



Dominion Policemen in uniform, outside the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa, 1909. From 1868 to 1920, the Dominion Police were responsible for guarding the Parliament Buildings, Rideau Hall and other government-owned property in Canada's capital.

Confederation. An incident in 1866 provided the necessary justification for its creation. A force of 800 Fenians — discharged veterans of the American Union Army — crossed the Niagara River and landed near Fort Erie, Ontario. They planted the Fenian flag, raised havoc among the inhabitants, and fought and defeated an armed Canadian force before being driven back across the U.S. border by a larger military force.

Tension was mounting in Ottawa. Where and against whom would the Fenians strike next? Did a Fenian fifth column indeed exist in Canada, as some politicians argued? During this period of national insecurity, important government and non-government buildings were being heavily guarded by the Militia. Then, in the early morning hours of April 7, Thomas D'Arcy McGee, a member of Parliament and outspoken critic of

the Fenians, was shot to death at his front door in Ottawa. His brutal murder sent shock waves through the town and only served to heighten the growing sense of paranoia.

### Opposition to Creation of New Force

The *British North America Act* of 1867 placed the responsibility for the administration of justice with the provinces; therefore, there was some opposition to the creation of a federal police force. For this, and other reasons, the size of the Dominion Police was kept small. Its plain clothes division worked with municipal and provincial police forces, including the RNWMP in the Territories. The Commissioner reported directly, and at times secretly, to Sir John A. Macdonald, who for a period of time, was both Minister of Justice and Prime Minister.