

“range” nearly all the Force’s police cars are radio-equipped. And we may be sure that in time the R.C.M.P. Aviation Section will be similarly outfitted, for the merits of extending the system to include an air arm will be at once apparent. In searches, especially, a plane circling over an area under observation has the advantages of unrestricted vision and can report directly to highway cruisers which then may converge for the arrest or rescue as the case may be.

The *Quarterly’s* cover picture this issue, for which we tender grateful acknowledgment to the National Film Board, shows one of the familiar-looking R.C.M.P. radio patrol cars. Externally the only distinguishing feature on the vehicle is the antenna at the back, but in a section of the trunk compartment there is a compact transmitter while up front where the heater is located in most cars there is a receiver. The control panel is near the ignition switch and the microphone is clamped by a small bracket to the instrument board.

Geographically Canada has its own peculiar police problems, but the magic of the air lanes now puts even distant points in split-second proximity to one another. Heretofore criminals haven’t experienced too much trouble finding lonely out-of-the-way places in which to operate, places where the chances of being interrupted are few and the possibilities of making a get-away fairly hopeful. Radio has changed that. Transient criminals in fast cars fleeing the long arm of the law find that arm much longer and more embracing today, for cars no matter how fast will never acquire the speed of radio.

The system enables police patrols to communicate with their district station and through it with other patrol cars. Time was when it was a mighty difficult matter for an officer commanding to keep in touch with members of his sub-division. The old-time policeman who patrolled the prairies on horseback was on his own when out on the road. Then came the automobile, and while its advent whittled distances down marvellously its very speed complicated the communication problem, for whereas the mounted man had probably been within a mile or so of his detachment getting a homesteader to sign the time-honoured complaint slip his more up-to-date counterpart might be miles away and not accessible until or unless he himself advised where he was.

Without extra expense or trouble radio has eliminated this unsatisfactory and confusing state of affairs and vital seconds previously lost in telephonic and vehicular communications are saved. But apart from being the only possible medium whereby divisions and sub-divisions can get in touch with mobile units without delay, it now is much easier to set up dragnet operations under this interlocking network which in point of area coverage is the largest police radio system in Canada. At this time when police man-power is at a low ebb and crime no lighter, police mobility is a prime necessity.

The enlarged scheme changes many a long-distance patrol problem into simple routine and in addition provides communication on a wide scale that may be used to augment or replace telephone and telegraph in times of civil emergency and disaster. The several cases cited in Mr. Wilson’s story illustrate how two-way radio aids police work, but of course they are only a few drawn from hundreds.

From the standpoint of crime detection, the value of radio is unquestionable, but its usefulness goes far beyond the tracking down and apprehending of wrongdoers. In the discharge of the Force’s countless extra-constabulary duties the new set-up will serve as public insurance in many ways. For example, in the reporting of bush fires or the summoning of medical assistance to remote settlers information will be relayed without delay, and should a highway accident occur miles from nowhere a radio-equipped police car happening along can in a matter of minutes have an ambulance and doctor on their way to succour the injured. From the humanitarian aspect, the system is an unexcelled boon that doubtless will save many lives.

Because of the vastness of the area it covers, the system is something dramatically new in the policing of this country. In the past the criminal has by the very nature of things set the pace and the police have had to keep up with him. For once, however, the forces of law and order have a definite advantage which they will continue to hold, for though it is true that burglars have been known to use radio devices in their depredations, radio on the scope of this new network is surely beyond the means of individual criminals or even gangs.