

# EDITORIAL

Seventy-five years ago the 300-odd men who made up the original North West Mounted Police began their epic trek to the Western prairie, at that time really a great lone land lying, as the late Thomas Hardy said of his

**Stock-taking after 75 years** Egdon Heath, almost as it had been left by the hand of its Creator. The transfer of authority from the Hudson's Bay Company directly to the Crown had not been accomplished without trouble, and it was the immediate purpose of the Mounted Police to make effective the civil authority of Her Majesty's representatives as well as to enforce the criminal law. The suppression of the rebellion of 1885, in which task the Force participated, marked the end of any challenge to the government, and as for law enforcement, the original small body of police has evolved into the present national force almost ten times its size, in point of numbers, and has performed that duty continuously during the intervening period.

Throughout those 75 years, too, the prairie region has developed from a vast empty plateau into one of the most important food-producing areas in the world, with flourishing cities and a prosperous farming population. But of most direct concern to all police forces is the fact that Canada as a whole has a record of law observance which compares well with that of other nations. This is true partly because the country has been settled largely by people in whom respect for law and order was inborn, and partly because of the efforts of the police. As far as the R.C.M.P. is concerned, *The Quarterly* would be less than candid if it dissembled the gratification of the Force in its feeling that it has enjoyed a large measure of public confidence and cooperation and built up a tradition of fair-dealing in its efforts, not to "get" any man but to maintain what is right.

However, the Force can afford as little as the individual to be smug about the past. It is more important to look forward than to look back. In this respect it seems to us that there is a tendency in some of the more firmly-established parts of Canada to regard the development of the country as being finished, whereas the fact is that, in the far greater part of this land, the natural conditions are almost as primitive as they were in 1873, with development only in its early stages. For the Force this means that within its own sphere it is building tradition today just as surely as it did in the last quarter of the 19th century.

This is not to say that conditions are static in those parts of Canada to which the foregoing remarks do not apply. The opposite is true. For one thing, there are authorities who say that there has been a break-down of public morals with a consequent lessening of respect for lawful authority. Without arguing that matter we may say that the Force expects much good from the program of Youth and the Police which it has undertaken. That program is one which can be expanded, and we believe the country will be well served by any effort which can be made to foster in its young people the tradition of respect for law and order which is so fortunate a heritage of the Canadian people, and without which there is no foundation upon which to build anything.

Again, it must be recognized quite definitely that there is a criminal class in Canada now. While we have been spared the depredations of a gangster element in the past, there are indications that we are by no means immune; we have antisocial men who appear to believe that for them crime can be made to pay, who work out new criminal techniques with a zeal and persistence that would be praiseworthy if directed toward legitimate ends.

Moreover we are threatened by sinister agencies whose aim is to abolish our most cherished institutions and thereby our freedom as citizens, agencies under whose direction the police would be, not the guardians of liberty and civil rights, but rather (to quote from a recently-published article written by Commr. S. T. Wood) "instruments of the state maintained for the purpose of imposing the will of the state or party upon the people".

Surely all this constitutes a formidable challenge. The resultant conditions must be met in detail as they arise, but it is more than pious platitude to say that the principles of truth, of justice and an understanding tolerance, do not change. They are quite as applicable to the problems of the future as they were to those of the past.