

SUBVERSION ON CAMPUS

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Canadian university campuses have been prime hunting grounds for the RCMP in their search for subversives since the beginning of the 1960's. But who really were the subversives?

The final report of the McDonald Commission, Freedom and Security Under the Law, which was made public in August, makes it clear how the RCMP subverted the intention of two successive federal governments to end general surveillance on university campuses. The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) specifically requested Mr. Justice McDonald to review the tangled history of relations between the RCMP, the CAUT and the campuses across the country. The results of this investigation are clear in the commission's final report.

In March 1978, the CAUT made the first of two submissions to the McDonald Commission. The concern of the CAUT on security matters, however, dates back to 1961. In its report the McDonald Commission casts some interesting light on that decade.

In the early sixties, when the Conservative government of John Diefenbaker was in power, the CAUT became alarmed about RCMP attempts to infiltrate and to suppress radical groups on university campuses. The attention of the RCMP at that time was particularly focused on individuals involved with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. The CAUT protested to the Minister of Justice, David Fulton, who, the McDonald Report makes clear, suspended all investigations of subversive activities on university campuses pending review of the policy. The Commissioner of the RCMP informed all divisions of the suspension of investigation of Communist Activities on university campuses. The intention of the government was to review its policy while maintaining the freeze.

Then in 1963, the government changed and Lester Pearson became Prime Minister. The Executive Secretary of CAUT, J.H. Stewart Reid and Professor Bora Laskin, now Chief Justice of Canada, arranged a meeting between Mr. Pearson, the CAUT and the National Federation of Canadian University Students. At the close of this meeting the Prime Minister issued a public statement that there was no general surveillance of university campuses. He stated that the RCMP went to the university

"as required for information on people seeking employment in the public service or where there are definite indications that individuals may be involved in espionage or subversive activities." The Pearson government did not revoke the Fulton memorandum.

The McDonald Commission makes it clear that, by 1967, the RCMP had decided to circumvent the Pearson policy on university surveillance and had found willing helpers among university faculty in Canadian universities.

A memorandum of November 29, 1967, issued by William L. Higgitt who was at that time Director of Security and Intelligence, tells how it was done. The document points to the great success of the force in an unnamed university where they simply exploited the right of the police to make inquiries concerning the security clearance of those applying for federal government jobs. It suggests that this success be replicated across the country. "Communist penetration" was reviewed, "specific faculties were singled out for further study," and all professors whose names were given as referees were interviewed, not just about the candidate for the federal job, but more particularly to see which ones might be recruited as informers on the campus.

In addition to those named as referees, faculty heads and assistants were also interviewed with the same motive in mind. "Following each interview," the RCMP memo stated, "the investigator committed the salient points to paper in a book which was maintained for the express purpose of compiling data on faculty members of the university concerned." The police officers were encouraged to transform these formal interviews into social contacts over coffee or lunch in order to develop a surveillance network.

The officers also asked their informers whether they had any objection to their activities on the campus. "It is significant," the RCMP memo states, "that, in most cases, there was no objection to any of our inquiries so long as they were conducted prudently and with discretion." At the time many faculty feared that students were being recruited as informers. It now appears that they should have looked a little more carefully around the common room.

The McDonald Commission concludes that this was a comprehensive, long-range programme to develop informers on the campus and was in express contravention of the

policies laid down by Mr. Fulton and Mr. Pearson. It was, in the view of the Commission, a clear attempt to subvert and to circumvent government policy.

In the aftermath of the October Crisis, the federal cabinet reviewed the Pearson understanding. The CAUT was aware that the government was wavering in its commitment to the 1963 statement and put pressure on the government to maintain it. Indeed an interim decision was made, after the preparation by the Force of a paper entitled "Academe and Subversion," to give the RCMP the flexibility it desired. The McDonald Commission reports

that the new Solicitor-General, Jean Pierre Goyer, however, resisted these attempts by the RCMP to weaken or to abolish the existing policy. The cabinet reaffirmed the Pearson policy in September 1971.

According to the report, it would seem that Mr. Goyer had more backbone than he was generally credited with at the time. However, he subsequently made two important modifications of policy which the McDonald Commission found to be in contravention of previous cabinet decisions. He limited the need for prior approval by the Solicitor-General to cases involving the use on campus of

electronic surveillance or paid informers. (In 1972 there appeared to be five paid informers and no electronic surveillance.) He was not, of course, informed by the RCMP of the network of unpaid informers and thus was manoeuvred into allowing this area of RCMP activity to fall outside the inspection of the minister in charge.

In addition, in 1972 the then Director-General of the RCMP, John Starnes, advised the Solicitor-General that informers who had penetrated organizations outside the university, but attended meetings within the university as agents of the penetrated organization, were



"O.K. So there's been a mistake."