

American Police Beat, Police, The Police Marksman, Police Times and the *Australian Police Journal*.

RED COATS ON THE PRAIRIES — THE NORTH-WEST MOUNTED POLICE 1886—1900, by Dr. William Beahen, present historian of the RCMP, and Stanley Horrall, former RCMP historian, published by CENTAX, a division of PRINTWEST, Regina, Saskatchewan, 350 pp. \$59.95

The book is the second official history in the 125 years of the Force's existence. It overlaps the first, written by the original historian of the Force, J.P. Turner, in his two-volume work, *The North-West Mounted Police, 1873-1893* (Kings Printer, 1950). Although the Beahen-Horrall book overlaps the Turner book from 1886 to 1900, it treats the material in much greater detail.

The present book covers the 14 years of Commissioner Lawrence William Herchmer's term in office. It is written in two parts; Part I by William Beahen, titled "Taming of the Frontier" and, Part II by Horrall entitled, "All Sorts and Conditions of Men." Part I deals generally with the police problems of the times, whereas Part II deals mainly with the conditions under which the men lived and worked.

However, the authors have covered all aspects of policing in the Prairies, including the political patronage that interfered with the Commissioner's management of the Force, and with his ability to discipline his officers. Only authors with access to the complete records of the Force could have written this book. They deal in a detailed and scholarly way with the living conditions, indiscretions, health, habits, training, discipline, pensions and even marital relations. They link these topics with the role of the NWMP in the political, social and cultural activities in this developing land. They have reported honestly on what they found in the records, warts and all.

In this book, Bill Beahen and Stan Horrall have limited their coverage of NWMP history to the Prairies and have not covered police work in the Yukon or the Force's participation in the Boer War. The time period of the book is that of the complete period of Herchmer's commissionership. He succeeded Commissioner A.G. Irvine, a mild-mannered man whose easygoing nature made it difficult for him to command men effectively. He was also a poor administrator and his handling of finances had been criticised. But it was his failure to become more active in the Rebellion of 1885 that finally forced Sir John A. Macdonald to dispense with his services. Irvine could have defended himself but characteristically refused to do so.

The Herchmer appointment was purely political. He was a complete outsider, with no police experience; before this appointment, was the Inspector of Indian Agencies. He had also been an officer with the regular army for a short time, had experience in business, and had spent considerable time in the West. Herchmer knew the Indians well, spoke French, and had developed influential political connections. But he was also known to be a good administrator and a hard worker. He had his supporters: Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney, then Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Territories was one, and the *Regina Leader* which reported, "He fills the bill." On the other hand, Herchmer, an Englishman by birth, was regarded by some as an outsider. Furthermore, he had no police experience. In the opinion of many, he did not appear to be the right man to take over a 1,000-man frontier police force facing an uncertain future. The Indians and Métis were not taking their 1885 rebellion defeat in good part. In keeping with Sir John A.'s national policy, the West was opening to settlement, and the security of the settlers was paramount.

Criticism of Herchmer's appointment came from many quarters, especially from the