mountie secret agent, John Eberhardt,⁹² received orders to proceed to Estevan and infiltrate the striking miners.⁹³ Even with these transfers, Superintendent R.R. Tait, in-charge of the southern Saskatchewan district of the Mounted Police, sought to avoid any action, such as stationing Mounted Policemen at mine sites, that the striking miners might perceive as provocative.⁹⁴ As the strike continued, tension grew. Mulhall believed that a particular

⁸⁹Brown and Brown, *An Unauthorized History of the RCMP*, 76.

⁹⁰NAC, RG 146, vol. 6, file 1025-9-91093, pt. 2, Report of Mulhall, 11 September 1931.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, D/Sgt. J. Metcalfe to Mulhall, 7 September 1931.

⁹²RCMP, Personnel Records of Special Constable J.L. Eberhardt. Eberhardt, of Czech background, started off as a Secret Agent, became a Special Constable, and then found his employment terminated by the Mounted Police in the mid-1930s.

⁹³*Ibid.*, Superintendent R.R. Tait to M.A. MacPherson, Attorney General of Saskatchewan, 8 September 1931. Informants were also used as well as other agents, including individuals working at the Taylorton, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan mines. NAC, CSIS Records, RG 146, vol. 6, file 1025-9-91093, pt. 3, Report of Secret Agents at Estevan Detachment, 18 October 1931. The RCMP approached at least one mine manager in order to get one of their operatives hired on as a miner.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, Tait to MacPherson, 15 September 1931.

mine manager, an American with experience in violent strikes in Pennsylvania, was responsible for the increasingly dangerous situation.⁹⁵ The Mountie's restraint in handling the strike angered several prominent Estevan citizens and led to the dispatching of an officer from Regina to investigate the complaints against his colleague: he found no validity to them.⁹⁶

As Mulhall and other Mounties had recognized, the flash point to any violence would be the use of strike-breakers by the mine owners, something the newly-arrived Detective/Staff-Sergeant Walter Mortimer communicated to headquarters.⁹⁷ A clash nearly occurred on 16 September when strikers surrounded a boarding house that held several strike breakers. The Mounties, under Sergeant C. Richardson, arrived and restored order by informing the men that the police "were neutral and were only there to keep the peace It was hard to explain to the striking miners, who were outside in the cold, that the men inside were not getting any more protection than they were themselves."⁹⁸ Richardson, however, angered several on the side of management, when he told the boarding house cook that it was up to her whether she should feed the strike breakers. She refused and several of the men

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, Report of Mulhall, 17 September 1931.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, Tait to Spalding, 28 September 1931.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, Report of D/S-Sgt. W. Mortimer, 19 September 1931.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, Report of Sgt. C. Richardson, 18 September 1931.

left.⁹⁹ Intimidation of this type on the part of strikers compelled the "big six" to dismiss the remaining replacement workers and shut down operations.¹⁰⁰

These examples of Mounted Police intervention in the dispute did not satisfy the coal mine owners and managers, a fact that contradicts the Browns' assertion that the police had simply done the bidding of the companies by protecting "scabs."¹⁰¹ Nor does the evidence support the statement contained in John Herd Thompson and Allen Seager's *Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord* that "[t]he mine owners ... turned the strike into a struggle against communism, ensuring themselves the support of ... the RCMP in their effort to break the union."¹⁰² On the contrary, the owners openly expressed their discontent and frustration with the Mounted Police to the provincial authorities and in the media:

The police failed utterly on Wednesday [16 September] when the operators attempted to start work in the mines with other labor. Otherwise the mines would have been working today. Adequate protection was promised the mining industry by the authorities in the event of such steps being taken. This protection was by no means given, and in the case of the Western Dominion Collieries, while the mob was still assembled there, police were completely withdrawn from the vicinity.¹⁰³

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, Schutz to Tait, 22 September 1931.

¹⁰⁰Hanson, "The Estevan Strike and Riot," 114.

¹⁰¹Brown and Brown, *An Unauthorized History of the RCMP*, 69.

¹⁰²John Herd Thompson with Allen Seager, *Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Inc., 1985), 225.

¹⁰³Regina *Leader-Post*, 16 September 1931, as cited in Hanson, "The Estevan Strike and Riot," 114.

Although the Saskatchewan government was concerned that a prolonged labour dispute might disrupt a valuable provincial industry, the provincial attorney general appears not to have issued orders to the Mounted Police; they kept him informed at every step and, in turn, he was content to let them do their job.¹⁰⁴ Part of that job included following up on the complaints voiced by the employers. Inspector F.W. Schutz defended Mulhall and added what he saw as the real causes of the strike, specifically miner grievances related to exploitation by company-run stores.¹⁰⁵

In a 23 September message to the attorney general of Saskatchewan, Tait of the southern Saskatchewan district offered a detailed criticism of the mining companies. The letter also demonstrated the narrow path followed by the Mounted Police in their attempt to balance the interests of the miners and the owners:

You will also note the reference made ... as to the attitude of the operators of the Taylorton Mine and Brick Plant, in which they express their opinion that the gathering of strikers at this point would constitute an unlawful assembly...

While technically speaking the gathering of the miners at the point in question might have been classed as unlawful assemblies their conduct was such as in my opinion did not warrant police intervention as at the time the situation was very critical and any indiscretion on the part of the police would undoubtedly have started a conflagration, the outcome of which would no doubt have resulted in loss of life and damage to property without in any measure relieving the situation.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴In the aftermath of the riot both he and the Premier of the province, J.T.M. Anderson, blamed the violence on communist agitators brought in from the outside. Hanson, "Estevan 1931," 63-4.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶RG 146, vol. 6, file 1025-9-91093, pt. 2, Tait to MacPherson, 23 September 1931.

The complaints of the mining companies, however, were being heard at the highest level of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Commissioner MacBrien offered his own opinion on the correctness of the force's role at Estevan in commenting on a report prepared by J.W. Spalding. Spalding had defended the Mounted Police against the criticism of the mining companies:

I want to assure you that conditions that governed our conduct in maintaining law and order were at times difficult, but it was early seen that the Operators, or at least some of them, were anxious to make use of the Police to protect strike-breakers and their property when certain under-lying conditions which caused the men to strike, did not warrant us in backing the Operators and Mine-Owners to the limit.¹⁰⁷

Beside this passage MacBrien wrote: "This seems peculiar. If the Operators wished to take in strike breakers they & their property should be given every protection unless there are some reasons for contrary action. It is not explained."¹⁰⁸ As a point of law MacBrien's comment was correct. What it failed to take into consideration, however, was that rigid enforcement of the law in a volatile situation was the wrong approach to take. Local Mounties at Estevan were well aware of this reality. Although there is no evidence that the commissioner ordered a change in RCMP policy, the cumulative pressure from the police critics seemed to make the Mounties more keen to protect property.

Eventually a clash occurred in the town of Estevan. That day was Tuesday, 29 September 1931. The Mounted Police, which had split into two units in order to protect mine

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, Spalding to MacBrien and MacPherson, 21 September 1931.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*

property, found itself outnumbered in the town as the miners began a parade. A confrontation occurred between the miners and Mounties and Estevan town police. Earlier in the day, the town council had prohibited parades. The police sought to stop any such demonstrations. A fire truck, on the scene in case its water was needed to inhibit the demonstrators, became the centre of a confrontation. A miner leapt on to the truck and declared it captured; he was immediately shot dead. The police then fired indiscriminately into the now dispersing crowd, wounding strikers and citizens of Estevan; two other miners died from their wounds. In the aftermath of the violence, the Mounted Police admitted no responsibility, even to the point of claiming during subsequent investigations that shots had been fired from the miners' side. The clash at Estevan followed much the same pattern as at Regina in 1935. In each case, Mounted Police-initiated violence was followed by the blame being placed on those who were the subjects of the violence.¹⁰⁹ An important contributing factor to the violence at Estevan was, as Hanson suggested, the large number of inexperienced Mounted Policemen on duty that day: thirty-four out of the forty-three constables had under a year of police experience.¹¹⁰

In the immediate aftermath of the riot, the Mounted Police closed ranks. At the subsequent trials of rioters, an effort was made to place the onus for the violence on the miners. Several police witnesses testified to having drawn their weapons only after being

¹⁰⁹For the Mounted Police perspective on the Winnipeg General Strike, see Vernon A.M. Kemp, *Without Fear Favour or Affection* (Toronto 1958), 66-8; and for a Mountie interpretation of the Regina Riot, see NAC, RG 146, vol. 26, file 93-A-00086, Assistant Commissioner S.T. Wood to MacBrien, 4 July 1935.

¹¹⁰Hanson, "Estevan 1931," 54.

cornered, testimony contradicted by pictures taken during the riot which show their guns out much earlier. An old, broken military rifle was the ludicrous evidence presented to prove that the miners had fired first.¹¹¹ Not all of the Mounted Policemen at Estevan, however, escaped unscathed. Sergeant Mulhall, the Mountie most clearly sympathetic toward the miners, and the individual charged with keeping the peace between the miners and the mining companies, seemed labelled, at least in part, as a scapegoat. Mulhall's superior on the day of the violence criticized the Mountie's role during the riot; the report was placed on his service record.¹¹² Detective-Sergeant John Metcalfe, meanwhile, continued to question the official line being spun by the mining companies and politicians just as some had in September 1931. He reported three months later:

I have also investigated this Red Movement in this field and find that all Miners who are branded Red by the Mine Owners or Management, are men who are connected with the Union Movement and are on the various Pit Committees, it appears to me that the moment a man submits himself to be appointed on a Committee or some position in a Union, and has nerve enough to approach the Owners on behalf of the workers, he is immediately branded a Red. I have not yet interviewed the Owner or Manager of a mine in regard to the red element that has not given me the names of all of the men on the Pit Committee and the names of some Official of the Union ...¹¹³

¹¹¹Brown and Brown, *An Unauthorized History of the RCMP*, 73-4.

¹¹²RCMP, Personnel Records of William Mulhall, Report by Assistant Commissioner J.W. Spalding, 20 October 1931. Moorhead expressed the opinion that Mulhall "did not rise to the occasion, but there is no evidence that he evaded taking a share in the responsibilities placed on our men, but he evidently was not in the thick of the fight as he did not receive a bruise of any kind, which of course is not proof that he did not play his part, but it is significant that he was unable to identify any one of the rioters who attacked our men whilst several of the recruits who were in the fight gave excellent evidence of their alertness and observation made at the time."

¹¹³NAC, RG 146, vol. 6, file 1025-9-91093, pt. 3, Report of D-Sgt. Metcalfe, 3 December 1931.

Estevan demonstrated the complexities of policing a strike in the sense of not only having to balance the interests of two distinct parties but also of one's superiors. The goal of the local Mounted Police in this case had been to avoid violence, even though both the strikers and the mine owners seemed to be seeking a clash of some sort. Clearly, however, in the mind of Commissioner J.H. MacBrien, the most important role for the RCMP to play in Estevan was to protect the property of the mining companies, including any replacement workers that these outfits employed. The words of the top Mountie increased the pressure on the lower ranks, and ultimately what the local Mounties hoped to achieve—peace—was lost in the hail of bullets.

The small Saskatchewan town was not the only location where protest and the involvement of the RCMP would lead to violence. Two other clashes, both in Saskatchewan, involved a characteristic of the 1930s: large groups of unemployed workers. By 1931, the railways carried thousands of unemployed Canadians searching for work. Two years later, the unemployment rate hit the highest level ever: 26.6 percent. The Depression did not strike all areas of the country with equal fervour: Saskatchewan and Alberta suffered the worst economic devastation as the agricultural sector, the most significant part of their economies, collapsed.¹¹⁴ The unemployed remained in the Depression's wake.

¹¹⁴Decline in Per-Capita Incomes by Provinces, 1928-29 to 1933

Area	Percentage Decrease
SASKATCHEWAN	72
ALBERTA	61
MANITOBA	49
BRITISH COLUMBIA	47
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND	45

Various politicians attempted to deal with the human remnants of the economic devastation. After achieving office in 1930, the government of Prime Minister R.B. Bennett brought in \$20 million in unemployment relief. Nothing, however, stemmed the rising unemployment levels and the declining economic growth. Very quickly the target of the Bennett government became not unemployment but the unemployed, specifically those out of work who were single and homeless; they, authorities believed, represented a threat to social peace. The solution of the Bennett government in 1932 was to put into practice a proposal by Major-General Andrew McNaughton and establish military-run relief camps throughout Canada where unemployed men could be sent to keep them far away from urban centres and potential agitators.¹¹⁵ Ultimately this system and its widespread unpopularity among its inhabitants would drag in the RCMP. In 1935, Commissioner MacBrien noted in his annual report that his charges had dealt with a number of relief strikes that occurred in Drumheller, Edmonton, Calgary, and Lethbridge during the previous year. "It has been necessary," the commissioner added, "to maintain reserve strength at several strategic points during the past year and present conditions warrant its continued maintenance."¹¹⁶

ONTARIO	44
QUEBEC	44
NEW BRUNSWICK	39
NOVA SCOTIA	36
CANADA	48

Source: Thompson and Seager, *Decades of Discord*, 351.

¹¹⁵See James Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 79-80.

¹¹⁶"Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for the Year Ended March 31, 1935," 14.

Part of the Mounted Police intelligence gathering operations after World War One had always concentrated on the unemployed. Like their relationship with employed workers, the RCMP's interaction with the unemployed in Alberta and Saskatchewan had two parts: spying on those out of work and their organizations, and cracking down on their protests. In the same year as the CPC was born, the RCMP began reporting in its security bulletins on the work of Communists among the unemployed. One section concluded with a reference to the recurrent theme of this era: "The significant feature of these activities is that they are but the execution of plans conceived outside the country, and furnished to and imposed upon our agitators from abroad."¹¹⁷ The CPC did well among the unemployed because it was the only major body which made a concerted effort to organize those out of work.

The police worried about the unemployed because of who was agitating among them. As early as 1927, the RCMP in Alberta was reporting to the commissioner that the CPC had designated an individual to organize the unemployed.¹¹⁸ Four years later, the RCMP informed the Saskatchewan attorney general that "certain Communistic Agitators are endeavouring to create trouble" among the unemployed in Saskatoon.¹¹⁹

Individual activists received a great deal of police attention. James Bryson was one such individual. What was the solution to such a menace? Headquarters wondered if Bryson

¹¹⁷Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for the Year Ended March 31, 1921," 47.

¹¹⁸NAC, RG 146, RCMP Records Related to Rebecca Buhay, vol. 10, file 92-A-00012, pt. 2, Jas. Ritchie, Superintendent Commanding "G" Division, to the Commissioner, 20 December 1927.

¹¹⁹NAC, RG 146, vol. 27, file 92-A-00123, pt. 4; Spalding to MacPherson, Sask. A.G, 30 January 1931.

was eligible for deportation.¹²⁰ Harvey Murphy, another Communist active in Alberta, also received Mountie attention because of his work among the unemployed. His activities and those of others prompted the officer in charge of the Edmonton CIB to warn the commissioner in September 1932 that unemployed men and women were to be organized along a more militant basis over the upcoming winter.¹²¹

In Edmonton, Mounties took their work to the large number of unemployed. A Mounted Policeman worked undercover in the local relief office, filing detailed reports, some of which ended up in the office of R.B. Bennett.¹²² This kind of intelligence was gathered for preventative reasons. In November 1932, for example, the Mounted Police acquired a circular calling for a Hunger March to Edmonton. The provincial attorney general received notification of the proposed protest, and that it was being organized by groups "known to be affiliated with the C.P. of C." H.M. Newson, head of "G" Division, recommended to the provincial government that the march be widely publicized, including a threat that anyone on relief participating would immediately be cut off and not allowed back on. He also indicated that the police would be rigidly enforcing the Railway Act prior to the date of the march to prevent marchers from reaching the capital of Alberta and participating in the march.¹²³

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, T.S. Belcher to O.C. "K" Division, 29 October 1931.

¹²¹NAC, RG 146, RCMP Records Related to Harvey Murphy, vol. 27, file 93-A-00087, part 2, Hancock, I/C Edmonton CIB, to the Commissioner, 30 September 1932.

¹²²NAC, Bennett Papers, reel M-1453, 493667-772.

¹²³PAA, accession no. 69.289, file 517B, Newson to Alberta Attorney General, 22 November 1932.

Nevertheless, all of the planning, spying, and preventative measures did not prevent violent clashes between the RCMP and the unemployed in the 1930s. Two serious clashes occurred—one in Saskatoon in 1933 and the other in Regina two years later. The violence of 1933 involved a group of unemployed in a relief camp on the exhibition grounds of the city of Saskatoon. The vagaries of the relief system frequently led to those without work moving about in the hope of getting back on relief if they had been refused it or of getting higher payments in a wealthier municipality. Relief, or the "dole," was based on the British poor laws and was a plan administered by local government. Cities attracted transients because the potential for finding shelter and nourishment was greater than in rural areas. Saskatoon attracted unemployed both from surrounding areas and those travelling through the province on the railway. A temporary relief camp had been established to accommodate the newcomers who journeyed into Saskatoon during the winter of 1931-32.¹²⁴ The fact that the camp, unlike most relief camps, was within an urban centre concerned the RCMP. Walter Munday, commander of the Mountie detachment in Saskatoon, had informed the provincial government in November 1932 that of the men in the relief camp "not more than 20% are residents of Saskatoon, the remainder are transients, a great number of which are foreigners, many of them not yet having established Canadian domicile."¹²⁵ The situation in the city also led to problems of jurisdiction, since technically the city police were in charge. The city police, however, wanted the RCMP to take a more forceful role. Superintendent S.T. Wood's

¹²⁴Glen Makahonuk, "The Saskatoon Relief Camp Riot of May 8, 1933: An Expression of Class Conflict," *Saskatchewan History*, vol. 37, no. 2 (1984), 56.

¹²⁵NAC, RG 146, vol. 27, file 92-A-00123, pt. 2, Munday to Spalding, 5 November 1932.

advice to the Saskatchewan government was to separate the “agitators” and arrest them on vagrancy charges.¹²⁶ Already the Mounted Police had one of their own infiltrating the relief campers.¹²⁷ Munday warned the commissioner on 9 April that the city seemed “to act as a magnet drawing transients and un-desirables from all parts of the Province and I am of the opinion that serious disturbances will likely occur both at the camp and in the City unless there is sufficient display of force to prevent them.” He added that neither the city police nor the RCMP contingent were strong enough to deal with the relief campers.¹²⁸ The following day, another senior Mountie in Saskatchewan, A.S. Acland, advised the provincial cabinet that a reserve force needed to be sent to the city in order to quell any serious disturbances. “In my opinion this troop will have to be used with great discretion,” Acland concluded on both a cautionary and prescient note, “and located well way from the Relief Camp, to guard against surprise, and in order not to precipitate a clash, particularly as the Communists object to our presence in the Camp.”¹²⁹

This important advice was ignored. Instead, the course of action selected was that recommended by Wood, the Regina-based commander of “F” Division. Thirty-seven Mounted Policemen under the command of Inspector James Sampson arrived in the city from the provincial capital. These Mounties went into the camp on 8 May, hoping to take the camp members by surprise as they ate their meals. Instead, the men resisted the police

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, pt. 4, S.T. Wood to Deputy A.G. of Saskatchewan, 22 April 1933.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, pt. 3, Wood to Commissioner, 26 April 1933.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*, Munday to Commissioner MacBrien, 9 April 1933.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, Report by A.S. Acland, 10 April 1933.

incursion. "Stones began to fly," wrote an eyewitness in the local newspaper, "and the officers, swinging their long cavalry batons, put their horses to the gallop and started to scatter the crowd, chasing them away from in front of the building, while their quarry scattered and took shelter in the corners of various buildings and behind fences. Wheeling their horses again and again, the policemen chased the fugitives all over the grounds, striking right and left."¹³⁰ As the riot progressed Sampson fell from his horse; it galloped off with his foot still caught in the stirrup; he died from injuries sustained after his head collided with a pole. Twenty-seven rioters faced charges; twenty-three were convicted. Despite the violence and mayhem that ensued after the intervention of the police, Wood expressed to the commissioner his satisfaction with the operation. He noted in a letter that the event was being treated more seriously than need be because of the death of Sampson.¹³¹

Wood's comments are important for one particular reason. He would be in command in Regina in June 1935 when two thousand determined Trekkers rolled into town on the top of rail cars. Wood had learned nothing from Saskatoon, and the same mistakes would be repeated in Regina with even more tragic results. The Regina Riot had its roots in the military-run relief-camp system. The system quickly became unpopular with the men, in part because of the twenty cents a day they received for often back-breaking labour. Another reason for the animosity was the simple realization that the camps were not designed to benefit the men; they were merely an excuse to remove the unemployed from urban centres.

¹³⁰Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, 9 May 1933, 7, as quoted in Makahonuk, "The Saskatoon Relief Camp Riot," 63.

¹³¹NAC, RG 146, vol. 27, file 92-A-00123, pt. 3, Wood to Commissioner, 12 May 1933.

The camps offered easy work for Communist agitators. The Relief Camp Workers Union, a Communist front organization, helped organize the men into a coherent force. Protests and strikes began in the camps and gradually grew in frequency. The discontent culminated in a province-wide relief camp strike in British Columbia in April 1935. Many of the strikers ended up in Vancouver. By the end of May, the strike appeared to be near an end. A sudden proposal to travel to Ottawa restored the energy of the strikers. Those who had been wondering what came next had an answer. The journey, which quickly became known as the On to Ottawa Trek, brought the Trekkers into conflict with the RCMP in the downtown of the capital of Saskatchewan.¹³²

On 12 June, orders came from Ottawa to halt the Trekkers in Regina. Various theories exist as to why Regina became the Trekkers' final destination. The city housed the government of Premier James Gardiner, a partisan Liberal and an enemy of the Bennett Conservatives. Winnipeg, a well-known centre of radicalism, was the next major stop after Regina. Major support for the movement could be expected in the Manitoban capital.¹³³ Wood instructed his men on how to deal with the approaching group of protesters. He

¹³²There are numerous works on the Trek. See, for example, Lorne Brown, *When Freedom Was Lost: The Unemployed, the Agitator, and the State* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1987); Victor Howard, *"We were the salt of the earth": A Narrative of the On-to-Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1985). For an article that incorporates RCMP security records released under the Access to Information Act, see Michael Lonardo, "Under a Watchful Eye: A Case Study of Police Surveillance During the 1930s," *Labour Le Travail*, vol. 35 (1995), 11-41. The definitive work on the actual events surrounding the Regina Riot remains Gladys May Stone, "The Regina Riot: 1935," (M.A. thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1967).

¹³³S.R. Hewitt, "'We are sitting at the edge of a volcano': Winnipeg During the On to Ottawa Trek," *Prairie Forum*, vol. 19, no. 1 (1994), 51-64.

advised a cautious approach because "[a]t the moment there is considerable public support for these strikers as the public do not realize the motive and revolutionary tactics behind the movement." The top Mountie in Regina worried that because of the popularity of the Trekkers the force would receive adverse publicity should mayhem occur. Still, Wood did not doubt the ultimate outcome of the RCMP's interaction with the Trekkers. He advised the officers under his command to carefully study a Mounted Police pamphlet entitled "Demonstrations, Unlawful Assemblies, Riots, Etc.," especially the section on coordinating dismounted and mounted men, and relay the important parts to their charges.¹³⁴

Once the Trekkers arrived in the capital of Saskatchewan their eastward progress ended for good. The Mounted Police did not permit any mass movement by rail or even by car—several who tried the latter method found themselves arrested. Eight Trek leaders did travel to Ottawa to meet with the prime minister on 20 June. The meeting degenerated into a shouting match as Bennett, under advice from the Mounted Police, tried to trot out the criminal records of various of the Trek leaders. The leaders returned to Regina, but it was quickly clear they were going nowhere. By the end of June, only the date that the Trek would be disbanded was left to be decided.

The next day was 1 July 1935, or Dominion Day, a national holiday; it was also to be a time of violent conflict. In a detailed report to MacBrien after the riot, Wood described the steps that led to the decision to try to arrest the Trek leaders:

Following the arrival of Sergt. Leopold here on the 1st instant with correspondence and documents from the east and other material from

¹³⁴NAC, RG 146, vol. 26, file 93-A-00086, Wood to Inspectors and Sergeants, 12 June 1935.

Vancouver. [deletion] Barristers, at once set to work to compile evidence against the leaders which would justify issuing a warrant for their arrest under section 98, in accordance with your instructions. After intensive work, it was decided at 4:00 P.M. ... to issue warrants for the arrest of Evans, Black, [names deleted]. It was considered that the arrest of these leaders would quickly liquidate that movement

Our first plan failed when it was discovered that the leaders did not congregate at Unity Center prior to going on the Market Square for the mass meeting; therefore, the alternate plan had to be put in operation. D/Insp. Mortimer blew his whistle at 8:17 P.M. The arrest of the two leaders, Evans and Black, first and second in command of the strikers, was effected as they jumped down from the speaker's platform and they were safely conducted to the Town Station in the police moving van, but only after there had been an attack on the escorts by strikers throwing rocks and other missiles.¹³⁵

Wood seemed determined not to let the Trek leaders, many of whom were Communists, escape unpunished. The decision to arrest the leaders, coupled with the location for the arrests—a crowded public square in the aftermath of a rally—made the result predictable. The Mountie-triggered violence that ensued led to the death of a Regina City policeman and dozens of injuries to Trekkers, Mounties, and ordinary citizens.

In the aftermath of the riot, headquarters required an explanation for the debacle. One factor that Wood pointed to was a breakdown in RCMP intelligence. For at least part of the Trekkers' journey a Mounted Policeman rode along disguised as one of them. One Mountie was instructed to join in Calgary, but he apparently did not make the journey. Mervyn Black ordered Constable Henry Cooper to join up with the Trekkers in Moose Jaw. He lasted in their ranks until 18 June when his identity was revealed and he was ordered out.¹³⁶ The RCMP then became reliant on an undercover Canadian Pacific Railway policeman for

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, Report of Wood, 19 July 1935.

¹³⁶Lonardo, "Under a Watchful Eye," 24.

information. Wood fingered him as being responsible for the decision to make the arrests on 1 July.¹³⁷

Part of Wood's search for a scapegoat was simply a recognition by him, consciously or unconsciously, that the RCMP had indeed been responsible for the Riot. He had ordered the arrest of the Trek leaders at a time when they were negotiating with the provincial government to disband the entire enterprise; the On to Ottawa Trek was on the verge of an unsuccessful but peaceful conclusion. Faulty intelligence was Wood's justification for his orders for the arrests to occur. He claimed to have had had no knowledge that the Trekkers were negotiating with the provincial government. Yet the whole police operation seemed rushed, as if the RCMP was afraid the Trek would successfully disband and its leaders escape from the grasp of the police. Wood admitted on 2 July that the plans to arrest the Trek leaders were "made hurriedly," although he added in the same sentence that these plans were also "carefully considered."¹³⁸

The outcome the officer in command of Regina envisioned when the Trekkers first arrived in his city did not include the men willingly giving up their protest journey after peaceful negotiations. The government's initial decision to halt the Trekkers was to prevent

¹³⁷"It was solely on the information supplied [deleted] please refer to his reports of the 29th June and 1st July—that I considered it advisable to make the arrests at the Market Square on the night of July 1st as I believed, from the information supplied [deleted] that the next day would see a demonstration, at a time and place suitable to the strikers, which would result in serious trouble. NAC, RG 146, vol. 26, file 93-A-00086, Wood to MacBrien, 12 December 1935.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, Wood to MacBrien, 2 July 1935.

them from reaching Winnipeg where another group of men was waiting to join.¹³⁹ Once the police stopped the Trek, the strategy became to prevent the men from leaving without being punished or even humiliated. In one attempt at negotiation, the RCMP tried to get the men to leave Regina for a temporary camp near Craven, Saskatchewan. The Trek leadership was rightly suspicious of the offer. Wood's plan to end the Trek was to lure the men outside the city "where they would be minus their supporters and where we could have dealt with them in a determined and satisfactory manner which would have compelled their 10 mile walk back to Regina, by which time they would have been in a frame of mind to accept any terms we might offer."¹⁴⁰ He recognized the next day that the Trekkers would not voluntarily agree to go to this camp. Instead, the Mounted Police readied for what its commander in Regina saw as an inevitable outcome to the presence of the Trekkers in Regina:

It is not expected that there will be many voluntary registrations tomorrow and that sooner or later there will be a demonstration in front of [deleted—most likely the office established to register the Trekkers] office which will bring about Police action. The situation is suitable for our purposes in that it is opposite the Armouries and there is a large open space in all directions surrounding the building where we could use mounted men to advantage. Following any such clash between the police and the strikers, I anticipate there will be a movement then toward voluntary registration and dispersion.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹For more information on the situation in Winnipeg see Hewitt, "'We are sitting at the edge of a volcano,'" 51-64.

¹⁴⁰NAC, RG 146, vol. 26, file 93-A-00086, Wood to MacBrien, 24 June 1935.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, Wood to MacBrien, 25 June 1935.

Six days later, Wood would get his violence; that violence, as he predicted, led to the dispersion of the Trekkers.

Commissioner MacBrien seemed unconvinced by his junior officer's explanations as to why violence had occurred. When in one report Wood mentioned "[y]ou will recall that your instructions by telephone and telegram to me were to arrest the late leaders of this movement with as little delay as possible" the commissioner underlined the last six words and wrote "[a]t an opportune time."¹⁴²

Wood directed a deliberate and largely successful campaign to deflect criticism away from the RCMP after the riot. He became, in the parlance of the modern political world, a "spin doctor." First, the police officer claimed that not a single member of the Mounted Police had fired a weapon. When the issue was raised on the floor of the House of Commons, Wood admitted to his superior that his men had indeed fired the bullets that had wounded the Trekkers.¹⁴³ Then the provincial government appointed an inquiry, the Regina Riot Inquiry Commission (RRIC), to investigate the causes of the riot. The RCMP, which initially ordered its members not to cooperate with the provincial body, sought to manage the outcome.¹⁴⁴ Wood informed the commissioner in January 1936 that he was "well satisfied with the course of the investigation to date, and believe we have effectively established in the

¹⁴²*Ibid.*, Wood to MacBrien, 23 July 1935.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, Wood to the Commissioner, 4 July 1935. One of the justifications for the RCMP use of firearms was that the Trekkers had fired on them first, the same reasoning that the police used in Estevan. Once again, however, no evidence could be found to show that the Trekkers possessed such weapons. *Ibid.*, Wood to MacBrien regarding firearms, 24 July 1935; *Ibid.*, Report of Insp. A.S. Cooper, July 24, 1935.

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*, Deputy Commissioner J.W. Spalding to Wood, 15 July 1935.

minds of the Commissioners and the public that this trek was a revolutionary movement, organized and directed by the Communist Party." Initially, Wood noted that the force had had difficulty in linking the CPC with the Trek. He, himself, testified to the commission and took the opportunity to stress the Communist connections to the leadership of the Trek.¹⁴⁵

Responsibility for what occurred at Regina was a powerful issue. At times during the commission, however, it did not look as if the RCMP would escape unscathed. Even the force's biggest supporter, the Bennett government, appeared ready to blame the RCMP for the sake of political expediency. The counsel for the Bennett government and the RCMP informed Wood on 1 February 1936 that all of the evidence entered so far indicated that "the responsibility of issuing of instructions to me rested on ... [MacBrien] and the force generally." Wood argued that, in fact, the commissioner received his instructions from the government of the day, but the counsel reiterated that no such evidence had been introduced. Saskatchewan Attorney General T.C. Davis rode to the rescue for the horsemen when he promised to make it clear to the RRIC that the Mounted Police received its orders from the Bennett government. All of these measures were designed to avoid, Wood stated, any "blame being laid on the force for the instructions issued or, for that matter, anything in connection with the On-to-Ottawa march or the riot in Regina."¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Wood to Commissioner, 25 January 25 1936. Wood believed in what he was saying: "Their [camp strikers] organization was along Communist lines ... the division leaders were, with possibly one exception, all active communist and this applied to the majority of the group captains They, in turn, were guided to a large extent by the strategic committee of about six members who were really the brains of the organization and without exception were active Communists." *Ibid.*, Report of S.T. Wood, 19 July 1935.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Wood to MacBrien, 1 February 1936.

MacBrien, who had already spoken with Wood on the telephone regarding this matter, immediately drew up a draft memo, entitled "Re: Responsibility" and sent it off to his subordinate in Regina. In writing the memo, the commissioner consulted both his immediate superior, the new federal Minister of Justice Ernest Lapointe, and T.C. Davis. MacBrien, the former military man, stated that he had "had the authority of the Minister in control of the force, the Honourable Hugh Guthrie, for all orders sent you respecting the illegal travelling on trains by the "On-to-Ottawa" trekkers and their prevention from proceeding east of Regina."¹⁴⁷ Thus ran the old general's argument: the politicians, accountable to the public, are ultimately responsible for the actions of their minions. Undoubtedly he was particularly sensitive on this issue because, like the good soldier that he was, MacBrien followed orders. The same issue had arisen three-and-a-half years earlier in the aftermath of the policing of the strike and riot in Estevan. Three levels of government and the RCMP bickered over which body was ultimately responsible for the actions of, and, even more importantly in the penurious 1930s, the expenses incurred by, the Mounted Police. In the aftermath of this battle, MacBrien consulted with the federal minister of Justice to ensure "that in future when extra men are required ... it will be necessary to make this request in writing and accept responsibility for the expense."¹⁴⁸

What happened in Regina in June 1935, as the RCMP sought to control a major demonstration of dissatisfaction with the government, displayed the complicated relationship

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*, MacBrien to Wood, "Re: Responsibility," 31 January 1936.

¹⁴⁸NAC, RG 146, vol. 6, file 1025-9-91093, pt. 4, "Memo Re: Sask. refusing to pay Estevan expenses," 9 January 1932.

between the RCMP and government. To fully appreciate where responsibility lay for the broken bones and windows in Regina, it is important to know what sort of advice and options the RCMP offered the Bennett Conservatives.

With the situation between the government and the Trekkers at a standstill in the middle of June 1935, Guthrie, the minister of Justice, naturally approached the Mounted Police for advice on how to deal with the stalemate in Regina; he received a detailed memo on 20 June from MacBrien. The commissioner specified what he viewed as the correct course of action for the government to take in dealing with its problem. The solutions included the recruiting of more Mounties; the blocking of any further train travel east; especially to Winnipeg; the centre of Canadian radicalism, the preparing of military units to deal with any outbreaks of disorder in Winnipeg; and "If the conference [between Bennett and the Trek leaders] breaks down and a definite attempt is made by those strikers now in Regina to board trains, police action should be taken to dispense [sic] them, and at the same time the known leaders should be arrested." MacBrien also advised the government to portray the Trekkers' demands as illegitimate, play up the presence of Communists among the Trek leadership, and make public Trek leader Arthur Evans' criminal record, a copy of which he included with his memo. It was now time for Bennett and Guthrie to be good soldiers. The federal government followed the general's advice, moves which directly led to a breakdown in the talks between the two parties. Concluding his memo, MacBrien "recommended that a general announcement should be made of the Government's determination to stop this illegal movement by all means at its disposal, and that the Provincial Governments and public generally be asked to assist with a view to controlling

what may develop into a most dangerous situation."¹⁴⁹ The government performed to the police script. After all, the police were the experts in such matters. The strategy of the experts, however, failed. The Trekkers paid the physical price for that failure. The Bennett government paid the political cost as it was ousted from office later that year. As for the RCMP and its leadership, MacBrien died three years later still in the position of commissioner; his successor was Stuart Taylor Wood.

In the aftermath of the On to Ottawa Trek and other similar protests, the RCMP became even more interested in the activities of the unemployed. In 1938, just the rumour of a new On to Ottawa Trek gave birth to a large pile of files on the activities of the unemployed. In that same year government offices were also sent orders from the Mounted Police on how to handle sit-down protests after a group of unemployed men occupied the post office in Vancouver and were then violently removed by Mounted Policemen.¹⁵⁰ In Saskatchewan a Lance Corporal rode the roads disguised as a vagrant. Quizzing twenty fellow travellers failed to reveal any plans for a new trek. Instead the men headed for Regina in the hope of finding harvest work.¹⁵¹ The events of September 1939 took care of the unemployment problem.

The relationship between the RCMP and both unemployed and employed workers in the interwar period was best characterized by S.T. Wood's emphasis on Communist

¹⁴⁹NAC, RG 146, vol. 26, file 93-A-00086., MacBrien to Guthrie, 20 June 1935.

¹⁵⁰Thompson and Seager, *Decades of Discord*, 293-4.

¹⁵¹NAC, RG 146, RCMP Records Related to Radicals and Unemployed in Edmonton, vol. 27, file 92-A-000123, pt. 1, Report of Det. Const. A.W. Parsons, 26 July 1938.

involvement in the Trek as a way of besmirching the movement. Wood was well aware that many in Canada and even some rank-and-file Mounties, who were not so removed from the bottom of society to be rendered insensitive to the plight of others, had genuine sympathy for workers, especially those who had the misfortune to find themselves without employment. Occasionally class snobbery fuelled by ethnic bigotry led to negative portrayals of workers in reports filed by Mounties. But if there had not been societal sympathy for this group, then there would have been no need to find scapegoats to blame for outbursts of worker unhappiness. A paternalistic equation formed in the minds of many Mounties and those in the various government departments that received police reports. Workers were essentially good, and if they were just left alone to do their jobs, most, despite the occasional grumble, would simply have been content to punch the time clock and put in their hours. The menace, however, came from the outside. Agitators, chiefly of the "Red" variety, and often as not "foreigners," promoted trouble where trouble did not exist. In playing both this perceived and actual role, these agitators gave the Mounted Police in Alberta and Saskatchewan a job to do. Mounties were policing soldiers with a mission to maintain order that had been given to them from on high; they used whatever means that were necessary, be it binoculars, bullets, batons, or bayonets, to get the job done.

CONCLUSION:

1914-1939: TRANSFORMATION COMPLETE

Upon the outbreak of war, the responsibilities and duties of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police were greatly multiplied; prompt action was necessary to arrest certain known enemies. ... [T]he Force also had to assume new responsibility ... over thousands of actual and potential enemy aliens to prevent them from any overt acts, and also to attempt to take care of any other citizens who might be used consciously or otherwise as tools for treachery.¹

As Commissioner S.T. Wood's words reflected, 10 September 1939 was an important day for both Canadians and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP): their government had just put them at war with Nazi Germany. For Mounted Policemen, hostilities meant that they had work to do. Under the Defence of Canada Regulations, which the force helped draft, a large number of Canadians had suddenly become enemies of the state.² The task of rounding up these legislated enemies would fall to the men in scarlet. It was something they performed with a particular relish.³ Pat Lenihan remembered the Mountie zeal well. A long-

¹S.T. Wood, "Tools for Treachery," *R.C.M.P. Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 4 (1941), 394.

²For more information on the Defence of Canada Regulations and the RCMP role in its creation see Daniel Robinson, "Planning for the 'Most Serious Contingency': Alien Internment, Arbitrary Detention, and the Canadian State, 1938-39," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 28, no. 2 (1993), 5-20.

³For personal descriptions of RCMP arrests see William and Kathleen Repka, *Dangerous Patriots: Canada's Unknown Prisoners of War* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1982).

time Communist and opponent of Canada's participation in the Second World War, he made the police hit list. Just before the birth of his daughter in June 1940, the RCMP appeared and took him away; no problems of jurisdiction; no questions asked; nothing. The next stop for Lenihan was an internment camp at Kananaskis.⁴ The RCMP were Canada's national police and security force all wrapped up into one. There were simply no challengers to that position.

Contrast Lenihan's treatment with that of Nels Bakkene of Ranfurly, Alberta in the First World War. Bakkene wrote a letter criticizing the war to a friend in Europe. The post office intercepted the letter and passed it on to Percy Sherwood, the commissioner of the Dominion Police. In turn, Canada's highest ranking security officer at the time forwarded the report to the Royal North-West Mounted Police (RNWMP) comptroller, who passed it on to the commissioner, who sent it out to the appropriate divisions with an accompanying order to investigate. The investigating Mountie simply attempted to scare the man straight. That was the situation in 1917.⁵ In 1939, however, Mounted Policemen would decide for themselves whom to ignore, whom to frighten, and whom to arrest.

Things were much different in the hot summer of August 1914--the Mounted Police battled a rival for the affections of the security state. The Dominion Police had handled security prior to hostilities and did the same in all of Canada except Alberta and

⁴*Ibid.*, 34-5.

⁵National Archives of Canada (NAC), Record Group (RG) 18 series A-1, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Records, vol. 519, file 11, pt. 1, "Crime Report Re Nels Bakkene Ranfurly, Alberta," 23 October 1917.

Saskatchewan for almost the entire war. The force started the war as an ordinary police force, with its primary focus on Alberta and Saskatchewan. It lost that aspect of ordinariness in 1917 when Alberta and Saskatchewan, with the support of Commissioner A.B. Perry, created their own police forces. Only in Canada's north did the Mounted Police continue regular policing duties. Operations in the south consisted of the enforcement of federal laws—and security work. The force's numbers dwindled in the aftermath of the war as many questioned the need for such an institution. Certainly the government of William Lyon Mackenzie King felt no particular warmth towards an outfit brought into the world by Conservatives, and which appeared as a federal blot on provincial autonomy. The number of men in scarlet continued to decline. The move of the RCMP to the department of Defence in 1922, coupled with the resignation of Perry, the dominant figure in the Mounted Police for over two decades, offered strong indications that an era was at an end.

Yet the RCMP survived its battles with the Dominion Police and politicians. For much of the interwar period the force strengthened itself on the Canadian landscape. An era was at an end, but it was the period of the old Mounted Police dealing solely with ordinary problems of the frontier. Canada was changing. Traditional Anglo-Canadian middle class hegemony was under assault by new ethnic groups who refused to assimilate, and by workers and left-wing radicals who challenged the status quo of liberal democratic Canada. The disorder at the end of the First World War only emphasized the changes occurring in Canada. At the same time, events like the Winnipeg General Strike triggered a tremendous backlash as Anglo-Canadian society responded to its challengers. The era of reaction was at hand.

This was the Canada the RCMP policed in the interwar period. How did the force respond? As their history in Alberta and Saskatchewan demonstrates, the Mounted Police underwent a metamorphosis. In part, this transformation, which began midway through the First World War, involved emphasizing their usefulness to the Canadian state by performing new and important work. In a country whose founding constitution emphasizes the principles of "peace, order, and good government," maintaining order was a key task of the Mounted Police. Those in power in Canada at the end of the First World War profoundly feared the disorder represented by the Winnipeg General Strike and accompanying labour disturbances. Subjects of this anxiety also included the activities of political radicals and non-traditional ethnic communities. In fact, the activities of radicals, workers, and members of ethnic communities were often linked both in reality and in the minds of the Canadian elite; they were all part of the same web. In the case of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC), it really did not matter how many members it had or how legitimate of a threat it was to the state, it became a target because of the type of people that belonged to (ethnic minorities, members of the working class) and the values they espoused (anti-capitalist, anti-British, anti-Christian). The CPC was a symbolic challenge to everything that made Anglo-Canada great.⁶

Hence the need for an organization like the RCMP. To the state, the Mounted Police represented a powerful unit for dealing with its fears. The force was a national quasi-military organization, free of the unionization that made other police forces less dependable, capable

⁶For a good study of the symbolism of the CPC see Michiel Horn, "Keeping Canada 'Canadian': Anti-Communism and Canadianism in Toronto, 1928-29," *Canada: An Historical Magazine*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1975), 35-47.

of meeting protest head on. Police officers on horses were an effective method of crowd control. If necessary, the RCMP could supply even heavier firepower. Mounties did machine gun and bayonet training in the interwar period, not in preparation for external wars, but to curtail domestic ones.

The RCMP's transformation included the creation of a national network of secret agents and informants, who gathered countless pages of information on individuals and organizations. The perception by a Mounted Policeman that an individual was a radical was sufficient reason to create a file under the person's name or the name of the group to which he or she belonged. Particularly troublesome organizations, exclusively on the political left, were targeted for infiltration, either by a regular member of the force or by a secret agent or informant. John Leopold, an active member of the force, advanced several rungs up the Communist Party of Canada ladder. For almost the entire 1920s, Mounties were as aware of Communist plans as were party members.

Usually the RCMP was content to monitor, watch, and collect information. Prevention was the key. During two periods of disorder, however, the labour disputes of 1919 and the growing anger of the unemployed of the early 1930s, the RCMP followed orders that led to crackdowns. In 1939, with the outbreak of war, Mounted Policemen performed a similar job as they compiled a list of suspects and then proceeded to round them up. On other occasions, the force meddled in the lives of radicals and clashed with workers when the police were called upon to deal with strikes.

As historian R.C. Macleod has argued, the RCMP in this era performed a bureaucratic role for the state through the enforcement of federal statutes.⁷ Mounties policed infringements of the Migratory Birds Act, enforced the Indian Act, and caught cross-border smugglers. What Macleod's argument failed to take into account, however, was that not all Mountie activities were created equal—certain tasks carried much greater symbolism, even if statistically they were not as significant. RCMP tasks related to maintaining the moral, political, and economic status quo could not be mistaken for having been anything but fundamentally important to ensuring Anglo-Canadian hegemony.

Specifically, the variety of the Mounted Policemen's roles made them extremely valuable to the Canadian state. That value increased as the 1920s went on, making the force indispensable. One point in favour of the RCMP's resurgence in the 1920s was the simple fact that no other agency existed which was capable of performing such a variety of tasks, especially the security role. The Dominion Police already had grass growing over its grave. Turning intelligence gathering over to each provincial police force would have created a logistics nightmare, effectively ending any national strategy for dealing with radicalism and other threats.

Part of the value to the state came from the preventative role the RCMP played. Two examples, anti-Communist and anti-narcotics activities, are indicative of this performance. In both cases the Mounties sought to prevent the spread of an infection, be it Communism or drug addiction. In the case of Communists, reports regularly detailed the response of an

⁷R.C. Macleod, "The RCMP and the Evolution of Provincial Policing," in R.C. Macleod and David Schneiderman (eds.), *Police Powers in Canada: The Evolution and Practice of Authority* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 44.

audience to a Communist speech, or the success of a particular radical. This sort of information was of interest to Mountie superiors and their superiors' superiors, all the way to the top. Why the desire to know the volume of the applause that greeted a speech or how many copper coins fell into a collection plate? Because the respective responses demonstrated whether Communism was dormant or infectious. The real concern was not with those making the speech; they were already infected. Even the positive response of an audience to Communist rhetoric could be rationalized by noting that the group was primarily foreign (read central and eastern European). These people were inherently radical, it was believed in the nativist mentality of the day, and thus beyond cure. No, the real concern was over the impact of the message on the most vulnerable of society: youth, women, some foreigners, principally those closest on the hierarchy to the British ideal, and elements of the working class. All needed to be protected from the Red plague. Michiel Horn's description of the anti-Communist campaign in Toronto is apt: "it was regarded almost as a measure of public health."⁸

Drugs represented a similar threat. Again, the concern was not with the traffickers or the majority of the addicts. The Chinese, considered synonymous with narcotics in the minds of Anglo-Canadian society and members of the RCMP, were already labelled unassimilable and thus beyond hope of cure. They could best be handled through quarantine in the form of deportation. Once more, the emphasis was on preventing the menace of drugs, primarily perceived as opium and inherently linked to the Chinese, from spreading to Anglo-Canadian society. Women were considered especially vulnerable to the danger associated with drugs.

⁸Horn, "Keeping Canada 'Canadian'," 46.

Drugs threatened their purity. They were defiled by narcotics because its use meant cavorting in every way possible with Blacks and Asians. The "cult of domesticity" from the period held women up as purity personified. Women were the foundation of the family, of the home, of society, and of the race. Emily Murphy, prominent Canadian feminist, police magistrate, and anti-narcotics crusader, specifically described the dangers of drugs as being the defilement of women;⁹ they required special protection in this instance. Riding to the rescue of these damsels in distress were the Anglo-Canadian Mounties on their horses.

With both drugs and left-wing radicalism, prevention was the name of the Mounted Police venture. Commissioner Perry established the rules in 1919 when in a memo he reiterated that detailed and accurate reports were crucial because "the only information which is of any value in connection with Bolshevism is the reliable and first hand information of what is going to happen before it occurs in sufficient time to permit arrangements being made to offset any intended disturbance."¹⁰ This belief in spying as a tool of prevention served as a justification for RCMP activities, both of the legal and illegal variety, well into the 1970s.¹¹

⁹Emily Murphy, *The Black Candle* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1922), 17, 210.

¹⁰NAC, RG 18, A1, vol. 599, file 1309-1335, "Circular Memorandum No. 807A.: RE: Detectives and Bolshevism," 6 January 1919. Perry's emphasis in the original.

¹¹In the late 1970s, Pierre Trudeau justified illegal Mountie mail openings by the employment of a statistical defence: "If they [the RCMP Security Service] can catch a kidnapper or terrorist once out of every five times, that's a good average." Trudeau, ever the skilled magician, apparently materialized these numbers out of thin air. Jeff Sallot, *Nobody Said No: The Real Story About How the Mounties Always Get Their Man* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1979), 131.

Mounted Policemen and the various tasks they performed also proved of value to the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan was the first to discover this benefit in 1928. Now, the Mounties, in addition to all of their other roles, had a regular policing job to play on the prairies. This new role was often similar to what they did for the federal government. Maintaining order during strikes was especially important in Alberta and Saskatchewan, two provinces with a mining sector that had experienced a great deal of conflict. Alberta and Saskatchewan were also the two provinces most devastated by the Great Depression. It is no coincidence that the three most violent clashes of the 1930s (Estevan [1931], Saskatoon [1933] and Regina [1935]) all involved cities in Saskatchewan, and all involved the Mounted Police. In Estevan, it was a case of maintaining order, which in the end turned into protecting the property of mine owners at all costs. In Saskatoon, the RCMP removed individuals who local officials believed threatened civic order. At Regina a botched Mountie effort to arrest the leaders of the On to Ottawa Trek, even as the movement was preparing to disband, sparked a huge riot. In all three cases, the RCMP lacked the subtlety and skill needed to avoid violence. An emphasis on military training and military values, and the recruitment of former military personnel, left the RCMP little better equipped to handle protests than the militia would have been. In this sense the RCMP did not fail the state; the protests and disorder were curtailed. Mounted Policemen, however, failed themselves; they violated their mythic image as neutral peacemakers.

Symbolism also meant that not every police task was created equal. Working to help deport non-British minorities, or at least to keep their activities in check, carried a great deal of weight among the majority of the Anglo-Celtic population in western Canada that found

itself in the grip of nativist sentiment in the 1920s. Many people inherently linked criminality and radicalism with immigrants and ethnic communities, often confusing differing cultural practices with racial characteristics. Members of the Mounted Police were no more immune from the society that produced them than are historians from the society that produces them; they were human beings first, unable to magically drop off the intellectual baggage of their values at a moment's notice. Thus, comments from Mounted Policemen, including various commissioners, linked radicalism, discontent with the status quo, criminality, and even depravity with immigrants and ethnic minorities. For Commissioner Perry, the solution, reflecting the tenor of the times, was assimilation. Commissioner Starnes in the 1920s saw discriminate deportation as an efficient tool for fixing the leaky faucet of radicalism.¹² In 1931, Commissioner MacBrien, reflecting the ethos of his era or at least of the Bennett government, recommended widespread deportation as the solution to problems of radicalism and unemployment.¹³ "Send them back where they came from" was the rallying cry of many nativists and many Mounties.

But if these roles had been all that the Mounted Police played for the state then they still may not have left the force in the dominant position it occupied at the beginning of World War Two. Who the RCMP were and what they represented were nearly as important as what they did. The force recruited ordinary men who mirrored the dominant elements in Canadian society. Its members were largely of British heritage. It was very much a British,

¹²Carl Betke and S.W. Horrall, *Canada's Security Service: A Historical Outline, 1864-1966, Vol. 1* (Ottawa: RCMP Historical Section, 1977) 429-30.

¹³Lorne and Caroline Brown, *An Unauthorized History of the RCMP* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1978), 63.

middle-class organization. Many of its members espoused nativist values that were popular in the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁴ Those that reached the upper echelons of the RCMP were those that most clearly reflected the ethos of the force and of the powerful in society (friends in high places also helped on occasion). In a hierarchical, militaristic institution, one did not advance by being an iconoclast; one progressed by following orders and by espousing the beliefs of one's superiors, or at least by keeping one's mouth firmly shut. Good soldiers like S.T. Wood went to the top; bad soldiers like Sgt. William Mulhall in Estevan—who made powerful enemies by asking questions—saw their careers stall. I.C. Shank, who served with the RCMP in the 1930s, saw first hand the danger of being a Mountie and raising questions about broader societal questions. On a particularly nondescript day in 1937 Shank made a casual remark to a senior constable: "Why do we have so many unemployed?" "You must be a Communist," was the immediate reply. Shank quickly realized that

even an unsubstantiated rumour of being a Communist sympathizer, if it reached the ears of the governing hierarchy might wreck my career, so from that day on, I avoided asking why we had unemployment or passing opinions on matters which might have political implications.¹⁵

¹⁴Walter Hildebrandt reached similar conclusions about the 19th century Mounted Police. In *Views From Fort Battleford* he wrote that "[t]he myth of the Mounties needs to be balanced off against the historical evidence that shows them to be no more and no less than men of their times, who carried the cultural baggage of the Victorian era they were part of. They are not and should not remain above history." Walter Hildebrandt, *Views from Fort Battleford: Constructed Visions of an Anglo-Canadian West* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1994), 111.

¹⁵Letter from Superintendent (rtd.) I.C. Shank, February 1996.

Those who advanced beyond the non-commissioned ranks also reflected the culture of the RCMP: it was a masculinity that mixed British middle and upper class values with the working-class physicality of police life. The Mounted Police reflected both the new trend in western societies at the time, which increasingly saw the middle-class male identity linked to physicality and violence, and the older tradition emphasizing rigid control and discipline as being the middle-class male ideals. Ethnicity was another important characteristic. Put simply, the Mountie represented the ideal Anglo-Canadian middle-class male image of early-twentieth century Canada.

The power of the force went deeper than its members; it symbolized the Canadian desire for order and control. It mixed security powers and nation-wide policing, which other police forces such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation enjoyed, and still managed to be the local police force in countless communities across Canada. The combination of these three factors made RCMP personnel unique and powerful. That power made them, in essence, above the law. In its final report, the McDonald Commission, formed to investigate illegal activities on the part of the RCMP Security Service, discussed the mixing of regular policing and security work: "A security service will inevitably be involved in actions that may contravene the spirit if not the letter of the law, and with clandestine and other activities which may sometimes seem to infringe on individuals' rights." The report noted in the next sentence, however, that "these are not appropriate police functions."¹⁶ These inappropriate police functions that derailed the Security Service in the 1980s were already occurring between 1914 and 1939. The opening of mail by the Mounted Police began during the First

¹⁶Sallot, *Nobody Said No*, 184. Emphasis added..

World War.¹⁷ By the end of the war detailed files were being kept on individuals considered troublesome to the state. The police attempted to influence the careers of individuals because of their radical activity. Illegal activities were suggested and, in at least one case, carried out.

Because the force grew in a time of disorder, it found itself in a particularly powerful position. In many ways, the First World War never ended for Mounted Policemen. They policed labour, ethnic groups, and radicals during the war; in the immediate aftermath of the conflict, widespread disorder that was associated with these three groups occurred. Thus the state directed Mounted Police members to, in effect, continue their wartime role. Then in the 1920s two greater menaces, Communism and drugs, appeared. Again RCMP personnel were needed to perform a mixture of police and security intelligence work. Similar work continued in the 1930s when the activities of tens of thousands of unemployed seemed to threaten both the status quo and social order. The 1930s ended with Canada again at war and the RCMP with additional security concerns involving radicals of the far left and right. Those on the left were viewed as particularly troublesome because they were too different. Commissioner Wood informed the Canadian public in 1941 that Nazis were not the biggest

¹⁷"The Department will be indebted to you for a reply to its communication of the 3rd instant, relative to the action of Constable Richards, of the R.N.W. Mounted Police, in searching the Carnduff, Sask. Post Office and seizing and retaining a registered letter addressed to Victor Lawrence, Carnduff, Sask. The Department takes a most serious view of this action of this police constable and I may say that if such conduct is repeated by any of your men, action will be taken to prosecute the offender." NAC, RG 18, vol. 492, file 476, Graham Moon, Sec. Post Office Dept., to Comptroller, 31 Oct. 1914. The Department of Justice also came down quickly against such action by the police. *Ibid.*, E.L. Newcombe, Dep. Min. of Justice, to the RNWMP Comptroller, 8 July 1915. This approach strongly differed from that of the Trudeau government where the prime minister attempted to justify the opening of mail by the police on the basis that they were preventing terrorism from occurring.

threat to Canada. Rather, the "Red" at home with "the protection of citizenship" was the biggest challenge to the freedom of Canada. He then launched into a shopping list of the problems Communists caused, a list that could just as easily have come off Commissioner Perry's desk in 1919:

1. Affiliations with labour bodies and a pretence of being the only champion of the "working class" constitute its main line of attack ...
2. The Communists, always quick to take advantage of human misery in any form, found the unemployed and underpaid easy tools for the spread of their doctrines of hate. The criminal and weakminded classes were even more enticed by their promises of gain.
3. Youth by nature is radical and therefore receptive to subversive propaganda promising social and economic reforms. ...
7. The Defence of Canada Regulations have all along been the point of attack by these enemies of democracy. So long as these stand there is little chance of getting on with the Revolution. So they are subjected to continuous attack on the grounds that they are unconstitutional, forbidding freedom of speech, press and assembly-- the very foundation stones of democracy. The Communists, of course, are only interested in the "rights" of democracy as a means of destroying democracy, but the gullible public is easily misled.¹⁸

When on a muggy Ottawa night in September 1945 Igor Gouzenko smuggled top secret documents out of the Soviet Embassy, the RCMP had additional confirmation that its emphasis had been correct. Gouzenko revealed that the Soviet Union, Canada's wartime ally, was actively spying in Canada. This news shocked a great many people, including Prime Minister King. This particular event is hailed as the first shot in the Cold War, a conflict which would stretch over decades and, in Canada and the United States, led to the

¹⁸Wood, "Tools for Treachery," 395-397.

besmirching of a large number of reputations as part of anti-Communist "witch hunts."¹⁹ For the security branch of the RCMP, however, it was business as usual; only the scale of operations changed after World War Two. The rest of the duties were the same—surveillance and intelligence gathering related to the far left in Canada. Anti-Communist searches were old hat to the RCMP. Mounties were free to continue their decades-long battle with their favourite enemy, Communists.

From the mid-1940s and through the 1950s that is exactly what they did. In the 1960s the rules of the game changed somewhat. First, the operations of the Mounted Police Security Service came under far greater scrutiny in an era of heightened concern over infringements on civil liberties. Events in the United States—the Black civil rights movement and the outburst of radicalism at American universities—began having an impact in Canada. The "New Left" came into being and the RCMP found it difficult to shift their focus from the Communist Party of Canada that was by now all but completely irrelevant. Quebec nationalism also erupted in the 1960s. Suddenly, a much stronger challenge to the Canadian state than the Communists could ever muster had emerged. By the end of the 1960s and into the 1970s, the RCMP Security Service shifted resources to deal with the separatist threat. The tactics that "the men in shadows" used against Quebec nationalists, while not completely different from those used against Communists, proved the undoing of the RCMP Security Service. Members of the force demonstrated an inability to distinguish between the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ), which employed terrorist tactics, and the Parti Québécois (PQ)

¹⁹For a study of the impact of the anti-Communist hunts on individuals in Canada see Len Scher, *The Un-Canadians: True Stories of the Blacklist Era* (Toronto: Lester Publishing Ltd., 1992).

which sought independence through the ballot box. Mounties broke into PQ headquarters and made off with membership lists. A barn was burned. Mail was opened illegally. A phony communiqué was issued calling upon FLQ members to resume a campaign of violence after Pierre Vallières, the intellectual father of the movement, had renounced violence.²⁰ Throughout this period the security branch of the RCMP did what its predecessors had done: it collected information about Canadians. By the 1970s the RCMP database on subversion contained files on over 800,000 citizens.²¹

All things, however, come to an end. In a sense, being the "good soldier" finally finished the RCMP Security Service. Cliff Harvison, who served as commissioner of the force from 1960 to 1963 wrote in his memoirs that critics who saw or pretended to see "the dangers of a 'police state' in almost every action of law-enforcement bodies" had it all wrong. "Surely that danger arises," he wrote, "only when the police disregard or refuse to follow the enactments of Government." The Trudeau government was at war with separatists; Security Service personnel were the government's front line soldiers, and they fought dirty. They also became casualties of the hostilities when in 1984 the government, based on recommendations of the McDonald Commission, told them not to come to work any more. Even then the Security Service was resurrected under an assumed name.²² Such developments, however, could not have been foreseen by Mounted Policemen in the halcyon

²⁰Sallot, *Nobody Said No*, 42-3.

²¹Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, Letter to the Editor, *Literary Review of Canada*, vol. 5, no. 10 (1996), 22.

²²For a study of the birth of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and its early years see Richard Cleroux, *Official Secrets: The Story Behind the Canadian Security Intelligence Service* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1990).

days of September 1939. Then, they clearly knew who the enemies were and what was to be done with them. During the previous twenty-five years the RCMP had faced trials, tribulations, and had been transformed. The force and its vision had triumphed.

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