



SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

Dear Editor,

I would like to comment on the article "Partners in Policing" which appeared in the Winter 1997 (Vol. 62 No. 1) of the *RCMP Quarterly*. I would suggest that the initial request for the RCMP to police the town of Flin Flon in 1935, was initiated by the mining company which was the principal employer in the area, and had a compliant municipal council; if you were employed by the company and expressed a dissident view, you were fired. There was also anti-communist phobia existing at the time, when all labour unions were allegedly communist-controlled. In the early winter of 1935, while I was taking recruit training, our squad was warned that we might be called on riot duty, and that gas bombs might be used to put down any insurgency in Flin Flon. We were not called out for riot duty on this occasion.

The article states that after the Flin Flon municipal agreement, "municipalities all over Canada inquired about policing agreements..." The question I want to raise is, how many agreements were signed before 1937 when the Town of Melville, Saskatchewan, the provincial and federal governments signed a contract? I am not aware of any.

In 1937, the Town of Melville went bankrupt, forcing the province of Saskatchewan to dismiss the town council and appoint an administrator. The police chief resigned and after selling two houses, he departed for his homestead — Scotland. The local RCMP rural detachment kept a passive interest in the situation, but it did not take an active part in maintaining law and order. When the agreement was signed, the Force was required to supply three members to do the municipal policing.

Cpl. W.H. Foskett, Cst. R.L. Welliver and myself were euphemistically **selected** for

this duty. I was assigned to take the first shift of patrolling the town, from 6 o'clock in the evening until 6 o'clock in the morning. The Force had neglected, or was unable, to provide a car for this three-man detachment, in a town with a population of over 3,000. Our office was located in the basement of the Town Hall, and we even had to supply our own flashlights on night duty. Several months later, the rural and municipal detachments were merged, making a total complement of six members. We moved into the rural detachment quarters and also had the use of a car to patrol the outlying areas of the town. The NCO of the rural detachment, a corporal, showed a great deal of initiative, which also brought its own reward, as the NCO i/c of a six-member detachment usually attained the rank of sergeant, and he did.

To my knowledge, other than Flin Flon in 1937, no municipal contracts were signed until 1941, when several Saskatchewan towns began employing RCMP personnel; and it went on from there, until today, where the RCMP now provides services to 200 municipalities.

As the last survivor of the Town of Melville original three members of the Force, I am proud to say that we must have done something right! As the article in the *Quarterly* somewhat unctuously states, "...RCMP members' ability to build meaningful, effective relationships with the communities they serve."

I would appreciate copies of my letter being supplied to the authors of the article "Partners in Policing" for their comments. I believe that an article, or at least a photograph of the Melville Detachment members, appeared in the *Quarterly* during 1938, or early 1939. As we were dressed in fur coats, it might be of interest to quite a few readers.

Regards,