

## Commissioner R.H. Simmonds: A Decade as a Leader



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On September 1, 1977, Robert Henry Simmonds accepted the tipstaff from Commissioner Maurice Nadon, as a symbol of the transfer of authority and responsibility that came with his accession to the rank of Commissioner of the RCMP. In retrospect, Commissioner Simmonds may wish that the tipstaff had a more practical application, with properties similar to a crystal ball to help him divine solutions to the many complex problems which would face him over the next decade. Essentially, the job of Commissioner of the RCMP is to fulfill two distinct yet inter-related responsibilities. First, he must act as the deputy head of a federal government agency advising his Minister on policy and carrying out the direction of the government concerning the administration of the Force. Second, he acts as Chief of a police force with a complex set of national, provincial and municipal law enforcement duties. In

both areas, Commissioner Simmonds was beset with controversial problems concerning which any solutions adopted were bound to bring criticism.

As a government deputy, Commissioner Simmonds guided the Force through a difficult period of transition. In the vital area of security, the Commissioner acted upon government direction transferring many of its intelligence functions to a civilian agency, and at the same time bolstering protection for Canadian statesmen and foreign functionaries in this country. Another difficult managerial task was implementing the Official Languages program in such a way as to increase services to the public without hindering the careers of members already in the Force.

As Chief of the RCM Police, Commissioner Simmonds oversaw the successful negotiation of renewals of policing contracts, a process accompanied by careful re-examination of the role of the RCMP and the expectations of its clients. In the sphere of criminal activities, the Commissioner recognized the increase in commercial crime and the growing sophistication in the illegal drug business, and guided the Force to respond accordingly. Coincidentally, a whole series of sensational criminal investigations focused a glare of media attention, which required great determination to avoid compromising the cases.

In describing Commissioner Robert Simmonds' character, the word determination springs immediately to mind. He attacked problems aggressively, and never let up until a solution was found. He made many personal sacrifices to his job including long hours at his desk. This