

Setting the Standard for Policing in Canada

*The following are excerpts from a speech given by Vernon Frolick, guest speaker at the RCMP Veterans's Association 1996 AGM in Penticton. Mr. Frolick began his criminal law practice in Kenora, Ontario, as assistant crown attorney, and later worked as a defence lawyer in Toronto. He subsequently moved to Terrace, British Columbia, where he worked as a prosecutor with the Attorney General's Office. Mr. Frolick is the author of *Descent Into Madness — Diary of a Killer, the story of fugitive Michael Oros, whose 13-year descent into madness culminated in his death and that of RCMP Cst. Michael Joseph Buday. Mr. Frolick recently completed another sabbatical year which took him north, to the Arctic, and south, through the length of the Amazon, over the Andes and into Columbia, to research material for his new book, The Great Treasure Hunt. — Ed.**

“In Bogota, life is cheaper than the cost of a cheap restaurant meal. For five dollars, off-duty police will clean up your street; 20 dollars for four bodies. To say that they give policing a bad name is the grossest of understatement. As Canadians, we have always had a higher regard for life. Fortunately, here the police are not hired killers (...) By and large, the history of Canadian settlement is gentle. Much more so than in any other country in the Americas.

There are two events in Canadian history that speak volumes about the kind of people that built this country and established the values which became the foundation of our

society. The first was the 17th-century colony of New France, now Quebec, with a population of about 10,000. Before the French Revolution and the development of their democracy, the people of France and its colonies were subject to slavery-like conditions under French rule. Arriving in Canada, these people had a chance to break free and a lot of the young men did. Out of a population of 10,000, fully 600 of them fled the Colony to live with the Native Indians

(...) These men became known as the “Coureurs des bois” and were legendary in their own time and even to this day. As more joined them and their children known as “Bois Brûlés”, their numbers multiplied into the thousands. Better known as “Metis”, today they spread from Quebec to the Rockies, and north, to the Arctic, with their numbers swelled with Scotch, English and other European intermarriages. It is said that no pure Indian remains in this country, east of the Rockies. Without doubt, the Metis were the backbone of the new country, Canada. They were courageous and intrepid and created a new race with a new spirit of a people who valued their freedom above all else.

The second important event was the creation of the Mounties (...) Let me tell you how an outsider sees the RCMP and its history. It is worth repeating. In fact, it is a story that should be told over and over to young people who, unfortunately, hear mostly U.S. history, because our television media is largely U.S.-dominated.