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THE ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the only federal police force in Canada, is a business-like organization and a living tradition.

A reminder of Canada's romantic past, an example of quiet devotion and dignity, and a symbol to the world at large of the courage and determination characteristic of their homeland, the scarlet and gold horsemen retain their appeal for youth and age alike.

Originally formed to keep order in the vast expanse which lay beyond the western boundaries of Manitoba, the Force remains sovereign in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon.

Because of the division of responsibility between the ten provincial legislatures and the federal authority in Ottawa, the functions of the Force are many and varied. From its general headquarters in the capital, the operations of 17 divisions mustering a uniform strength of 6783 officers and men aided by 1785 special constables, civil servants and civilian employees, are directed and co-ordinated.

The peaceful settlement of Western Canada at the turn of the century is an outstanding title to fame of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, then the North West Mounted Police, which was organized in 1873 by the Federal Government to administer justice in the regions ceded by the Hudson's Bay Company. Quebec and Ontario maintain their own police forces. The other provinces have entered into agreements with the Federal Government whereby the Royal Canadian Mounted Police is hired upon terms of annual payment to enforce the Criminal Code and provincial statutes.

Soon after the passing of the British North America Act in 1867, the newborn Federal Government had acquired an enormous and potentially rich area stretching from the Red River Valley to the Rockies and from the United States to the forests of northern Saskatchewan. Before these resources could be developed, however, order had to be established throughout this vast region. The Government at Ottawa needed an instrument for the assertion of its authority, the enforcement of law and eventually the safe construction of a transcontinental railroad, which was British Columbia's price for entering Confederation.

In 1874, 300 mounted riflemen rode from Manitoba to the Rockies. Their mission was to bridge the plains, pacify the warring tribes and protect the country from adventurers. Two years later, the Force had become firmly planted, and had won the confidence and respect of native chiefs and their people. Devoid of the arrogance and brutality so often displayed by newcomers to the prairies, the Mounted Police endeavoured to make law-abiding citizens of both white and red men.

The North West Mounted Police was modelled partly on the Royal Irish Constabulary and partly on one of the systems followed in India. Since it operated as a military body, policy dictated that it follow the Army in dress and interior economy. But even then, the Prime Minister, Sir John A. MacDonald, stressed that he wanted a plain, mobile, fully civil force suited to the rigours of the country, "with as little gold lace and fuss and feathers as possible". To gratify the Indians' fondness for the scarlet tunics of Queen Victoria's soldiers, who had been stationed in the West, the police were provided with the time-honoured dress. The red coat became the badge of friendly authority.

After the Indian uprising in 1876, which culminated in the Little Big Horn battle where a United States cavalry regiment under Major-General George A. Custer was wiped out to the last man, Sioux fugitives from American retaliation turned northward for refuge. Upon 214 officers and men of the North West Mounted Police depended the security of life and property along hundreds of miles of restless boundary. Tactful handling of the situation, coupled with the loyalty and prestige of Crowfoot, chief of the preponderant Blackfoot Confederacy, led to the conclusion of the most important treaty in Canadian history, which gave the Ottawa Government complete sovereignty of the West.

The transition from buffalo hunting to farming was carried out under Mounted Police surveillance. On the plains, the laws of the Dominion were now administered almost entirely by them.

The construction of the railroad, which brought in some 4,000 turbulent labourers, created new difficulties. Once the dominant Blackfoot Confederacy had accepted the white man's way of life, things moved smoothly, but the distasteful restrictions of the settlements and reservations stirred up the Indians and halfbreeds against the intruding Easterners. Soon they were demanding redress of many grievances, and, in the spring of 1885, led by Louis Riel, the Métis rebelled. For several months, the Force bore up under the strain, while militia columns converged from both Eastern and Western Canada to quell the uprising. The Blackfoot remained loyal. With the defeat of the rebels and the capture of their leaders, the insurrection came to an end.

Rapid change and development followed. New settlers swarmed into the high plains region of the West, which is ideally suited for wheat farming and cattle ranching.

The North, also, was to come within the orbit of the Force. By 1895, thousands of prospectors from Canada and the United States were flocking to the Yukon gold fields. It became obvious that some sort of police control was necessary. Amid a conglomeration of all classes of people, a small detachment of 20 selected officers and men struggled to maintain order. In 1898, a judicial district was established with headquarters at Dawson City, and the Yukon was constituted a separate territory. The population of Dawson had reached 20,000. The duty of carrying the mails to the scattered gold camps was undertaken by the Force, while patrols using boats and sled dogs branched out over the North.

Following the Boer War, in which the Force was well represented, some 300,000 settlers streamed westward and took up homesteads on the plains. By 1904, detachments were opened in the Arctic, extending the Mounted Police beat from the International Boundary to the Arctic Ocean and from Hudson Bay to the Alaskan border.

World recognition came when a contingent of Mounted Police rode through London at Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. In 1904, King Edward VII marked the brilliant and steadfast services the Force had rendered by bestowing on it the prefix "Royal". A year later, the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta, which the Force had helped to raise from infancy to adulthood, were added to Manitoba to divide the Western plains into the three "Prairie Provinces". For the next decade, the Mounted Police carried out their mission

of justice and mercy, covering thousands of miles on horseback, in dogsleds, canoes and boats. Soon after the outbreak of the First World War the strength of the Force was increased but fell again due to the number of enlistments in the armed forces. It was not until 1918 that the Government authorized the despatch of two squadrons of the RNWMP for service in France and Siberia. After the Armistice, the establishment rose again to 1,200.

In 1918 the RNWMP was assigned the enforcement of Dominion legislation for the whole of Canada west of Port Arthur and Fort William and in 1920 its jurisdiction was extended to cover the entire country, its headquarters were transferred from Regina to Ottawa, and it was renamed the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. At this time, the Force entered a new territory east of Hudson Bay and aeroplanes came into use. Famous Arctic patrols, in 1924, pushed deep into the Eskimo domain. The most important exploration since then was the forcing of the North West passage in 1942 by the RCMP schooner St. Roch. The historic trip from Vancouver to Halifax lasted 28 months. Most of the pioneering is over now, but the Mounted Police continue to push back the frontiers.

In the period between 1932 and 1934 a Marine Section was established. Today the Mounted Police has under its jurisdiction an area as large as the whole of Europe, while its many duties involve operations by air, sea and land.

The long and tedious journeys overland through difficult terrain became less frequent when the Force began to use aeroplane; at first through the co-operation of the RCAF, and since 1937 by the formation of the Aviation Section. As the Second World War opened, the "Air" Division was establishing its headquarters at Rockcliffe. Although the RCAF took over most of its personnel and equipment, it continued to make many flights in the northern country on police and defence missions until it was re-formed in 1946. It performs various tasks of service and rescue, and helps the Mounted Police to be more efficient than ever. Food can be taken by air to distant detachments and the injured and sick brought out. On the prairies, the transfer of personnel and prisoners is effected more rapidly. Moreover, air patrols make for more rigid control of hunting and fishing.

At sea, the Marine Division played an important part before the Second World War in cutting revenue losses through smuggling. These losses had cost the federal Treasury uncounted millions of dollars. When hostilities broke out, it numbered only 209 officers and men and some 33 ships and boats. They were immediately transferred to the Royal Canadian Navy, and assisted in organizing examination sections and in controlling merchant shipping by means of coastal and seagoing patrols. Members of the Marine Division filled key positions in the rapidly expanding naval service. Casualties amounted during the war years to 41 per cent of the establishment.

After the end of hostilities, a new fleet (comprising eight minesweepers converted for escort duties, four motor launches and 13 small patrol vessels) was put in operation. With added strength, the Marine Division resumed its policing of the Atlantic and Pacific coasts and certain inland waters.

The RCMP further contributed to the armed forces a Provost Company, which became a unit of the First Canadian Division, charged with enforcing discipline, manning traffic points and giving information on convoy movements and unit locations. This body provided the bulk of provost officer personnel posted to the staffs of formations.

Members of this group were also employed at detention barracks, field punishment camps, training depots and special investigation sections. In co-operation with the Allied Military Government in occupied countries, they helped to reorganize and direct civilian police systems, fire departments and civil defence.

The major task of the Force, during the period of emergency, was safeguarding essential industry and implementing anti-sabotage and protective measures. The RCMP not only kept check on draft evaders and deserters but engaged in counter-espionage work, with such success that the authorities were able to announce in 1945 that subversive activities in Canada had been almost wholly disrupted by the speedy arrest of hostile elements. To cope with the tremendous responsibility with which they were faced, the Mounted Police had to improvise. With the assistance of specially-engaged personnel, they guarded vulnerable points and co-operated with all departments in the execution of war-time legislation.

The Reserve, which started as a temporary measure, has become a well-trained, dependable arm of the Force. Part-time workers have been formed into an official unit in which "constable is the only rank". It has done excellent work already and will be called on to perform still greater service for the community.

Geographical obstacles that formerly appeared almost insurmountable have been overcome by means of recent discoveries. RCMP experts have completed an extensive radio network across Canada. All RCMP ships and aircraft are radio-equipped.

Though its character has changed greatly since its formation 90 years ago, the RCMP still reflects much of the glamour of the frontier through its northern and other far-flung detachments. These assignments range from Arctic patrolling and the supervision of Eskimos to ordinary prevention work concerning the contraband of narcotic drugs, counterfeiting, illicit distilling, identification and classification of criminals. The RCMP, on behalf of Canada, holds a membership in the International Criminal Police Organization. It assumes the protection of public buildings, makes reports on migratory birds, furbearing animals and hunting out of season, takes part in the application of customs and excise laws and, to a small extent, of immigration regulations. It investigates naturalization papers and passports, makes enquiries on applicants for civil positions, enforces statutes governing the Indians, and many other federal enactments, as the Commissioner's annual report shows.

For such tasks, men of many types and talents are needed. Yet each candidate must be characterized by personal integrity, a high degree of intelligence and a sense of responsibility. The selection of recruits is carried out by means of the usual form of educational examinations, supplemented by a psychometric test and a patterned interview.

To qualify, an applicant must be a British subject, or Canadian citizen, between the ages of 18 and 30, unmarried, at least five feet eight inches in height, physically fit, and able to speak, read and write either English or French. Members are not permitted to marry until they have served for two years and are 21 years of age. As the enlistment period is five years, they must re-enlist at the expiration of each term to become eligible for a life pension, which is granted under the provisions of the RCMP Act. Careful selection at the recruit level is followed by periodic interviews conducted by the Personnel Branch throughout the entire career of the policeman. The recruit's eight-months initiation includes drill, horsemanship, shooting, study of criminal law, aids to investigation, public relations and much else, including swimming and life saving.

Riding is a very minor and emergency aspect of actual police work but an important item in training. The riding school, with its gruelling routine, is a splendid form of physical culture and of character development. In order to maintain high morale in the Force and to perpetuate in its personnel a model Canadian youth, equitation is retained as an incomparable school of audacity, calmness, perseverance, mental alertness and sportsmanship. L'esprit cavalier helps to maintain l'esprit du corps.

The educational programme of the Force embraces a wide scope. In addition to initial recruit training, an advanced training course is provided for selected members up to the rank of corporal and having from six to 16 years' service. In 1938 the RCMP instituted the Canadian Police College, which holds courses semi-annually and alternately at Regina and Ottawa. In addition to its own members, the Force welcomes selected personnel of police forces the world over for training at the College.

The Force could have no better publicists than these missionaries and the dignified RCMP Quarterly, which has become Canada's most-quoted magazine. That famous display of fine horsemanship known as the Musical Ride has been acclaimed in Britain and the major cities of North America. The present RCMP Band, the eighth to be formed since 1876, ranks among the best on this continent.

Despite its extracurricular activities, the RCMP remains the "Silent Force", unpretentious and unobtrusive. Quietly, and without fanfare, it lives up to its motto: "Maintiens le droit".

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