

*Private Members' Business*

public are so concerned about possible changes to the red serge uniform. To do so, both the history of the force and of the uniform must be examined.

The idea of a mounted police force originated in response to a need to establish law and order in the northwest in advance of any settlement. The solution of Sir John A. Macdonald was the creation of a paramilitary police, trained for the warfare, with preliminary civilian responsibility. Its model was the Royal Irish Constabulary. Accordingly, in 1873, the Dominion Parliament passed legislation for the establishment of a mounted police force for the Northwest Territories to be known as the Northwest Mounted Police.

Three divisions of 50 men each were mobilized at Fort Garry, Manitoba, where training and organization took place during the winter of 1873. Recruitment proceeded and reached a strength of 1,000 by the year 1885.

Once established in the northwest, demands upon the force increased. Members supervised trading practices, provided some relief and medical services to the Indians and they carried out patrols throughout the area. In addition, the force had an economic and cultural impact on the west as many members, upon leaving the force, made the west their home.

Furthermore, by the start of the Klondike gold rush in 1896, the Northwest Mounted Police was already established in the Yukon. From the start, the force carried out almost all the administrative functions of government. Its members acted as land agents, magistrates, police and mail carriers. After the peak of the rush had subsided civil servants had relieved the force of many of its administrative duties. A few years later, the force was also to play a prominent role in opening up the Canadian Arctic frontier.

In 1905, the first contracts were negotiated for the force to act under the direction of the provincial authorities to enforce the criminal laws and local statutes. The force was active in the campaign of the Canadian government to attract settlers to the prairies. By 1914, over a million settlers had arrived. The police became land agents, agriculture experts, welfare officials and immigration officers. By this time, the mounted police had achieved an international reputation for its part in bringing about the orderly development of western

Canada. It is noteworthy to add that the force sent contingents to fight in both World Wars.

In 1920, the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, as it had become in 1904, absorbed the Dominion Police which had been responsible for federal policing in eastern Canada. In keeping with its national role, it was renamed the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

I have provided only the briefest of overviews of the origins and the history of the force. My intent was simply to illustrate why many Canadians identify with and are protective of the red serge uniform. In fact, the history of the uniform is central to this discussion. In keeping with the para-military role of the force, many of the traditions established in the early days were of military origin. These military traditions were nowhere more apparent than in the style of the uniforms of the force which followed the patterns of the British Army.

In accordance with Sir John A. Macdonald's apparent desire to keep the uniforms of the new police force simple, a jacket made of heavy scarlet serge with a wool lining was issued as the tunic for all ranks; dark blue cavalry pattern overalls, black boots and a pillbox cap or white helmet completed the uniform.

By 1876 officers were pressing for a distinctive uniform in keeping with their social and military status as well as one that would distinguish them from members of other ranks. An elaborate full dress uniform and a simpler everyday uniform were authorized. Scarlet was used for tunics of all ranks, partly because it was the traditional British military colour and also to avoid confusion with the blue-clad U.S. army.

Although the scarlet tunic coupled with the stetson hat is generally reserved for ceremonial occasions, this uniform still represents the image that most Canadians have of the force. This image is continuously being reinforced and promoted both within Canada and abroad through the performances of the RCMP musical ride. Based on traditional cavalry drills, the ride provides audiences with a unique opportunity to experience an exciting part of Canada's past.

Today the RCMP truly has a presence from sea to sea, across all provinces and in the north. In eight of the ten provinces the force is under contract to enforce the Criminal Code and provincial laws. Under comparable arrangements, the force provides policing services to over 190 municipalities across Canada. The RCMP also