The North-West Mounted Police,
1873 - 1883
by Edwin Charles Morgan
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The early history of the Canadian North-West Territories is inseparable from that of the North-West Mounted Police. Created by an act of the Dominion Parliament in 1873, the force arrived in the Territories only four years after the acquisition of the area by Canada, at a time when it was still a remote, unsettled country, peopled almost entirely by nomadic Indian bands, whose condition was serious, decimated as they were by disease, demoralized by the liquor trade, and facing eventual starvation as their mainstay, the buffalo, diminished in numbers. Only a decade later, the area could no longer be considered a remote frontier. Transportation and communication had been developed, both internally and with eastern Canada, a number of settlers had taken up homesteads and founded towns and villages, the Indians had been brought under treaty and placed on reserves, territorial government had been established. In 1875, Major-General E. Selby Smyth wrote, "the Mounted Police Force is the beginning of a new order of things in the North West Territories, prosperity and security will follow in its track...." By 1883, the force was an established, proven institution with a growing tradition, and an impact already made on the plains. What had been accom-
plished, anticipated continued settlement and growth. Perhaps fortunately, the pace of development was to be slow for most of another generation, allowing the force still further time to mature before the onslaught of settlement after 1900. But by 1884 it was evident that one of the major influences in shaping the legal climate and context of development of the West would thereafter be the North-West Mounted Police.

There is an abundance of historical literature about the North-West Mounted Police, many of the books and articles are popular in style, a considerable number having been written for the juvenile market. Some eight books, however, may be classified as serious histories of the force. Although published over a period of more than forty years, they follow the pattern set by the first of them, Chambers' Royal North-West Mounted Police (1906). His narrative account of the organization and experiences of the force is recapitulated, with additional chapters for subsequent events, in Haydon, Riders of the Plains (1910, 1918), Longstreth, The Silent Force (1927), MacBeth, Policing the Plains (1931), Fetherstonhaugh, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (1938), Douthwaite, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (1939), and Kelly, Men of the Mounted (1949). Nearly all of these authors, although they do not provide citations or bibliographies, acknowledge in the prefaces to their books access to official records. Several state that the incumbent Commissioner or other officers of the force read their manuscripts; Mrs. Kelly, indeed, noted that the
Commissioner "so made sure that the information contained therein was correctly presented from the point of view of the Mounted Police." These authors would not have incurred censure from sensitive members of the force, for their treatment of it is unreservedly complimentary. They have, it is true, not concentrated solely on dramatic events or resorted to the degree of adulation found in much of the popular writing. Chambers consciously resisted the temptation "to dwell rather upon the dramatic and sensational incidents of the records of the force than upon the more matter of fact and historically valuable annals." Douthwaite maintained that there was "more sheer nonsense written concerning its achievements than in the case of any other uniformed force in existence." He set forth "a bare record of events as actually they transpired," but Fetherstonhaugh proposed to emphasize "the adventures of the officers and men rather than the details of organization and administration."

These authors have compiled a good deal of information about the North-West Mounted Police in its first decade. There is some divergence in the elaboration of specific episodes but the material is largely repetitive. It is not documented, and almost without exception organized only in chronological order. There is no critical analysis. Discussion of principles, and differing opinions and interpretations are rarely, if ever, found in the books surveyed. Some of the fundamental questions that might be raised about the force's
experience, such as the possibility of political influence on its actions or patronage in appointments and the philosophy of law enforcement which it represented and enforced, which should be of concern to serious students are either ignored, glossed over, or only briefly alluded to, and certainly no assessment of these aspects is attempted. The common theme is the story of a small force despatched to a raw frontier, facing and accomplishing formidable tasks, the pacification of the Indian tribes and the imposition of law and order in preparation for settlement, and establishing a reputation for fairness and courage.

This theme persists in the most recent history of the force, John Peter Turner's *North-West Mounted Police, 1873-1893* (1950). The only official history, it is a two-volume work which provides much more detail for this period. It is a year-by-year chronicle of events, including information on strength and disposition of the force, equipment, mounts, etc. Turner himself regarded it as "being in large part a work of reference." Undocumented, it does reflect intensive examination of police records and incorporates the result of many interviews with former members of the force. The work has considerable value for this reason, but the reader would prefer to know what records and people provided the authority for various statements. In marked contrast to Turner, and the other histories of the force, Paul Sharp's scholarly *Whoop-Up Country* includes a documented account of the role of the police in the international
border area of the south-western Territories and northern Montana. He analyses the reasons for their success in handling Indian relations, compared with that of the situation in the United States, and makes perceptive comments about the force, such as the dangers inherent in its involvement in the judicial process.

In view of the many secondary sources on the North-West Mounted Police, it was not to be expected that this study would reveal major episodes previously unpublished. It was, however, necessary to review, and document from primary sources, the genesis and organization of the force and its experience in this period. At best, it has been possible to add a few new features to the major episodes. However, it has been possible to present aspects of the force which to date have received almost no attention, primarily its internal life, and its informal relations with the surrounding population. It was also found that the force had been the subject of public controversy in the press and parliament, a dimension of its history not previously explored. In organizing and presenting this research, much of which is therefore new, it has been possible to maintain, in general, a chronological framework, coupled with a thematic approach, in contrast to the histories discussed above.

This thesis shows that the North-West Mounted Police was created by the Dominion government in response to the evident needs of the area and upon the recommendation of com-
petent observers. It traces the organization of the force, its despatch to the Territories, which involved an arduous summer-long expedition from the Red River to the foothills of the Rockies in 1874, and its initial activities in establishing bases of operation and enforcing law and order. It then proceeds to a discussion of the administration of the force and its deployment, it demonstrates the success of the force in developing friendly relations with the native population and in handling the numerous problems associated with them: cattle and horse stealing, inter-tribal hostility, settlement on reserves, and most dramatically, the influx of thousands of American Sioux after the Custer massacre, posing a threat to the peace of the area and a delicate problem in international relations. The study, as well, examines the relations of the police with the railway construction crews and the white settler, again demonstrating its success in carrying out its duties. In only one aspect, that of enforcement of the prohibitory liquor laws, did it engender much dissatisfaction. The study examines further the experience in maintenance of the force in this period, and reveals that major problems affecting discipline and morale were encountered but did not seriously hamper the performance of its duties. While this thesis reaches the same general conclusions about the force, as the authors discussed above, it does so by a somewhat different route. It develops the proposition that the force was eminently successful not simply because of its courage
and tenacity in facing the challenge of the formidable fron-
tier—and that is a genuine theme—but also because, in carry-
ing out its duties, it also managed to triumph over financial
stringencies, poor recruiting methods, inadequate provisions
for training, conflict between responsible ministers of the
Crown and Commissioners, problems of morale and desertion,
unbecoming and immoral conduct on the part of some men, and
considerable public criticism of its activities. It is main-
tained that the North-West Mounted Police instituted a regime
of law and order which gained almost universal respect, and
imperted a character to the area which distinguished it from
the frontier society associated with the American West.

It is clear in reading the histories of the force to
date that the writers have accepted westward expansion as a
good thing. This thesis has not been the place to debate that
question. Given that fact, which was the fundamental condition
underlying the creation of the force, it is difficult not to
conclude that the North-West Mounted Police played a vital,
indeed, indispensable role in bringing peace to the Territories,
to the benefit of both the natives and the settlers, and to the
Dominion as a whole.

I wish to thank Dr. A.R. Allen, my thesis adviser, for
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CHAPTER I

THE ORIGIN OF THE NORTH-WEST MOUNTED POLICE

For two centuries, the Hudson's Bay Company ruled Canada's vast North-West, and through its agents had provided for the maintenance of law and order in the vicinity of its posts. But elsewhere, lawlessness was rampant; horse stealing, inter-tribal warfare, and frequent murders were the rule. The surrender by the company of its lands to the British government in 1869, which had been sought by an address from the Parliament of Canada in 1867, was followed by the formal transfer of the area to the Dominion on July 15, 1870.

The acquisition of Rupert's Land from which the new Province of Manitoba was soon carved out, meant the achievement of one of the chief aims of Confederation as embodied in the British North America Act, which had made provision for the admission of Rupert's Land and the North Western Territory into the Dominion should the opportunity arise. Now, with the subsequent creation in 1870, of the North-West Territories, the dream of a "Dominion from Sea to Sea" could become a reality. But before a trans-continental railway linking British Columbia to the eastern provinces could be built, and before the hoped-for settlement and development
could come, law and order would have to be imposed upon the "great domain."

Canada had been empowered, under the Rupert's Land Act of 1868, to enact such laws, following a transfer of the area in question, as might be necessary for the peace and good government thereof. With the transfer, the Dominion was faced with both an awesome task and a magnificent opportunity. However, the legal possession of the country did not mean its actual possession. For a time, a power vacuum existed. In a book entitled *Ocean to Ocean*, published in 1873, the Rev. George Grant refers to a conversation with Lawrence Clarke, the Hudson's Bay Company Factor at Fort Carlton, on the Saskatchewan, in which Clarke told Grant that "both traders and Indians were learning the dangerous lesson that the Queen's orders could be disregarded with impunity."¹ This situation would prevail until the government acted to assume the role abdicated by the Hudson's Bay Company.

In the same year that the company had ceded its interests to Great Britain, the Whoop-Up Trail, which led from Fort Benton, on the Missouri River in Montana Territory, to the forks of the St. Mary and Oldman Rivers in present-day Alberta was originated.² Over this route came the American

¹George M. Grant, *Ocean to Ocean* (London: S. Low, Marston, Low, and Searle, 1873), p. 132.

²On more recent maps, the Oldman River continues on from its junction with the St. Mary to join the Bow River in merging into the South Saskatchewan. The portion of the Old-man extending from the St. Mary to the Bow was shown on early maps as the Belly River. There is a Belly River shown on more recent maps, which is a tributary of the Oldman, some miles to the west of the confluence of the St. Mary and the Oldman.
wolfers and traders, bands of outlaws and desperadoes from Montana and adjoining United States Territories, who killed the buffalo for their hides and for use as poisoned bait for other fur-bearing animals, and who, from a chain of trading posts or "forts" immediately east of the Rockies on Canadian territory, such as Fort Hamilton (soon to bear the less dignified but more appropriate name, Fort Whoop-Up), Stand-Off, Slide-Out, Kipp, High River, and Sheep Creek, dispensed their poisonous "fire-water," arms and ammunition to the powerful and ferocious tribes of the Blackfoot confederacy; the Blackfoot, Bloods, and Piegans. Branching off from this trail, other traders came to the Cypress Hills to trade their whiskey, laced with strychnine, to the Assiniboine and the Cree. This trade had resulted in a highly-organized traffic which saw buffalo robes and other peltries leaving Canada for the United States, the demoralization of the Indians, and the provisioning of them with the arms and ammunition which made them the more dangerous.

To the north, the settlers about Fort Edmonton were imposed upon by the whiskey traders who were beginning to frequent that area, and by the Indians with whom the traders dealt. And they were disturbed also by the presence of a number of Métis in whom, it was feared, lingered the ideas which had led to the Red River Rebellion. To the east and north-east, in the districts of Fort Ellice, Wood Mountain, and the Qu'Appelle, roaming bands of Sioux, not long removed

1At the junction of the St. Mary and Oldman Rivers.
from the scene of the Minnesota Massacres made the few white settlers, Métis and other Indians uneasy. The necessity of a policing body was becoming increasingly evident. To determine the extent of this need, Lieutenant-Governor Adams George Archibald, resident at Fort Garry, despatched, on the recommendation of Donald Smith, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, Captain William Butler of the Canadian Militia on a two-fold mission in the autumn of 1870.

Butler's principal instructions were (1) to determine the extent, and origin of the small-pox scourge which then raged throughout the region, and (2) to report upon the existing state of affairs in the North-West, and make recommendations for the maintenance of peace and order. His book, The Great Lone Land, contains his recommendations. Butler reported a country without law, order or security, where robbery and murder had gone unpunished for years, where Indian massacres went unchecked, and civil and legal institutions were unknown. And he recommended: (a) the appointment of a Civil Magistrate or Commissioner, after the models existing in Ireland and India; (b) the organization of a well-equipped force of from 100 to 150 men, one-third to be mounted; (c) the establishment of government stations near Edmonton and Carlton; and (d) the extinguishment by treaty of Indian titles

2Ibid., p. 354.
3Ibid., p. 367.
to the land.  

However, in April, 1870, previous to Butler's expedition, Sir John A. Macdonald, in his role as Minister of Justice, had sent a report to the Committee of the Privy Council advising the desirability of taking immediate steps for the "organization of a Police Force for service in the North West Territory," to be "set in motion at the earliest moment on the opening of the season." The force envisaged in the report was to consist of a maximum of 200 men head-quartered at Fort Garry, under the command of Captain D. R. Cameron, R.A. Macdonald recommended the immediate enlistment of fifty men, fifteen of whom should be French Canadians, "able to read, write, and speak English and French"; men, Macdonald said, who "should be picked men, young, hardy, able-bodied, and unmarried, and good horsemen." The period of engagement was set at three years, "terminable at the option of the Government at the end of the first or second year, or at any time, for inability or bad behaviour at the discretion of the Officer commanding the Force." In addition to recommendations regarding pay, subsistence, clothing, accoutrements and equipment, Macdonald said that those enlisting should receive at the end of their service, if deserving, "a free allotment of land, upon such terms in respect to settlement as may be hereafter determined." Finally, Macdonald requested authority to direct Captain Cameron to immediately

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1Ibid., p. 381.

2P.C. 1335, April 6, 1870.
enlist fifty men, to make the necessary arrangements for their clothing and equipment, and to proceed to Fort Garry and engage the balance required to bring the strength of the force to 200 men, and he recommended that as soon as the Red River Country (the North-West Territory) became part of the Dominion, that Cameron be named a Commissioner of Police under the provisions of an Act respecting Police of Canada, which, passed in 1868, provided for the appointment of such an officer for the Dominion of Canada.¹

Macdonald's recommendations were approved forthwith by Order-in-Council, and Cameron was instructed to proceed with the organization of the force. Cameron was appointed a Commissioner of Police, and the force was to be ready for service on and from the first of May, 1870.² With the assistance of Sergeant A. H. Griesbach of "A" Battery, Kingston, Cameron undertook to make the necessary preparations. He reported his findings to the Deputy Minister of Justice under the heads of Examinations and Approval of Candidates; Arms and Accoutrements; Appointment of Officers; Medical Attendants and Supplies; Camp Equipment; Horses and Stable Gear; Authority for Enforcing Discipline and Acting in the North-West Territories; Clothing.³ Various items of stores and equipment

¹Canada, Parliament, Statutes of Canada, 31 Victoria, chapter 73.
²P.C. 1335, April 6, 1870.
were purchased, but the plan was eventually shelved, and set aside "for future use,"\(^1\) probably because of the intended mobilization and despatch of the Militia to the scene of the Red River Rebellion.

The idea of a policing body for the North-West had not originated with Macdonald. Indeed, as early as the Palliser Expedition it was evident to Lieutenant Thomas Blakiston, R.A. Blakiston, attached to the expedition as a magnetical observer stated that "for the maintenance of law and order, the suppression of the liquor traffic and the preservation of peace with and among the Indian tribes," it would be necessary, "to establish a military police, somewhat on the system of the Irish Constabulary."\(^2\)

Though the force contemplated by Macdonald in 1870 had not become a reality, he continued to view it as a necessity. "We must have," he wrote to Sir George Cartier in 1871, "a mounted police under a stipendiary magistrate, and officers of the Dominion, to keep things quiet on the border."\(^3\) A few weeks later, he wrote Cartier,

There must be organized ere long for the North West a mounted police. I quite agree with the views of Cyril Graham and the Hudson's Bay authorities on the matter. With emigrants of all nations flowing into that country

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\(^1\) Ibid.

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 18.

we are in a constant danger of an Indian war. . . . This may be prevented by an early organization of a mounted police.1

Meanwhile, others joined in the demand for the creation of such a force. A Mr. Burrows of Winnipeg travelling through the West, wrote of the people in the Edmonton area,

There is a wide-spread desire among all classes for some form of Government and administration backed by a small force of mounted police or military. For this small and so scattered community, I agree with Captain Butler that the commissioner form of Government and administration of law and justice combined, backed by a small force, on the East Indian plan, would be the best. Another question which agitates the people here is, how to meet the state of affairs on the frontier, where, on Belly River, fifty miles within our frontier, the American traders have a settlement, from whence, evading their own laws, they deluge the plains with smuggled goods much to the detriment of our traders; and worse than all demoralize the Indian by giving them liquor which they cannot obtain from this side.2

The people of the general area to which Burrows referred had already made their position known to Archibald, the recently appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba, with jurisdiction over the North-West. In an address of congratulation to Archibald, dated January 10, 1871, the inhabitants of Victoria and White Fish Lakes, including the whites, the English Half-breeds, and the Crees thanked Archibald for sending Butler on his mission, and said: "We live in a part of the country where there is no protection either for life or property. . . . until a suitable force is sent into the Saskatchewan. . . ."3 And the petitioners continued,

1Macdonald to Cartier, June 16, 1871, ibid., p. 930.
2Manitoban (Winnipeg), November 25, 1871, p. 1.
3Ibid., March 25, 1871, p. 1.
The proclamation prohibiting the importation and sale of ardent spirits is regarded by all parties as a boon, but there is no police to enforce the law. We would most earnestly request that your Excellency, at your earliest convenience, send a force into the country... We are deeply anxious that British authority should be established without a conflict of races.1

Signed by the Rev. G. McDougall, Richard Hardisty, the Hudson's Bay Factor at Victoria, Andrew Whitford and forty-nine others this petition was followed shortly by a similar petition by the inhabitants of White Fish Lake. Their petition stated in part: "We are the more glad to hear that your Excellency has issued a Proclamation that no 'fire-water' should be imported or sold in this country, would that there was power to sustain the law..."2

Others, such as the Rev. George Grant, helped bring the situation on the western plains to national attention. Grant, who, as Secretary, accompanied Sanford Fleming the Engineer-in-Chief of the Canadian Pacific and the Intercolonial Railways on his explorations in 1872, embodied his views, which had earlier appeared in the press, in his book entitled Ocean to Ocean. Expressing a concern similar to that of Butler, and many others, Grant wrote,

Making all allowances for the fears of those who see no protection for life or property within five hundred or a thousand miles of them... it is clear that if the government wish to avoid worrying, expensive, murderous difficulties with the Indians, "something must be done." There must be law and order all over our North-West from the first. Three or four companies of fifty men each,

1Ibid.

2Ibid.
like those now in Manitoba, would be sufficient for the purpose, if judicially stationed.\(^1\)

And Grant added, "Ten times the number may be required if there is long delay. The country cannot afford repetitions of the Manitoba rebellion, on account of the neglect of either half-breeds or Indians."\(^2\)

In the same year that Grant made the above observations the government despatched the Commanding Officer of the Canadian Militia, Colonel P. Robertson-Ross, to survey the situation. Robertson-Ross covered the country from Fort Garry to the Pacific Coast, visiting the Hudson's Bay Company posts at Swan River, Fort Ellice, Carlton, Pitt, Victoria, Edmonton, and Rocky Mountain House, along the way. While at Edmonton and Rocky Mountain House, Robertson-Ross learned of the establishment of a trading post named Fort Hamilton, said to be at the junction of the Bow and Belly Rivers,\(^3\) and he concluded that the danger to the white inhabitants through the demoralization of the Indians by the American traders situated there was very great. "It is," he said, "indispensable for the peace of the country and welfare of the Indians that this smuggling and illicit traffic in spirits and firearms be no longer permitted."\(^4\) To stop it, Robertson-Ross

\(^1\) Grant, op. cit., p. 133.

\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) See below, p. 56.

recommended the establishment of a Customs House, along with a military guard of about 150 soldiers in the area. It would, he said, put a stop to the liquor traffic and stop the horse stealing expeditions,

which is the real cause of all the danger in that part of the country and the source of constant war among the Indian tribes. Indeed, it may now be said with truth, that to put a stop to horse-stealing and the sale of spirits to Indians, is to put a stop altogether to Indian wars in the North-West.1

Robertson-Ross said that the Blackfoot Indians would gladly welcome any Dominion force sent to effect these purposes, and stated,

One regiment of Mounted Riflemen, 550 strong, including non-commissioned officers, divided into companies of fifty, would be a sufficient force to support Government in establishing law and order in the Saskatchewan, preserving the peace of the North West Territory, and affording protection to the Surveyors, Contractors, and Railway Labourers about to undertake the great work of constructing the Dominion Pacific Railway.2

This force, Robertson-Ross said, should be distributed by stationing at military posts, fifty Mounted Riflemen at Forts Ellice, Carlton, Pitt, and Victoria, 100 men at Fort Edmonton, and 150 men near the Porcupine Hills in southern Alberta.

Since the Indians were widely scattered, and traditionally hostile to one another, he argued,

it will be readily understood, that comparatively small bodies of well armed and disciplined men judiciously posted throughout the country, could easily maintain military supremacy. A body of fifty mounted riflemen, armed with breech-loading rifles, is a formidable power on the prairies.3

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1Ibid.
2Ibid., p. CXXV.
3Ibid., p. CXXIV.
The Indian problem was not the only one Robertson-Ross observed. In a comment that was to be prophetic, he noted:

It should be borne in mind too, that in addition to the Indian element, there is a half-breed population of about 2,000 souls in the Saskatchewan unaccustomed to the restraint of any Government, mainly depending as yet upon the chase for subsistence, and requiring to be controlled nearly as much as the Indian.¹

Robertson-Ross's report was well received, and the civil force having advantage of military discipline which Macdonald came to envision, can be traced to the recommendations of Butler and Robertson-Ross. On the nature of the force, Robertson-Ross observed that

in the event of serious disturbance a Police Force acting alone, and unsupported by a disciplined military body, would probably be overpowered in a Province of mixed races, where every man is armed, while to maintain a military without any Civil Force is not desirable.²

Prior to the publication of the reports of Grant and Robertson-Ross, Lieutenant-Governor Archibald had besieged the government with requests that a mounted force be sent as soon as possible. In November of 1871, Prime Minister Macdonald wrote Archibald, "I quite agree with you that a mounted constabulary would be worth much more than mere infantry. . . . This is, however, for the future, as we must get an appropriation from Parliament for this purpose."³ No action was taken by the government, however, and Archibald

¹Ibid., p. CXCV.
³Macdonald to Archibald, November 3, 1871, Macdonald Papers, PAC, transcripts in the Archives of Saskatchewan (hereafter cited as A03).
persisted. In January of 1872, Archibald wrote Macdonald: "As to the North West itself, you must count upon the necessity of making early preparations to send a force there."¹ Two months later Archibald, stressing the unsettled feeling of the Indians in the Saskatchewan Valley, wrote, "their increasing tendency to insubordination and insolence," and their "general feeling of uneasiness . . . contains the elements of much danger."² Besides the Indian threat, Archibald expressed a fear that the Métis in the Saskatchewan Valley and Edmonton districts may repeat the troubles which had sparked the Red River Rebellion. "You must," Archibald said, "raise a military force to control these elements."³ And Archibald expressed the belief that "with 150 mounted troops scattered over the line of the Saskatchewan there would be the means of enforcing order."⁴ This letter was soon followed by another letter⁵ with which Archibald enclosed a petition signed on behalf of the inhabitants of Victoria Wesleyan Mission by the Reverends John McDougall and Benjamin McKenzie. This petition, dated March 1, 1872, and addressed to W. I. Christie the Hudson's Bay Company Factor at Edmonton for transmission to Archibald, read in part,

¹Archibald to Macdonald, January 19, 1872, ibid.
²Archibald to the Secretary of State for the Provinces, March 22, 1872, Department of the Interior files, 1870-1883, file No. 5, PAC, microfilm copy, A03.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Archibald to the Secretary of State for the Provinces, April 30, 1872, file No. 6, ibid.
In the past year crimes of every kind perpetrated, our animals stolen, our fences burned, our fields plundered, and if we had revenged the wrongs inflicted a Civil War would have been the consequence. . . . The pressing want is protection.1

And in calling for the speedy completion of a Treaty, they added that "until this takes place the settler already in the country will be subject to risk of life and property,"2 and the future progress of the country retarded.

The new Lieutenant-Governor, Alexander Morris, appointed December 2, 1872, took up where Archibald left off. In a letter to the Hon. the Secretary of State for the Provinces in March of 1873, Morris transmitted a copy of a resolution passed by the first meeting of the recently appointed North-West Council. The Council resolved that in the opinion of Council, it is necessary that for the maintenance of peace and order in the North-West Territories, a sufficient force of military and police, the latter being under military discipline and either wholly or in part mounted, should without delay be stationed in the Territories.3

Prior to this communication Morris had warned Macdonald that little as Canada may like it she has to stable her elephant. In short the Dominion will have to maintain both a military and police force in years to come. . . . The presence of a force will prevent the possibility of such a frightful disaster as befell Minnesota and which without it, might be provoked at any moment.4

In another despatch Morris turned his attention to

1Ibid.
2Ibid.
3Morris to the Secretary of State for the Provinces, March 12, 1873, file No. 12, ibid.
4Morris to Macdonald, January 16, 1873, Macdonald Papers, PAC, transcripts in the A03.
the problem of settling the West. Signed by the Administrator of Government House, Fort Garry, the letter advised Macdonald:

I feel justified in saying that the presence of a military force in the North West is absolutely necessary. Not only shall we fail to attract Immigration to the North West, unless the due protection of Immigrants is thus insured, but settlers now residing on the frontiers of Manitoba, will through fear of Indian hostilities be induced to leave the Province.1

Inevitably the question of a police force for the North-West was raised on the floor of the House of Commons, March 31, 1873. Dr. John Schultz, M.P., in presenting a motion for copies of correspondence relating to the dissatisfaction prevailing among the Indians of Manitoba and the North-West, drew attention to the Imperial Proclamation of July 15, 1870, which had transferred 300,000 square miles to Canada, and pledged the Dominion to the care and protection of 68,000 Indians. Schultz warned the House that if the Indians became "convinced that they have been unfairly dealt with . . . that the feeling of injustice will produce the same results"2 as they had produced in the United States. Mr. Cunningham, M.P., for Marquette, attributed the discontent to the American whiskey traders, and he said that if Canada was to retain possession of the North-West she must establish garrisons throughout the Saskatchewan District to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Americans who "had a

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1McKeagney to Macdonald, May 1, 1873, Hon. Alexander Morris Papers (hereafter cited as Morris Papers), Public Archives of Manitoba.

Cunningham called on Schultz to deny that "the cause of the continued quietness of the North-West was owing to the good management of the Hudson Bay Company." In reply Schultz denied having charged the Company with causing dissatisfaction among the Indians, but he said that many Indians were disturbed because while the Company had received a large amount for their lands only $3 per annum had been allowed to the Indians in the treaty made in 1871. The call for a force was joined also by Donald Smith, M.P., and Chief Commissioner for the Hudson's Bay Company in Canada. There were few dissenting voices in Parliament or throughout the nation. One who did discount the value of a force was the Hon. Joseph Howe. Howe asked if the Hudson's Bay Company had not governed the country for years without the assistance of a single soldier, and said, "If Canada could not hold the North-West without garrisons scattered all over the country she could not hold it at all." Sir John A. Macdonald then told the House that he believed that for a considerable period the management of the Indians must be entrusted to that Company. It was out of the question that the Government could have a force sufficient to protect every wandering or stationary trader in that enormous territory. It was the duty of the Government to see that the frontier was protected, to see that there were no raids nor incursions or outrages by violent men from another country; and when settlement took place it would be their duty to see that a militia force was organized, and that law was maintained. . . . It was the intention of the Government,

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1 Ibid., p. 49.  
2 Ibid., p. 48.  
3 Ibid., p. 49.
however, during the present session, to ask the House for a moderate grant of money, to organize a mounted police force, somewhat similar to the Irish mounted constabulary. They would have the advantage of military discipline . . . and by being police would be a civil force, each member of which would be a police constable, and therefore a preventive officer. . . . The Dominion would keep up a mounted police force to protect the frontier, to look after the Customs and put down smuggling, and particularly the smuggling of ardent spirits. . . ."1

Finally, the government was moved to take concrete action. On May 3, 1873, the long-awaited step was taken, when Macdonald introduced a bill to provide for the organization of the force. On May 23, 1873, Royal Assent was given the bill, entitled "An Act respecting the Administration of Justice, and for the establishment of a Police Force in the North West Territories."2 In addition to authorizing the Governor-in-Council to appoint Stipendiary Magistrates having magisterial, judicial and other functions appertaining to any Justice of the Peace, or any two Justices of the Peace, under any laws or Ordinances which may from time to time be in force in the North-West Territories, the Act provided for the constitution of a police force in and for the North-West Territories under a Commissioner of Police, for the appointment of one or more superintendents, a paymaster, surgeon, and veterinary surgeon, and for the engagement of constables and sub-constables to a maximum of three hundred men. Those engaged were to be of "sound constitution, able to ride, active and able-bodied, of good character, and between the ages of eighteen and forty

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1Ibid., p. 50.
2Statutes of Canada, 36 Victoria, chapter 35.
years." All had to be able to read and write either English or French. The period of engagement was to be three years, the Commissioner and every Superintendent was to be ex officio a Justice of the Peace, and every constable and sub-constable was to be a constable in and for the whole of the Territories. The Act fixed the rates of pay; provided for free grants of land not exceeding one hundred and sixty acres to those satisfactorily completing their term of service; for the discipline of the force, for the performance of all duties relating to "the preservation of peace, the prevention of crime," and the apprehension and custodianship of criminals, offenders, and lunatics; and for the quartering, billeting, cantoning, and transportation of the force by non-government agencies, and for the imposition of fines if such services should be refused. The Act, of course, was not perfect, and some of its shortcomings, particularly the absence of any provision for imprisonment for desertion or other insubordination would soon become apparent.

Although the long-contemplated organization of the force had finally been authorized, the government did not take any concrete steps to this end until August of 1873. If a single event could be credited with hastening the actual mobilization of the force it would be the Cypress Hills Massacre, in which a number of Assiniboine Indians had been killed by American wolfers in the Cypress Hills in May of 1873. In a letter to the Minister of the Interior on August 26, 1873, Morris stated that in consequence of the
need for the enforcement of Criminal and Civil laws, the repression of the illicit liquor trade, the occupation of the West in the near future by railway operatives, and the expected influx of settlement into the Saskatchewan country, he desired to impress upon the government that, it would be "impossible to govern what is, in fact, almost the half of a Continent, without a considerable force, and ... the murder of Indians on our soil by American traders, confirm this view."^1 Before this despatch reached Ottawa, however, steps were then being taken to constitute the force in accordance with the founding Act.

An Order-in-Council on August 30, 1873, approved the following recommendations of Macdonald, as Minister of Justice, that a police force in and for the North-West Territories be constituted forthwith:

(1) The Force should consist of 300 men, exclusive of officers, and should be divided into six divisions of 50 men each; such Divisions to be lettered A to F consecutively.

(2) That a Commissioner of Police be appointed according to the Act who will command the whole Force, and have the honorary rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

(3) That a Superintendent of Police be appointed for each Division with the honorary rank of Captain and that they be styled in their Commissions, Superintendents and Inspectors.

(4) That there be appointed two Sub-Inspectors for each division under the Superintendent and Inspector who shall have honorary ranks as Lieutenants and be styled in their Commissions Superintendents and Sub-Inspectors.

^1Morris to the Minister of the Interior, August 26, 1873, Morris Papers.
(5) That a Paymaster be appointed who will also perform the duties of Quartermaster of the Force with honorary rank as Captain.

(6) That a Veterinary Surgeon be appointed with honorary rank as Lieutenant.

(7) That the non-commissioned officers be a Chief Constable to rank as Sergeant-Major, and for every ten men a constable to rank as Sergeant or Corporal as ordered by the Commissioner. A Constable should also be appointed to do duty as Paymaster and Quartermaster Sergeant.

(8) The remaining men of the force to be styled Sub-Constables; provided that should circumstances at any time require a larger number of constables, acting appointments shall be given to the most deserving and intelligent sub-constables, they being selected with the view to future promotion.

(9) That sufficient horses shall be at once provided to mount all the Commissioned officers, and at least one-half of the Force. The number of horses that experience will show are necessary for the force, to be regulated from time to time by Order in Council.

(10) That the Commissioned officers shall receive the annual salary or pay as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Commissioner of Police</td>
<td>$2,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Superintendents and Inspectors, each</td>
<td>$1,400.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Superintendents and Sub-Inspectors, each</td>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Paymaster acting as Quarter-Master</td>
<td>$1,400.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Veterinary Surgeon</td>
<td>500.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(11) Each Constable shall be paid one dollar a day, and each Sub-Constable, seventy-five cents a day, besides rations, barrack or other lodging accommodation and medical attendance free; and such clothing as may from time to time be fixed by Order in Council.

(12) It is not proposed to appoint a Surgeon for the present as the Force will probably be scattered in small parties over the North-West, one Surgeon at Headquarters would be of comparatively little use to the Force as a whole; and it is believed that it would be better to employ medical men in the vicinity of the different stations and recompense them for their services under the 27th Section of the Act.¹

¹P.C. 113⁴, August 30, 1873.
The Governor General of Canada, Lord Dufferin, took an active interest in the force. In a letter to the Colonial Secretary, the Rt. Hon. The Earl of Kimberley, on September 11, 1873, Dufferin advised Kimberley of the government's intention to organize the force. Dufferin expressed his enthusiasm at the move, and added,

I am the more desirous that the organization of the Police Force may be perfected without delay as I have received information that a massacre of Indians has been recently perpetrated in the North West Territories by a band of American desperadoes, and that up to the present time the murderers have not been brought to justice.1

Meanwhile, Morris was quickly running out of patience. He was obviously disturbed by communications from Ottawa such as that by Sir Alexander Campbell, Minister of the Interior, dated August 14, 1873, in which Campbell wrote:

A despatch goes to you today to say that the Government have not considered the circumstances at Fort "Whoop Up" sufficiently grave to call for the sending of a force there. I had recommended that a sufficient force, say 150 men—should be sent from Fort Garry. My recommendation was based more upon my appreciation of the impression that such an expedition would exercise upon the minds of the Black Feet than even upon the necessity of removing the band of desperadoes who are doing so much to demoralize the Indians according to the reports you send me.2

Exasperated, Morris telegraphed Macdonald on September 20, "What have you done as to Police force their absence may lead to grave disaster."3 On the receipt of this telegram Macdonald wrote Lord Dufferin,

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1Dufferin to Kimberley, September 21, 1873, Colonial Office Records, Vol. 720, Despatch No. 9991, p. 37, microfilm copy, PAC.
2Campbell to Morris, August 14, 1873, Morris Papers.
Morris is getting very uneasy about matters in the North West. The massacre of the Indians by the Americans has greatly excited the red men there. Added to other troubles the arrest of Lepine and the consequent flight of Riel from the country has rearoused the fanaticism of the French Canadian Half-breeds and Morris fears all kinds of trouble. He is so pressing about the necessity of having the Mounted Police there, that although we intended to concentrate them at Toronto and Kingston for the winter and give them a thorough drilling before going West, we find it necessary that the Force should be sent up before the close of navigation. It would not be well for us to take the responsibility of slighting Morris’s repeated and urgent entreaties. If anything went wrong the blame would lie at our door. I shall hurry the men off at once. No time is to be lost. The Dawson route is not open after the middle of October.1

On the same day as Macdonald wrote the above, Campbell advised Morris that "the organization of the Police Force is in progress. I wish it was going on more rapidly but our Chief is not, you know, very expeditious in such matters and he has it in charge. I hope and believe that he will have a force of one hundred-and-fifty men on duty this winter."2 Exactly two weeks later, Campbell notified Morris that the force was "being rapidly put together," and that one hundred and fifty men would be in Fort Garry "before the season closes."3

The government had responded to the various reports and petitions calling for a police force. The passage of the Act had provided the machinery for the recruitment and mobilization of a force to bring law and order to the "great domain." In the ensuing ten months much would be accomplished. In two

1Macdonald to Dufferin, September 24, 1873, ibid., Vol. 20, Part 3, pp. 711-12.
2Alexander Campbell to Morris, September 24, 1873, Morris Papers.
3Campbell to Morris, October 8, 1873, ibid.
stages, the authorized strength of three hundred men would be mobilized at Fort Garry, the organization, equipment, and distribution of the force would be proceeded with, and the long-awaited expedition to the North-West Territories would be underway.
The mobilization of the North-West Mounted Police and their initial establishment in the North-West Territories was accomplished in little over a year. The first appointments in September, 1873, were followed by widespread recruiting in eastern Canada. Recruits were despatched in stages to Manitoba, where, by June, 1874, the force was assembled at its authorized strength, equipped, and given basic training. On July 8, a few weeks after the hoped-for date of departure, the force began a four month trek into the region it was to police. Late fall saw it established in winter quarters and coming to grips with its first policing duties.

The first appointments to the North-West Mounted Police were made on September 25, 1873, when Lieutenant Colonel W. Osborne Smith, District Deputy Adjutant-General of Militia of Manitoba, was named temporary Commissioner, with instructions from the Minister of Justice which confined his duties to the initial organization, and not to the deployment of the force. By the same Order appointing Smith, the

1 P.C. 1230, September 25, 1873.

2 Smith to W. T. Urquhart, Secretary of the North-West Council, December 11, 1873, Royal Canadian Mounted Police Records (hereafter cited as R.C.M.P. Records), Comptroller's Office, file No. 235-74, PAC.
following appointments were authorized:

To be Superintendents and Inspectors with the honorary rank of Captain: William Drummer Jarvis, Charles F. Young, James Farquharson Macleod, William Linder, Jacob Carvell.

To be Superintendents and Sub-Inspectors with honorary rank of Lieutenant: James Morrow Walsh, and Ephrem A. Brisebois.

To be Paymaster and Quarter Master with honorary rank of Captain: Edmund Dalrymple Clark.1

Smith was destined to carry out the duties of Commissioner at Fort Garry until December 16, 1873,2 although Lieutenant Colonel George Arthur French, a Captain in the Royal Artillery, and late Inspector of Artillery and Warlike Stores in Canada, had been appointed Commissioner on October 22, 1873.3 A few days previous to French's swearing-in, Smith advised Ottawa,

I am very pleased to hear French is at hand. I shall not be at all sorry to be relieved of the Police work. Although I must say that the conduct of officers and men has been all one could wish and that the organization is now pretty well complete.4

Following the appointments made on September 25, the recruitment of men for the force was hurriedly carried out. Superintendent-and-Inspector Charles F. Young, and Superintendent-and-Sub-Inspector E. A. Brisebois recruited in

1 P.C. 1230, September 25, 1873.

2 French to the Minister of Justice, January 7, 1874, R.C.M.P. Records, Comptroller's Office, file No. 7-74.

3 P.C. 1397, October 22, 1873.

the Maritimes.\(^1\) James Morrow Walsh, Sergeant-Major Arthur Henry Griesbach,\(^2\) and Superintendent-and-Inspector James Macleod recruited in Ontario,\(^3\) while in Quebec men were engaged by Superintendent-and-Inspector William Winder.\(^4\) In all a total of 162 officers and men assembled at the port of Collingwood on Lake Huron in the early days of October, in preparation for their departure via the water and wagon road called the Dawson Route, which led from Port Arthur to Fort Garry.\(^5\) Macdonald had advised Lord Dufferin that the Dawson Route would be frozen over by the middle of October,\(^6\) but the men shipped out in three contingents beginning the fourth of that month. The first contingent embarked that day for Port Arthur consisting of forty men under Sub-Inspector J. M. Walsh.\(^7\) On October 8, the second contingent of sixty-two men, and three officers, Captains William Winder, and Jacob Carvell, and Lieutenant E. Brisebois, made their departure;\(^8\) the third group of fifty-three men under Captains Young, Macleod, and J. Breden shipped out on the evening of

\(^1\)Young to French, and Brisebois to French, January 28, 1874, R.C.M.P. Records, Comptroller's Office, file No. 8-74.

\(^2\)Turner, op. cit., p. 95.

\(^3\)Ibid., pp. 95-96.

\(^4\)Ibid., p. 95.

\(^5\)Manitoban, November 1, 1873, p. 3.


\(^7\)Manitoban, loc. cit.

\(^8\)Ibid.
the tenth. Following their arrival at Port Arthur, the men set out on an arduous journey across rivers and lakes connected by numerous portages. An overland march of 110 miles through blizzards and sub-zero temperatures finally brought the men to Lower Fort Garry. The first detachment under Walsh reached the Red River on October 21, and reached the Stone Fort on the following day; the last, under the command of Superintendent Young arrived on October 31.

On November 3, Commissioner Smith swore in the new arrivals by administering the following enlistment oath:

We, whose names are herewith subscribed, declare that we have taken the oath of allegiance to the Sovereign, and we do hereby severally, voluntarily, agree to and with the Commissioner of Police, to serve in the Mounted Police Force established for service in the North-West Territories, under the provision of the Act of the Parliament of Canada, 36 Victoria, Chapter 35; that such service shall be for three years, and that we will not leave the Force, or withdraw from our duties unless dismissed or discharged therefrom, nor, after the expiration of the said three years, until we shall have given six months' notice in writing to the Commissioner. That during such service we will, well and faithfully, diligently, and impartially, execute and perform such duties as may from time to time be allotted to us, and submit to such penalties as may at any time be imposed on by law, and will well and truly obey and perform all lawful orders and instructions given to, or imposed on us; that we will take care of and protect all articles of public property which shall from time to time be entrusted to us, and make good all deficiencies, and damages occuring to such property, while in our possession or care, except through fair wear and tear, or unavoidable accident.

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1Ibid.
2Ibid., October 25, 1873, p. 3.
4George Bartley, "Fiftieth Anniversary of the N.W.M.P.,” Scarlet and Gold, 1923, p. 27.
The first man to sign the roll was Regimental Sergeant-Major Arthur Henry Griesbach, who, in 1870, had assisted Captain Cameron in making the preparations for the force then envisaged by Sir John Macdonald. Griesbach’s signature was followed by those of Samuel Benfield Steele and Percy R. Neale.¹

A few days after administering the oath, Smith issued a General Order which directed that the force at hand be divided into three Troops, to be known respectively as "A," "B," and "C" Troops. Officers were posted as follows: Captain William D. Jarvis, the Senior Superintendent and Inspector, as Officer Commanding; Superintendent and Sub-Inspector J. M. Walsh as Adjutant; Superintendent and Inspector Captain Charles F. Young and Superintendent and Sub-Inspector J. Breden assigned to "A" Troop; Superintendent and Inspector J. F. Macleod, and Superintendent and Sub-Inspector Brisebois to "B" Troop; and Superintendents and Inspectors William Winder and Jacob Carvell, and Superintendent and Sub-Inspector A. Shurtliff to "C" Troop. Constable A. H. Griesbach was appointed Chief Constable and Sergeant-Major, fifteen Sub-Constables were appointed to act probationary as Constables, and the remainder of the men were posted to the various troops. In all, 151 men were affected by this order.²

Prior to, and in the first weeks after their arrival,

¹Ibid.
²General Order, November 12, 1873, R.C.M.P. Records, Commissioner's Office.
Smith was occupied in obtaining supplies for the men and arranging for the billeting of a number of the force by the Militia. He had already arranged for the purchase of a number of horses, rations, and forage from the Hudson's Bay Company, the Militia, and individual entrepreneurs, and he was making every effort possible to bring in the uniforms and stores frozen in on the Dawson Route. Smith ordered that drills should not be commenced until the men were settled, but established a temporary daily routine. Shortly he was able to advise Ottawa that he had completed the organization by making Senior Superintendent W. D. Jarvis responsible for the discipline and duties of the force, Sub-Inspector Walsh, Adjutant and responsible for the stables and the riding school, Constable Griesbach, Chief Constable and Sergeant Major, and Captain E. D. Clark, the nephew of Sir John A. Macdonald, Paymaster and Quartermaster.

While Smith was occupied in making the preliminary arrangements for the force stationed at the Lower Fort, which had been rented from the Hudson's Bay Company, French was attending to various matters in Ottawa. Smith wrote of French: "I think from what little I know of him, you have

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2 Memorandum to officers, October 25, 1873, ibid., p. 29.
3 Smith to the Deputy Minister of Justice, n.d., ibid., p. 69.
5 P.C. 373, April 22, 1876.
got a good man in French, not afraid of work, and fond of his profession."¹

In a memorandum dated November 14, French made the following observations on portions of the originating Act:

The Force although available for ordinary Police duties would appear to be organized, under the Act, somewhat like a Regiment of Cavalry or Mounted Riflemen:— Thus the Commissioner represents the Lt. Colonel; the Superintendents or Inspectors — the Captains; the Sub-Inspectors the Lieutenants; the Constables — the Sergeants and Corporals; the Sub-Constables — the Privates. Similarly the six Divisions of 50 men each represent Companies or Troops of equal strength. The staff connected with the Force are not alone similar, but actually bear the same titles as in a Regiment — viz.:
   The Paymaster
   The Quarter Master
   The Surgeon
   The Veterinary Surgeon.²

French, however, was critical of the lack of provision for a Major or an adjutant, and he recommended the appointment of an Assistant Commissioner to (1) take the Commissioner's place in his absence, and (2) to take command of a very important post, or of an Expeditionary Force of two or more Divisions.³ This recommendation was carried out a few months later, and the duties envisioned by French capably performed in the person of James Farquharson Macleod, C.M.G.,⁴ whom French had specifically recommended for the position.⁵

¹Smith to Richardson, Department of Justice, October 22, 1873, R.C.M.P. Records, Smith letter-book, p. 16.
²Memorandum, French to the Deputy Minister of Justice, November 14, 1873, R.C.M.P. Records, Comptroller's Office, file No. 6-74.
³Ibid.
⁴P.C. 628, May 28, 1874.
⁵French to the Minister of Justice, May 15, 1874, R.C.M.P. Records, Comptroller's Office, file No. 57-74.
In the same memorandum French was critical of the provision by which both Inspectors and Sub-Inspectors were styled Superintendents, and he recommended that the latter title should apply only to the Inspectors. French objected also to the dual office of Paymaster and Quarter Master, which he said was too onerous for one man to undertake, and complained of the "inadequacy" of the salary provided for a veterinary surgeon.¹

Shortly after the change in command on December 16, General Orders issued by J. M. Walsh as Acting Adjutant provided for Riding Instruction and other drills, and for the daily routine. As had been the practise to that date, officers and constables were to ride daily and sub-constables twice weekly, the length of each ride being set at an hour.² Afternoon parades were to be held for foot drill, and the daily routine, to be supervised by the Orderly Officer of the day, provided for:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6:30 A.M.</td>
<td>Reveille</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00-8:00 A.M.</td>
<td>Stables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:15 A.M.</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:45 A.M.</td>
<td>Guard Mounting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 A.M.</td>
<td>Parade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 A.M.</td>
<td>Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30-12:30 P.M.</td>
<td>Stables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 P.M.</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00 P.M.</td>
<td>Parade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30 P.M.</td>
<td>Tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:45-5:30 P.M.</td>
<td>Stables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:45 P.M.</td>
<td>Retreat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30 P.M.</td>
<td>Piquet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30 P.M.</td>
<td>First Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 P.M.</td>
<td>Last Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15 P.M.</td>
<td>Lights Out</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹French to the Minister of Justice, November 14, 1873, ibid., file No. 6-74.
²General Order No. 1, December 3, 1873, R.C.M.P. Records, Commissioner's Office.
³General Order No. 2, January 5, 1874, ibid.
In the next few weeks; other General Orders named Walsh as acting Veterinary Surgeon and Riding Master,\(^1\) and Macleod the Musketry Instructor responsible for target practice of the corps.\(^2\)

In the months following his arrival, French, whose request that his service with the force should be counted as military service had been approved,\(^3\) spent his time acquainting himself with the existing situation in the North-West, and determining the most suitable means of transport, the best trails to the West, and the stores, provisions, and equipment required for the successful prosecution of the expedition planned for the summer of 1874.\(^4\)

While French was thus occupied, Morris and others continued to press upon the government the seriousness of the situation prevailing in the Territories, and to urge the earliest departure possible of the force. In a letter to

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\(^1\)General Order No. 2, February 4, 1874, ibid.

\(^2\)General Order No. 5, March 3, 1874, ibid.

\(^3\)Kimberley to Dufferin, February 12, 1874, Records of the Governor General's Office, despatches from the Colonial Office, Despatch No. 395, PAC.

\(^4\)"Annual Report of the North-West Mounted Police," 1874, pp. 5-6. In the period 1874-1883, some of the annual reports of the North-West Mounted Police were not printed in the Sessional Papers of Canada. The reports for this period are available as follows: 1874, and 1875, typescript, R.C.M.P. Records, PAC; 1876, Sessional Papers, 1877, No. 9, pp. 21-25; 1877 and 1878, printed, but not bound in Sessional Papers, R.C.M.P. Records, PAC; 1879 to 1883, in Sessional Papers. For convenience the reports will be cited simply as "Annual Report of the N.W.M.P." If included in Sessional Papers, the year and number of the Sessional Papers will be provided.
Lord Dufferin, in December, 1873, Sir Edward Thornton, British Ambassador to Washington, transmitted copies of letters from Hamilton Fish, Secretary of State of the United States, and of C. Delano, Secretary of that country's Department of the Interior, in which the co-operation of Her Majesty's authorities was sought to secure the suppression of the liquor traffic among the Indians. In his letter to Fish Delano made reference to Inspector J. W. Daniels of the United States' Department of Indian Affairs, who had advised Delano that "so long as it is a legitimate business in the British possessions, it is impossible to prevent Indians being supplied. . . ."1 Morris continued to urge the necessity of prompt action as soon as possible in the spring of 1874, "for the real enforcement of law, in the North West."2 "I do not believe," Morris continued,

the Privy Council have yet fully realized the magnitude of the task that lies before them in the creation of the institution of civilization . . . in the suppression of crime . . . and in the maintenance of peaceful relations with the fierce tribes . . . beyond Manitoba.3

Morris urged an increase in the strength of the force, the making of treaties with the Indians inhabiting the area between Fort Ellice, and the forks of the Saskatchewan River, the apprehension and punishment of the perpetrators of the

1Delano to Fish, November 29, 1873, Records of the Governor General's Office, despatches from the British Minister at Washington, Despatch No. 43, P.A.J.

2Morris to the Minister of the Interior, December 4, 1873, Morris Papers.

3Ibid.
Cypress Hills Massacre, the suppression of the liquor traffic; and the "general enforcement of law and order in the Territories."¹ Morris also urged that the Imperial Government be asked to provide a regiment for service in the North-West. "The circumstances," he said, "are exceptional, and the presence of a British Regiment might prevent possible International complications of a grave character."²

A series of resolutions passed by the North-West Council on March 16, 1874, reflected Morris' concern. The Council recommended:

1. That the murderers of "unoffending" Indians at Cypress Hills be arrested if in Canadian Territory, or extradited from the United States,
2. That a sufficient force be despatched to collect Customs duties, and to repress the liquor trade in the Bow and Belly Rivers districts,
3. That the Privy Council request the maintenance of a British regiment in the Territories,
4. That the police force be placed under more rigid discipline than could be secured by the mere impositions of fines and dismissal, and
5. That a messenger should precede the force to explain its purposes to the inhabitants of the Territories.³

The need for an increase of the force to the authorized strength of three hundred men had soon become apparent to Commissioner French. In February, 1874, French had gone to Ottawa to obtain permission for such an increase, and was

¹Ibid.
²Ibid.
³Extracts from the Minutes of the North-West Council, March 16, 1874, Interior files, file No. 5, PAC, microfilm copy, AOS.
agreeably surprised to find the government had already reached the same conclusion.\(^1\) On March 14, 1874, the government authorized the recruitment of 150 additional Constables and Sub-Constables, the appointment of a surgeon and veterinary surgeon, and the purchase of the additional horses, arms and ammunition, oxen, Red River carts, medical and veterinary stores, and other equipment necessary for the march west, along with agricultural implements for the use of the force at the various posts to be established in the North-West.\(^2\) Recruiting of the additional men was soon under way, and they were brought together at the New Fort, Toronto, and distributed among three new Divisions. Training of the new recruits was undertaken, and preparations for their despatch to the West begun.\(^3\) By May 11, the government was able to state that the collection of materials sufficient to sustain the force for one year had been completed.\(^4\) On the same day, the Minister of Justice submitted for the Privy Council's approval, a plan to concentrate the force at Dufferin, and to send it westward along the boundary line to the end of survey, from thence in a north-westerly direction to the valley of Milk River, and from there to the junction of the Bow and Belly Rivers where the liquor traders were said to be concentrated. The plan called for the Commissioner to establish a post at

\(^2\)P.C. 237, March 14, 1874.
\(^4\)P.C. 604, May 28, 1874.
this junction and to leave there an officer with at least two divisions, with the necessary supplies to see them through the winter, and the necessary equipment for raising produce in the ensuing season. From this point, the force was to head northwards to Fort Edmonton where another Division was to be stationed, and from thence return eastward to winter at Fort Ellice. The plan also authorized French to engage interpreters and scouts for the expedition. These plans were approved.¹

The experience of 1873 persuaded the government to abandon the Dawson Route for the transport of the additional men to the West, and permission was sought from the American government for their transportation through United States territory via Port Huron, Chicago, St. Paul, Fargo, and Pembina. The approval, requested by Sir Edward Thornton, the British Ambassador at Washington was obtained for the transport of men, horses, two field guns, two mortars, carbines and other arms, ammunition, and various other equipment.² On June 6, the force at the New Fort, consisting of sixteen officers, 201 men, and 244 horses, left Toronto on two special trains. At Sarnia, nine cars containing wagons and agricultural implements were added, and at Detroit two more cars containing thirty-four horses were attached to the trains. The force arrived at Fargo on the morning of the twelfth. No

¹Ibid.

²Hamilton Fish, Secretary of the United States to Thornton, May 21, 1874; R.C.M.P. Records, Comptroller's Office, file No. 230-74.
time was lost in preparing for the march overland to Dufferin, the headquarters of Her Majesty's Boundary Commission. On the fourteenth the force pulled out to a camp near Fargo, and on the fifteenth began the march to Dufferin, which it reached on the nineteenth of June.¹ On their arrival at Dufferin, the new recruits were welcomed by "A," "B," and "C" Divisions, which under Assistant Commissioner Macleod had departed Lower Fort Garry on June 7.² French was much relieved to reach Canadian soil, and in commenting on the journey from Toronto wrote, "the conduct of the men had been most exemplary, their general appearance and conduct invariably attracting the favorable notice of the railway officials and others en route."³

French's sense of pride in his force was not ill-placed. In its initial recruiting, and throughout the following decade the North-West Mounted Police was able to secure personnel of reasonably high calibre, and indeed, some men of outstanding ability. Smith in charge of the first group of recruits, gave considerable thought to the make-up of the first three divisions. Smith advised the government that he had been careful "to mix as much as possible in these troops men of all religious denominations and from those of the French speaking men who were unable to understand English at

²Ibid., p. 8.
³Ibid., p. 7.
present, and he expressed his satisfaction that, in view of the large proportion of French speaking people in the Northwest, there had been a good quota of French Canadians engaged from the Province of Quebec. Care had been taken also, Smith said, to distribute the various trades and callings among the different troops.

Efforts were made to recruit from all of the provinces suitable men, of mature age, abstainers, particularly those who had a rural background. Macleod, a later Commissioner, preferred men who were abstainers, and who through farming experience had learned to handle a horse and endure fatigue, qualities also stressed by Major General Smyth, who in the summer of 1875, undertook a tour of inquiry into the force, and wrote,

I consider that men should be recruited from the rural districts, a few only for clerks, etc., to be taken from towns. The decayed gentleman is a failure. They should be active young men, sons of farmers accustomed to face all kinds of weather and rough work as well as to the use of horses, this element is badly wanted in the force.

The men engaged for service in the force came from a variety of backgrounds. Many of them, particularly those

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
recruited in 1873 and 1874, had had previous military or police experience. Indeed, on the eve of their departure from Dufferin to the West, forty-one had seen service in her Majesty's Regular Service, fourteen had served in the Royal Irish Constabulary, thirty-two in the Canadian Artillery and eighty-seven in the Canadian Militia.¹ Of the first three hundred men engaged, it is known that 167 were Canadians, forty-three hailed from Great Britain, twenty from Ireland, one from the Channel Islands, one from Jamaica, seven from the United States, four from France, one from Germany, and one from Bohemia.²

Understandably, the vast majority of Canadian recruits came from eastern Canada. Of the first 168 men to reach Fort Garry, thirty-five hailed from New Brunswick, twenty-six from Nova Scotia, seventy from Ontario, and thirty-seven from Quebec.³ A partial roll of men for one division, 1873-1880, revealed a continuing predominance of eastern Canadians, showing their origins as follows: Ontario 51; Quebec 30; Nova Scotia 5; New Brunswick 3; England 8; Scotland 5; Ireland 5; Italy 1; United States 4; Shetland Islands 1; New Britain 1. The remaining two in this group gave their previous homes as Battleford and Fort Macleod.⁴ These figures may suggest a

³Manitoban, November 1, 1873, p. 3.
significant decline in the Maritime proportion in the force as a whole during this period. This would be further borne out by the fact that in 1881, Lieutenant Colonel Herchmer engaged an extraordinarily large number of recruits in the Maritime Provinces, namely ninety-four, as compared to sixty-nine from Ontario, and seventeen from Quebec.¹

Occupationally and religiously, the force was also remarkably diverse. There was a large number of clerks, along with telegraph operators, soldiers, professors, gardeners, students, lumbermen, surveyors, shoemakers, blacksmiths, painters, sawyers, tinsmiths, travellers, farmers, a dentist, a bartender, and even a sailor.² In the initial years, the religious affiliation of the men appeared to be heavily weighted in favor of the Church of England. A table of religious denominations at Swan River Barracks, as of August 30, 1875, showed Church of England adherents as 110, 29 Roman Catholics, 25 Presbyterians, two Methodists, and three "others."³ In 1883, of twenty men at Fort Walsh, eighteen belonged to the Church of England, one was a Roman Catholic, and one a Presbyterian.⁴ However, a "Descriptive Roll of Men of 'B' Division, Qu'Appelle, 1880" indicated that

while the occupational backgrounds of the men remained similar to those first engaged, there was a considerably different emphasis in their religious affiliations. Of the forty-six men listed, eleven had had previous military experience, two had been policemen, and seven clerks, while the others had been carpenters, machinists, farmers, painters, plumbers, blacksmiths, stone-cutters, saddlers, carriage makers, moulders, and brewers. Their average age was 24.5 years. Their religious affiliations cited as Church of England 14, Roman Catholics 12, Presbyterians 9, Protestants 6, Methodists 4, and Baptists 1, reflected more adequately the major religious groupings of the nation.

Many of the men had very interesting connections. For example, Sergeant-Major Francis was a veteran of the Crimea; Cecil Denny was a nephew of Sir Stafford Northcote, a prominent figure in the Conservative party of Great Britain during the Disraeli era; Francis Jeffrey Dickens was a son of the famous novelist, and an ex-District Superintendent of the Bengal Police; E. Dalrymple Clark, the nephew of Sir John A. Macdonald's wife, had first come west as private secretary

1Ibid., RG1838c, Vol. 7.
2Ibid.
5P.C. 1291, November 4, 1874.
to Lieutenant-Governor Morris;\textsuperscript{1} Crofton had been a Brigade Major in the Confederate Army;\textsuperscript{2} another was the son of a French General.\textsuperscript{3} In addition to Commissioner French, and his successors, Macleod and Irvine, officers such as Jarvis, Herchmer, Walsh, Crozier, Walker, Winder, Shurtliff, Gagnon, Cotton, Antrobus, and others had held the rank of Captain or above in the Canadian Militia.\textsuperscript{4} Throughout the first decade, appointments were made of men who had military backgrounds, or training at the Military College at Kingston.

While the members of the force were subjected to considerable adverse criticism over the years, it was often said that on the whole they were a superior class of men. When the first group arrived in Winnipeg in 1873 the \textit{Manitoban} viewed them as "a fine body of men."\textsuperscript{5} A St. Paul newspaper wrote of those who passed through that city in the spring of 1874: "All the men are fine appearing, and it is undeniable that they are as a whole a much more intellectual, gentlemanly, and respectable appearing body of men than the private soldiers of the United States army."\textsuperscript{6} Six years later, they were described as.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Manitoban}, June 20, 1874, p. 1.
  \item Ibid.
  \item \textit{Saskatchewan Herald} (Battleford), October 10, 1880, p. 1.
  \item \textit{Manitoban}, November 1, 1873, p. 3.
  \item Ibid., June 20, 1874, p. 4, reprinted from \textit{St. Paul Press}, June 10, 1874.
\end{itemize}
a different class than those who form the largest part of a regular army, they are as a rule young men of a very good class. It would be hard to find in any regular army a regiment of equal intelligence, or so handsome men. Their character is exemplified in the barrack rooms, where one will hear at all times, intelligent and gentlemanly conversation taking the place of the low, boisterous language usually heard in such places. Their good judgment, enables them to understand why an order should be obeyed, and to appreciate the efforts of officers . . . , when a man disgraces himself he also does his troop, and his life is made miserable for a few days by his comrades.1

Thus it appears that the average man had received a reasonably good education for the times, although none of the acts in the period specified a particular level of education and none of the records of the force bear on the point.

While the force later experienced some difficulty in retaining personnel due to desertions, illness, and retirements, there was usually a surplus of applications. In 1874, it was said there were thirty-five applicants for each position.2 According to Prime Minister Macdonald there were upwards of 800 applications for the vacancies existing in the spring of 1879,3 a claim supported by Commissioner Macleod who a few weeks earlier had said that over 700 had already indicated a desire to join the force.4 He could, therefore, well say that he could "afford to be somewhat critical in his selection of

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1Globe, April 17, 1880, p. 6.
2Manitoban, June 22, 1874, p. 4, reprinted from St. Paul Press, June 10, 1874.
recruits" and thus expected "to take back with him a troop as nearly faultless in every way as can possibly be obtained."  

While French was taking stock of his force now assembled at Dufferin, and preparing the men for departure to the Territories, the government was in the midst of the complex arrangements necessary to facilitate the passage of the force through the plains. Approval in the form of an Order-in-Council had been obtained by the Minister of Justice to send agents of the Hudson's Bay Company at Forts Edmonton and Ellice to the Blackfoot and other tribes with presents for distribution to the Indians, and to explain the object of the government in sending out the force. The North-West Council had recommended that this be done, and although the plan set out in the Order-in-Council was not carried out, a mission for a similar purpose was despatched. Only the composition of the mission was changed, and the Rev. John McDougall, a Wesleyan Missionary in the heart of the Blackfoot country was instructed by Lieutenant-Governor Morris as follows:

I hereby authorize and request you to proceed on a mission to the Blackfeet and other tribes of the Indians with a view of explaining to them the reasons which induced the Queen to send a body of policemen to the North-West Territories and to send also a portion of her troops with a party of American soldiers to mark out the line between the Territories and those of the United States. In your intercourse with the Indians, you will be good enough to state that the Queen is sending a force of Mounted Police

1Ibid.

2P.C. 602, May 28, 1874.

3Extracts from the Minutes of the North-West Council, March 16, 1874, Department of the Interior files, 1870-1883, file No. 5, PAC, microfilm copy, A03.
into her territories in the North-West for the preservation of law and order and the prevention of aggression on the part of lawless American traders against Indian subjects, and for the suppression of intoxicating liquor among the Indian tribes. You will therefore ask the Indians to give the Force their good will as coming from Her Majesty the Queen, and as being designed to promote their happiness amongst her people in the North-West. I would particularly observe that the cooperation of the Indians is not sought in any action which the Police Force may find it necessary to take, nor are they asked to act as allies for any military purpose. The Force is sent for the purpose of expressing the good will of the Queen and her care for her Indian subjects, and they are asked, therefore, to regard the Force with a friendly eye. . . . Soliciting your good offices in this matter; I have requested the Commissioner of the Hudson's Bay Company to place at your disposal presents to the value of $1,500 to distribute among the Indians how you may.1

Subsequently, in compliance with the request of the Hon. A. A. Dorion, Minister of Justice, similar arrangements were made with the Hudson's Bay Company officials at Fort Qu'Appelle and Fort Edmonton to distribute an additional $1,000 worth of presents among the Indians in the vicinity of their posts.2

The government also turned its attention to providing rules and regulations for the guidance of the force, and instructions to Commissioner French,3 whose salary it raised to the maximum of $2,600.4 The Minister of Justice, the Hon. A. A. Dorion was in frequent communication with French prior to the departure of the force. In a letter dated June 1, Dorion instructed French to keep a daily journal of the expedition; to record the features of the country such as the

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1 Turner, op. cit., pp. 115-16.
2 Ibid., p. 116.
3 P.C. 694, June 3, 1874.
4 P.C. 691, June 3, 1874.
climate, soil, the availability of water, wood, birds, fish, coal and minerals; to report any cases in which he or his officers had exercised magisterial authority; to establish good relations with United States authorities should the opportunity arise, to avoid any trespass on United States territory; "to be kind and friendly but firm" with the Indians with whom he may come in contact, to explain the force's mission to them, and to avoid them attaching themselves to the expedition. An Order-in-Council of June 3, defined the duties of the Commissioner, surgeon, veterinary surgeon, paymaster and quartermaster, and on June 23, French was issued additional instructions, which required him to enforce: (1) The criminal laws of Canada, made applicable by 36 Victoria, chapter 34 to the North-West Territories; (2) the customs duties, and the laws prohibiting the importation of liquor into the Territories, made applicable by 37 Victoria, chapter 7; and (3) to seek the apprehension of the perpetrators of the Cypress Hills Massacre, under the Indictable Offences Act of Canada.

Meanwhile the government sought arrangements for the quartering of portions of the force and for additional supplies. It requested the Militia Department to provide barracks and other accommodation for the force at Kingston and Toronto,

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1 Dorigan to French, June 1, 1874, Colonial Office Records, Vol. 728, pp. 315-23, PAC.
2 P.C. 694, June 3, 1874.
3 Bernard to French, June 23, 1874, Colonial Office Records, Vol. 728, Despatch No. 8742, pp. 369-74, PAC.
and to provide as well, carbines, saddles and kits,¹ and arranged with the British government for a wide range of equipment,² while on June 20, the Prime Minister wired James Grahame, Chief Commissioner of the Hudson's Bay Company, Fort Garry requesting that the company provide free accommodation at Fort Edmonton for 100 to 150 men and horses.³ In the weeks preceding the arrival of the second contingent, in June, 1874, further appointments had been made, and other steps taken in preparation for the march west. Fort Ellice, to which a small detachment had been posted in May with instructions to search carts for liquor, and to begin farming operations,⁴ and which Robertson-Ross had deemed "well placed in a military point of view"⁵ was named the first permanent headquarters on May 28, 1874.⁶ In selecting Fort Ellice, the Minister of Justice stated that it was the converging point of all the present known trails and roads leading into the North-West, that the telegraph should reach there sometime before the end of 1874,


² Dufferin to Kimberley, March 14, 1874, Colonial Office Records, Vol. 727, Despatch No. 2674, p. 250, PAC; Lord Eustace Cecil to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, March 20, 1874, Records of the Governor General's Office, Despatches from the Colonial Office, Despatch No. 29, PAC.


⁴ General Order No. 3, May 2, 1874, R.C.M.P. Records, Commissioner's Office.

⁵ "Annual Report of the Department of Militia and Defence," 1872, Sessional Papers, 1873, No. 9, p. CXIII.

⁶ P.C. 603, May 28, 1874.
that the Dominion surveys had already been carried out in the vicinity, and that a mail route could readily be established between that point and Winnipeg.¹

Finally all preparations had been made for the start of the expedition. French had discussed the proposed route with Captain Cameron, R.A., the Commissioner of the British portion of the International Boundary Commission, and Captain Anderson, R.E., the Commission's chief astronomer,² Lieutenant-Governor Morris, and well-informed Métis.³

French's belief that the force could move westward in June was not realized.⁴ A number of developments had conspired to delay the departure. On the night of June 20, shortly after the six divisions had congregated at Dufferin, the camp was struck by a tremendous thunderstorm, which stampeded about 250 horses, many of which were found thirty-five miles from the camp.⁵ As a consequence many days were spent in tracing them and bringing them in, and additional time was consumed in waiting for the horses to recover from this ordeal. Further time was lost while the force awaited the arrival of revolvers from England.⁶ A further delay almost

¹Ibid.
³Morris to A. Mackenzie, July 10, 1874, Morris Papers.
⁶Ibid., p. 9.
occurred when a request from the commandant of the United States military post of Fort Pembina reached French, asking for his assistance in apprehending Sioux Indians who had killed settlers in a raid at St. Joseph thirty miles from Pembina, should the Indians cross the line. On receiving this request French wired Ottawa for instructions, and was advised by the Deputy Minister of Justice to avoid anything which could lead to a collision with the Sioux, who were friendly with the Canadian authorities.

Before the expedition began thirty-one men had absented themselves without leave. In explaining these defections French wrote,

Although Dufferin had many advantages as a point of rendezvous for the Force, it had many disadvantages. There are several low public houses there; it is close to the Boundary Line, and although it might appear invidious to call this the worst place on the Red River for mosquitoes yet its claims in that direction are generally admitted. To get badly cooked food, to be worked hard all day, and to be pestered all night with mosquitoes is objectionable, and it is not encouraging to an ordinary individual, under such circumstances to be assured by one of those prophets of evil, who are always about. 'Oh mosquitoes! you have not felt any yet; just wait till you get to the Pembina River, or the Souris...!' And so after another sleepless night Sub. Con. Jones thinks he had better give this thing up while he can, and steps across the Boundary Line.

However, French had anticipated desertions, and on leaving Toronto had brought out twenty spare men. "I had endeavored," French said,


2 Bernard to French, July 9, 1874, ibid.

before leaving Toronto to get rid of any who were not willing "to rough it." On two distinct occasions, I assembled all ranks on parade, plainly told them that they would have, and must expect, plenty of hardship; that they might be wet day after day, and have to live in wet clothes; that they might be a day or two without food, and that I feared they would be often without water and I called on any present who were not prepared to take their chances of these privations to fall out, and they could have their discharges, as there were plenty of good men ready to take their places. A few did thus accept their discharges, and one feels they acted properly in the matter.¹

Finally on July 8, 1874, the force left Dufferin for the West.² The complete list of officers upon this occasion was as follows:³

Commissioner - Lieutenant Colonel George Arthur French
Assistant Commissioner - Major James Farquharson Macleod, C.M.G.
Surgeon - John G. Kittson, M.D.
Assistant Surgeon - Richard B. Nevitt, M.D.
Paymaster - Sub-Inspector W. G. Griffiths
Adjutant - E. D. Clark
Veterinary Surgeon - John L. Poste
Quartermaster - Charles Nicolle

"A" Division
Inspector William Drummer Jarvis
Sub-Inspector Sévère Gagnon

"B" Division
Inspector E. A. Brisebois
Sub-Inspector Edwin Allen

"C" Division
Inspector William Winder
Sub-Inspector Thos. R. Jackson

¹Ibid.
²Ibid.
³Turner, op. cit., p. 129.
"D" (Staff) Division

Inspector James Morrow Walsh
Sub-Inspector James Walker
Sub-Inspector John French (brother of the Commissioner)

"E" Division

Inspector Jacob E. Carvell
Sub-Inspector John H. McIlree
Sub-Inspector H. J. N. LeCain

"F" Division

Inspector Theodore Richer
Sub-Inspector L. N. F. Crozier
Sub-Inspector Vernon Welch
Sub-Inspector Cecil E. Denny

Chief Constables (Sergeant-Majors)

Regimental . . . . A. H. Griesbach
"A" Division . . . . S. B. Steele
"B" Division . . . . Joseph Francis
"C" Division . . . . J. H. G. Bray
"D" Division . . . . T. W. S. Miles
"E" Division . . . . J. B. Mitchell
"F" Division . . . . T. H. Lake

"The Column of route," French wrote, "presented a very fine appearance. First came "A" Division with their splendid dark bays and thirteen wagons. Then "B" with their dark browns. Next "C" with bright chestnuts, drawing the guns, and gun and small arm ammunition. Next "D" with their greys, then "E" with their black horses, the rear being brought up by "F" with their light bays."¹ In all the force's roll consisted of 343 officers and men, of whom fifteen had previously been posted to Fort Ellice and twenty-three to Fort Dufferin. Thirty-one others were absent-without-leave. The marching-out state of the expedition included: 274 officers and men,

including one Surgeon, and one Veterinary Surgeon, a half-breed "overseer," fifteen half-breed ox-drivers, two white ox-drivers, and three guides, of whom two spoke Blackfoot and one was to lead the cavalcade to the boundary line, 338 horses, two field guns, two mortars, 142 working oxen, and 93 cattle. Double wagons numbering 73 and 114 ox-carts (or Red River carts, which French dubbed "that imposition of the plains") completed the column.\(^1\) The train was undoubtedly the most colourful and impressive procession ever to cross the plains of the Canadian West, and, when closed up, extended for a mile and one-half. It was more usual, however, for the column to spread itself out over four to five miles. It was, French said, "a motley string of ox-carts, ox-waggons, cattle for slaughter, cows, calves, mowing machines, etc." Its composition revealed clearly that it "had a double duty to perform: to fight if necessary, but in any case to establish posts in the far west."\(^2\)

French had previously objected to the force under his command being dependent on the officials of the Militia Department for their supply. "The Force," he said, "must necessarily have a more substantial basis than the exigencies of the Militia Force are likely to require,"\(^3\) and he concluded that (1) the stores and provisions should be taken west by

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 32.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 10.
\(^3\)French to the Deputy Minister of Justice, n.d., R.C.M.P. Records, Comptroller's Office, file No. 5-74.
the force's own horses and oxen, and that (2) cattle for slaughter should be driven on foot by the force, instead of the carrying of large quantities of pork or pemmican. On the eve of departing Dufferin, the force had been well supplied with provisions of all kinds, except for oats. An accident while barging an adequate supply of oats down the Red River had spoiled the grain, and attempts to replace it would have delayed the force's departure until the following year. The shortage of oats, however, was to hinder the force throughout the expedition.

From Dufferin to Roche Percée, a distance of 270 miles, things went fairly well in contrast to what would follow. In spite of the excessive heat which told heavily on both horses and oxen, the men's general lack of skill as teamsters, the frequent shortages of water, and the scarcity of good pasture, French was satisfied that the force had settled down in good working order. However, the shortage of oats had already taken its toll on the Canadian horses, which failed on the dry prairie grass, and the hauling of carts and wagons had equally proven the unsuitability of the Red River Pony to that chore.

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1Ibid.
2Colonel Bernard, Deputy Minister of Justice to Lord Dufferin, n.d., Colonial Office Records, Vol. 730, Despatch No. 1357, p. 92, PAC.
3The account following, of the progress of the expedition, unless otherwise noted, is based on the diary of Commissioner G. A. French, published as Appendix "A," "Annual Report of the H.V.C.P.," 1874.
4The name commonly used in this period in reference to a locally-bred pony.
On July 24, the force reached Roche Percée on the Souris River. Here in compliance with directions which had reached him shortly before leaving Dufferin, French detached a portion of "A" Division under Inspector W. D. Jarvis with orders to proceed via Fort Ellice to Edmonton. The object of this arrangement was to relieve Colonel French of the stores which were not considered requisite for his further progress west, and to avoid a long journey for a portion of the men and horses, since Fort Edmonton was in any event the destination of a portion of the force for the winter. Hence fifty-five horses, twenty-four wagons, fifty-five carts, sixty-two oxen, and fifty cows with their calves were sent along with Jarvis to Edmonton and Ellice, along with six sick men and twelve half-breeds. On July 29, the force under French arrived at Wood End Depot, where it remained for the day in order to cook and bake a supply of rations, and secure a supply of wood. Leaving Wood End on July 31, the force ascended the Missouri Coteau on the fourth of August. At this point, French sent Assistant Commissioner Macleod to the Boundary Commission Depot for oats and pemmican, and left the Boundary Commission Road which now ran south of the


2The Minister of Justice stated that the plans set out in P.C. 604 (see above pp. 35-6), were not inflexible. Perhaps the Hudson's Bay Company delay in not replying in the affirmative until July 28 (see p. 47, footnote 3), to the Prime Minister's request for accommodation at Fort Edmonton, caused the change in plans which led to French despatching at the government's orders, only a portion of one division to Edmonton.
American border. French was now obliged to chart his own course, or to depend for direction on his guides, not all of whom had proved trustworthy. In his annual report for 1874 French stated:

After leaving the B. S. road, I surveyed our route as well as (under the circumstances) I could. It entailed on me a very large amount of extra work. I had to be on the alert to take the altitude of the sun and find our latitude. I plotted out the work and marked it on Palliser's map. At night I had frequently to wait up until 1 or 2 a.m. to obtain the magnetic variation of the pole-star. But I was well rewarded for my trouble a month later when without guides, I was enabled with a certain amount of confidence to strike out for the forks of the Bow and Belly rivers by compass and find the place within a short distance of that calculated on. ¹

On the twelfth of August the main body encamped at Old Wives Creek. It proved to be a poor site for both man and beast, the water of the lake being heavily alkaline and the pasture indifferent. A number of horses had already succumbed, and many more were sick. It became evident to French that the Canadian horses, brought suddenly from a diet of oats to the pasture land of the prairies suffered severely and broke down. However, help was on the way. On the eighteenth, French recorded that Macleod had been able to purchase 60,000 pounds of oats from the Boundary Commission, which in spite of the high price was, French said, "A Godsend to the poor horses." On the nineteenth the force moved its camp to a point about two miles north-west of its previous site on Old Wives Creek, and French formed a "Cripple Camp" for his ailing horses, and a number of sick men.² While at Old Wives Creek,

²Near present-day Gravelbourg.
French had conducted a search of a cart train belonging to a man named Ouilette, but found no liquor, and had received a deputation from a band of Sioux. The Sioux, French reported, were much broken in power and spirit by their continued conflicts with United States citizens and behaved in a friendly manner.

The main body set out again on the twentieth, and the journey continued daily except on Sundays, when divine services were regularly held. On August 25, the force marched through the northern slopes of the Cypress Hills. Writing from the camp "West Butte" French stated that the Cypress Hills extended for more than one hundred miles, that the water supply was very precarious, and what little available was of a noxious quality. On the second of September, the force fell in with the first buffalo, but French found the advantage derived from supplementing the diet with buffalo meat was neutralized by the almost total destruction caused by their grazing of the naturally scanty pasture, and their use of ponds and streams, the only sources of water, for wallowing. The sixth of September saw the force encamped on the South Saskatchewan, and, on the ninth of September, within three miles of the forks of the Bow and Belly Rivers1 without realizing it. On the tenth of September French found that he had struck the Belly River above the junction of that stream and the Saskatchewan, and he sent back Inspector Walsh to the spot where

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1See above, p. 2, footnote 2. Hereafter, the Belly River referred to throughout this study is now called the Oldman.
they had camped on the ninth. Walsh found the forks of the Bow and Belly Rivers where the headquarters of the whiskey traders was said to be, but the only "forts" in sight were "three deserted log huts without roofs."¹

It was clear that their objective had not been reached. French, therefore, despatched exploring parties up the Belly and Bow Rivers in search of the alleged forts, and arranged to send Inspector Walsh with seventy men and fifty-seven horses through to Edmonton as originally planned. On the thirteenth the party that had gone up the Belly for about thirty miles returned, and on the fourteenth, the party which had explored the Bow for about eighty miles arrived back with a gloomy report on the country. On the advice of Pierre Léveillé who had been sent out by Lieutenant-Governor Morris with presents for the Indians, French countermanded the Edmonton party. Léveillé assured French that the horses could not survive the trip to Edmonton and French instructed Walsh to follow the main force to the Trois Buttes, or Sweet Grass Hills, some seventy miles to the south.

Nothing had yet been seen or heard of the Blackfoot, and French with a view to finding wood, water and pasture headed for the Trois Buttes just south of the boundary line. By this time French, anticipating the return journey of a portion of the force, had begun to feel anxious for the safety of his command. "It was now the middle of September," he recorded in his diary,

and the appalling fact was ever pressing on my mind that on the 20th September of last year the whole country from the Cypress Hills to the Old Wives Lakes was covered with a foot of snow, several men and horses having been frozen to death. All over this country there is little wood, and snow would hide the buffalo chips, the only fuel available. I could not possibly reach this portion of the country till well into October; however, the snowstorm we had experienced had been exceptionally early and I hoped for the best, while determined to prepare for the worst.1

When the force reached the Trois Buttes, French learned that there were no whiskey-trading posts in that vicinity, and he heard also that the whiskey traders had left the country, but planned to return as soon as the police returned east.

On the nineteenth of September, French moved down to the Boundary Commission Road near the foot of the west Butte. The Buttes, misplaced too far to the south on Palliser's map were covered, on the seventeenth of September, with a light blanket of snow. The Commissioner proposed the establishment of a post thereabouts, under the command of Assistant Commissioner Macleod, and accompanied by Macleod then set out for Fort Benton which they reached on September 24. While there French obtained reliable information about the Bow and Belly Rivers country. Whoop-Up he learned was a scattered settlement along the Belly River sixty to eighty miles from its forks with the Bow, and about 210 miles to the north-west of Benton. Whoop-Up was in reality at the forks of the St. Mary and Belly Rivers, not at the forks of the Bow and Belly as the authorities had been led to believe by the report of Robertson-Ross in 1872. Therefore the Commissioner reached

1Ibid.
the conclusion that the vicinity of Fort Whoop-Up was the proper place for a strong detachment. Plans to establish a post at the Trois Buttes were abandoned, and French was authorized by telegram from Ottawa to establish a post in the general vicinity of Whoop-Up, and to obtain from Benton all necessary supplies for the hutting and provisioning of the force to be stationed there for the coming winter. Here also French received word that the headquarters of the force had been changed to a point on the Swan River, in the vicinity of Fort Pelly rather than at Fort Ellice.¹ In accordance with these instructions French ordered Assistant Commissioner Macleod to take a detachment to Fort Whoop-Up, the main scene of liquor trading in the North-West, and left Fort Benton on September 26 to rejoin "D" and "E" Divisions on the return trip to Swan River Barracks.

The expedition had reached its destination under many difficulties. The force consisted of men but newly recruited and with but little drill or discipline, and was supplied with horses which were required to undergo unusually hard work with but poor food and water. Nevertheless, the force had come through in remarkably good health and spirits. No deaths had occurred, and there was little to give grounds for anxiety, except the unsafe condition of many of the horses and the probability of a snowstorm on the return trip.

French rejoined the returning force on the twenty-ninth, and on the thirtieth set out on the journey "homewards."

¹P.C. 893, July 13, 1874.
After an uneventful trip of fifteen days French reached Lake Qu'Appelle, and on the twenty-first arrived at the new headquarters. Here, dismayed at the location and the unfinished condition of the barracks, French was shocked to find that prairie fires which had burned everything in the vicinity, had destroyed most of the hay supply. He decided that the force could not be wintered there, and a Board of Officers, which he hurriedly convened, concurred in this conclusion. Leaving "E" Division there, French left with "D" Division and his staff for Winnipeg, which was reached on November 7. Subsequently the force left Winnipeg to winter at Dufferin.

As the returning force made its way to Swan River Barracks, Macleod acted to carry out his instructions to proceed to Fort Whoop-Up, believed to be the centre of the liquor traffic. Macleod reported that he had visited and searched Fort Whoop-Up on the tenth of October, that but for one old man, the place was deserted, and that no liquor had been found at the fort.¹ In at least one respect, however, Macleod's report appears to have been inaccurate, for Charles Schafft, a Montana gold prospector who claimed to have been at the fort at the time of Macleod's arrival wrote on October 10, 1874, to the New North-West, a weekly newspaper published at the gold mining camp of Deer Lodge, Montana,

The Manitoba Mounted Police [sic] a force of 150 men under command of Major Macleod, encamped on Belly River a short distance below here last night. In the evening the Major,

¹Colonel Bernard, Deputy Minister of Justice to Lord Dufferin, n.d., Colonial Office Records, Vol. 730, Despatch No. 1357, p. 92, PAC.
some other officers, and a squad of men paid us an official visit. They acted with courtesy toward every one, but all appeared "dry" which after a 4 months' march on arid plains is perhaps not to be wondered at. They asked for whisky, but when we regretted our inability to give them a drop, they evidently took it as a joke, for several details under command of proper officers were soon engaged in trying to find the "critter." They searched up stairs and down stairs, peeping into all kinds of holes and crevices, but their search was of no avail and they left for other fields. Should they find any liquor I shouldn't wonder that under its influence they may arrest some enterprising "merchant" from his pursuits for awhile.

The boys after their 4 months' march looked hearty in physique, but wear a most abominable uniform—a short red coat, leather britches trucked [sic] into boots, all supplemented by a white cover that looks no more like a head covering than a coal scuttle. They are armed with "Snyder carbines" and revolvers, have also several field pieces and plenty of ammunition. Their horses are nearly given out. It is probable that they will fit up some kind of winter quarters at the first favorable spot that may suit their fancy...¹

As a matter of fact, the force did not continue much further and Macleod soon advised French that he had moved the force across to the Old Man River, about thirty miles to the northwest, where he was to establish a post just below the Porcupine Hills. In a series of reports to French in the next few weeks,² Macleod advised the Commissioner that he had been able to establish friendly relations with the Blackfoot tribe, arrest some of the whiskey traders, and build barracks. The Indian chiefs, Macleod said, had expressed themselves deeply grateful for the change brought about by the presence of the force. There was, Macleod stated, a "complete stoppage of


the whiskey trade throughout the whole of this section of the country."¹ All was changed now, the Indians said. As one old chief told Macleod "before you came the Indian crept along, now he is not afraid to walk erect."²

While French and the force under his command were on the return trip, and Macleod was bringing law and order to the country of the Blackfoot, another major accomplishment of the force was being slowly brought to a successful conclusion on the long trail leading from Fort Ellice via Carlton to Fort Edmonton. "A" Division, which, under Inspector William Jarvis, had separated from the main body at Roche Percée on July 29,³ left that point for Fort Ellice on August 1.⁴ They had had their horses taken from them, and had been given in exchange many that Sub-Inspector Gagnon called "the refuse of other troops." This contingent reached Fort Ellice on August 12, and, after leaving some horses and men there, departed that post on August 17, its state of parade consisting of two officers, twenty constables and sub-constables, thirty horses, twelve wagons, thirty cattle, sixty-nine oxen, four dogs, fifty-three Red River carts, twelve Métis, and Mr. Drever, the Métis "Chief."⁵

¹Macleod to French, December 4, 1874, ibid., p. 62.
²Macleod to French, December 1, 1874, ibid., p. 64.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Ibid.
On November 1, Gagnon was able to record in his diary "at last everyone has reached its destination; last night we had news of the other troops. . . . We left Carlton with 10 wagons drawn by oxen and arrived with 4 only, the rest having perished on the way." This contingent had suffered terrible hardship. Gagnon's diary contains frequent entries such as "the cattle are very tired"; "oxen had to be left on the road"; "forced to shoot insensible horses." As early as the sixteenth of September Gagnon wrote "It is very doubtful that any one will ever reach their destination." Nevertheless, by virtually carrying their exhausted, frozen horses the last few miles, the portion of "A" Division under Jarvis had finally reached the Hudson's Bay Post at Fort Edmonton. In his report Jarvis stated:

... on looking back over our journey, I wonder how we ever accomplished it with weak horses, little or no pasture, and for the last 500 miles with no grain, and the latter part of it over roads impassable. We made them, that is to say, I kept a party of men ahead with axes and, when practicable, felled trees and made corduroy over mudholes, sometimes 100 yards long, and also made a number of bridges and repaired old ones. We must have laid down several miles of corduroy between Fort Pitt and here. Streams which last year when I crossed them were rivulets, are now rivers difficult to ford. And had it not been for the perfect conduct of the men and real hard work, much of the property must have been destroyed.2

In another part of his report Jarvis singled out for particular mention Constable Labelle for his careful attention to the horses, and Sergeant-Major Samuel Steele whom Jarvis stated

1Ibid.

"has been undeviating in his efforts to assist me, and he has also done the manual labour of at least two men." The latter was to become one of the most famous members of the force.

With the arrival of the portions of the force under French and Jarvis at their winter headquarters, and the establishment of Fort Macleod,\(^1\) a long and difficult task had been brought to a successful conclusion. Nevertheless, the partisan press in eastern Canada had published many adverse reports on the expedition regarding starvation, want of food, etc. "Absurd reports,"\(^2\) French called them, when first brought to his notice on reaching Qu'Appelle on October 21, and in his first annual report he accused the press of ulterior political purposes in printing such reports, which could only encourage United States outlaws to resist a Canadian force.\(^3\) A leading Canadian newspaper had aroused French's ire by referring to officers as "incapable" and "inexperienced," the men "careless" and "disheartened," and the horses as being "baulky," "vicious," and "broken down."\(^4\)

And an article in the *New York Times* reported that "the account of the expedition given by the privates is more in detail. They say that in the march across the prairies it was reduced by bad management, desertion, sickness and death

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3 Ibid., p. 25.

Such reporting was characterized by French as flights of fancy, adding the following notes: "'Bad management' is, I suppose, a matter of opinion"; "if men were such fools as to 'desert' when marching 'across the prairies' there would indeed be some cases of starvation to report." "Sickness, scarcely a serious case on the trip; Death. Thanks be to God for his manifold mercies to us there was neither loss of life or limb on the whole trip"; "what could have reduced the ranks to 'eighty' it is difficult to tell. I fear the ration return would show no such reduction."\(^1\)

French was justifiably proud of his command. It had completed a round trip from Dufferin and back of 1,959 miles in a country almost destitute of supplies, and which necessitated the heavy labour of carrying guns, ammunition, stores, and provisions, and the building of bridges and roads. The portion under Captain Jarvis had endured equal hardships and had logged 1,255 miles from Dufferin to Edmonton. As French said:

Tied down by no stringent rules or articles of war, but only by the silken cord of a civil contract, these men by their conduct gave little cause for complaint, though naturally there were several officers and constables unaccustomed to command and having little experience or tact, yet such an event as striking a superior was unknown and disobedience of orders very rare.

Day after day on the march, night after night on picket or guard, and working at high pressure during four months from daylight until dark with little rest, even on the day sacred to rest, the force ever pushed onward, delighted when occasionally a pure spring was met with. There was still no complaint when salt water or the refuse of a mud hole was the only liquid available, and I have

seen this whole force obliged to drink liquid which when passed through a filter was still the colour of ink. The fact of horses and oxen dying for want of food never disheartened or stopped them, but pushing on on foot with dogged determination they carried through the service required of them under difficulties which can only be appreciated by those who witnessed them.

Where time was so valuable there could be no halting on account of weather, the greatest heat of the July sun or the cold of November in this northern latitude made no difference; ever onward had to be the watchword, and an almost uninterrupted march had to be maintained from the time the force left Dufferin with the thermometer 95 to 100 degrees in the shade, until the remainder of the force returned there in November, the thermometer marking 20 to 30 degrees below zero, having marched 1,959 miles.\(^1\)

As 1874 drew to a close the force had accomplished a great deal. The first blow had been struck at the illicit liquor trade, friendly relations had been established with the Blackfoot and other Indians, useful investigations had been conducted in connection with the Cypress Hills Massacre, and four posts, Forts Ellice, Edmonton, Macleod, and Swan River Barracks, signalled the appearance of law enforcement in the North-West.

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\(^1\)Ibid., p. 27.
CHAPTER III

DIRECTION AND DEPLOYMENT OF THE FORCE, 1873-1883

By the end of 1874 the North-West Mounted Police had penetrated the far reaches of its scene of operations and had occupied its initial quarters. The outlines of its organizational framework had been established, but in the ensuing decade its direction was subjected to change, both in terms of the responsible department and minister at Ottawa and in the person of the Commissioner. The headquarters of the force was moved no less than four times in the period to sites more effective for the carrying out of its duties. At the same time the temporary quarters of the first season were expanded into a network of police posts, organized in a system of districts and divisional points, each with a number of permanent outposts and, as the occasion required, temporary detachments and patrols. The strength of the force, too, was expanded, and despite periodic efforts at economy the over-all expenditures for its maintenance were increased accordingly.

The Act originating the force had provided that headquarters would be selected by the Governor in Council and that there the office of the Commissioner should be maintained.¹

¹Statutes of Canada, 36 Victoria, chapter 35, section 18.
Fort Ellice, to which a small party had been despatched in May of 1874, had been selected as the first headquarters. However, it was soon replaced by Swan River Barracks, about ninety miles to the northwest, a few miles north of the Hudson's Bay Company's post at Fort Pelly. According to the Order-in-Council which provided for the relocation of headquarters, the new site had a number of advantages over Fort Ellice. It was, the Order said, on or near the likely route of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and in a more direct route to Fort Edmonton; it was in a much more heavily-wooded region, which would facilitate the construction of barracks; and the superior soil of the area was more likely to attract settlement. The Order authorized the Minister of Public Works to take the steps necessary for the erection of barracks and stables to accommodate 15 officers, 170 men, and 100 horses, to issue instructions to his engineers to select the site, and to reserve a section of land for that purpose. A few days later, another Order authorized the expenditure of $30,000 on the new headquarters.

Despite the reasoning of the Order-in-Council, the location of headquarters at Swan River Barracks was a subject

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1 General Order No. 3, May 2, 1874, R.C.M.P. Records, Commissioner's Office.

2 P.C. 893, July 18, 1874.

3 P.C. 979, July 28, 1874.

4 Often referred to as Fort Livingstone, following establishment of the temporary capital of the N.W.T., at the same site in 1876, and sometimes, incorrectly, as Fort Pelly.
of controversy from the time Commissioner French and the force returning from the west reached there on October 21, 1874. The government's reasons for selecting Swan River Barracks as headquarters, aside from those set out in the Order-in-Council of July 18, 1874, are puzzling. It is true, that in first designating Fort Ellice as headquarters the government aimed at stopping the smuggling of liquor over the trail which led from Winnipeg to Fort Edmonton. The detachment there had been most successful in this connection both before and after the change of headquarters, and the force stationed at Swan River continued to be active in this regard. However, a small detachment at each place would have sufficed for this purpose. When the chief reasons for despatching the force west are considered: the enforcement of the Customs laws at the boundary line, the pacification of the Indians, particularly those belonging to the Blackfoot confederacy, and the apprehension of the perpetrators of the Cypress Hills Massacre, the failure to locate the headquarters at some point further west appears inexplicable. The *Manitoba Daily Free Press* early expressed its surprise on August 13, 1874, commenting that "why Fort Pelly should be selected as the headquarters for the peelers does not at once strike a person. In fact it don't strike a person after some thought." The Rev. John Macdougall considered the selection a serious mistake. It would have been better, he stated, to have selected a point on the Bow River. "There," Macdougall said, "is where the liquor traffic flourishes in

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all its hideousness." Major-General Smyth also expressed surprise at the location of headquarters. Smyth stated that it should be "beyond the junction of the great trails leading from the Cypress Hills and the Saskatchewan . . . as near as possible to the main trails and also to the line of telegraph and railway projected to pass through the Territory." This would have placed the headquarters at a more central point in the Territories somewhere in the vicinity of Fort Carlton.

In May of 1875, French received orders to remove the portion of the force which wintered at Dufferin, to the new headquarters, which he reached on July 6, 1875. French who had been shocked at the location of the barracks when he arrived at the site in 1874, soon reached a point of utter disillusionment with the staff of the Department of Public Works responsible for its construction. He had been rather magnanimous in this connection on his first visit there in 1874. French reported then that no part of the barracks was finished, and some of the buildings had not even been begun; the amount of work done in such a short time was marvellous nevertheless; and if the buildings were not ready for occupation, it

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1Ibid., September 10, 1874, p. 4.
3Ibid., p. 64.
4Memorandum of the Minister of Justice, April 10, 1875, R.C.M.P. Records, Comptroller's Office, file No. 203-75.
5French to the Minister of Justice, July 9, 1875, ibid., file No. 335-75.
was not for want of zeal and energy on the part of the gentleman superintending their construction.\textsuperscript{1}

Even then, however, it was evident that more than the condition of the barracks met with French's displeasure. In a diarized account of French's initial reaction, the Public Works engineer, Hugh Sutherland, recorded that Sub-Inspector Shurtliff told him on October 21, 1874, that "French did not like the place at all and did not intend to remain there,"\textsuperscript{2} and that when he, Sutherland, pointed out the Commissioner's residence, French said "you can save yourself any further trouble on this building for I never intend to live here."\textsuperscript{3}

Soon after reaching headquarters in July, 1875, French expressed his displeasure to the Minister of Justice. In a letter dated July 10, French complained of the lack of blacksmith's, carpenter's, or saddler's shops, and guard room, that the green lumber used had not even been plastered inside or out, that no double windows or doors, or even outside porches had been installed, and he enclosed a memorandum of Inspector Carvell who reported considerable suffering during the past winter, and a letter of the Surgeon, J. D. Kittson, who wrote of the hospital that no kitchen, no privy, no washroom, or "Dead House" had as yet been provided. Besides, French said, not even latrines existed for the officers or men. In con-

\textsuperscript{2}Memorandum of H. Sutherland, n.d., R.C.M.P. Records, Comptroller's Office, file No. 63-75.
\textsuperscript{3}Ibid.
cluding this letter, French stated that it is with much reluctance I have brought myself to write this letter. As I feel that I may again lay myself open to being charged with not acting heartily in concurrence with the policy of the government regarding these buildings. I prefer taking the risk of doing so however, rather than that a still larger number of the Force, which I have to command (besides women and children) should have to undergo the exposure and hardship which there is little doubt Inspector Carvell's Division suffered during the past winter.1

French was indeed risking governmental displeasure, but was not without support in his opinion of the site and buildings. Shortly after his letter reached Ottawa, Smyth wrote to the Minister of Justice referring to the erection of the barracks on a site covered with granite boulders, and said that "skilled workmen should be sent as soon as possible to execute these very necessary fittings and additions."2 Apparently in response to this double-barrelled criticism, the government took steps (in August) to improve the situation by instructing Sutherland to lathe and plaster the barracks before the coming winter.3 Nevertheless, French's relations with the Public Works officials continued to deteriorate. In a letter dated September 4, French charged that the branch of the Public Works at Swan River was "in a singularly disorganized

1French to the Minister of Justice, July 10, 1875, ibid., file No. 454-75.

2Smyth to the Minister of Justice, July 27, 1875, Canada. Department of Public Works, correspondence re Swan River Barracks 1875-1879, PAC, microfilm copy in A03.

3Sutherland to the Minister of Public Works, January 1, 1876, ibid.
state, and that owing to want of common foresight, there are no materials available for the completion of the Barracks before an almost arctic winter is upon us."¹

French's dislike of the site may have made him too hasty in his criticism however, for many improvements were apparently made between September and December of 1875. Sutherland reported on January 1, 1876, that the lathing and plastering had been carried out, that a guard house had been built, that latrines had been installed at all the buildings, and that many other improvements had been made. "I am," he said, "glad to be able to inform you that a general feeling of satisfaction exists throughout the entire force as to the comfort and convenience of the barracks and other buildings."² However, these improvements could not have been completed until near the end of the year, for when compiling his annual report for 1875, in December, French, while conceding that the situation had been much improved, was still obviously far from satisfied.

I am glad to be able to report that the Quarters at Swan River have been so much improved by the plastering that there are very few complaints of coldness now; the dilatoriness of the Board of Works in not finishing these Barracks is rather annoying, particularly as we are left so short of accommodation that we have neither a room for Service on Sundays or one for a Reading or Recreation Room for the men; the Guard Room will I suppose be constructed without much further delay. Mr. Sutherland

¹French to the Minister of Justice, September 4, 1875, R.C.M.P. Records, Comptroller's Office, file No. 454-75.
²Sutherland to the Minister of Public Works, January 1, 1876, Canada. Department of Public Works, op. cit.
having arrived, they are also constructing latrines for the Married Quarters, and ere long matters will doubtless be as well as they can reasonably be expected to be in such an unexpected locality.¹

In the latter months of 1876, however, it was still possible for the Toronto Globe to publish the following assessment questioning both site and quarters:

The Mounted Police headquarters at Fort Livingstone, better known as Fort Pelly is situated at the junction of Snake Creek with the Assiniboine about twelve miles distant from the Hudson Bay fort. Why such a spot was chosen for the headquarters of the force no one seems to know. If the object was to pitch upon the most barren and ungenial spot in the whole North-West, the genius who recommended the location has been admirably successful, for there is scarcely cultivable land enough in this neighborhood to make a garden patch. The barracks are built on a high rocky point, where the winds and the lightning indulge in as terrific tournaments as men ever witnessed about the cloud-enveloped peak of Mount Pilatus. . . . At times the hurricane is so violent that the inmates consider it prudent to go out for a little fresh air, and watch their deserted habitations swaying to and fro before the angry elements. . . .³

By this time the controversy over the location had reached the floor of the House of Commons. In the session of 1875, John Schultz, M.P., asked if it were true that the force returning from the Rockies had not remained at Fort Pelly because of the unfitness of both barracks and stables.⁴ The government seemed reluctant to admit that it had made a mistake, or that the criticism was well-founded. Prime Minister Mackenzie stated that all of the force should have remained

²Actually at the junction of Snake Creek and Swan River.
³Globe, September 2, 1876, p. 2.
⁴D.H.C., March 30, 1875, p. 993.
there, that they had left there "very improperly," he thought, but that that action had been taken due to the destruction of the hay supply, not because of the inadequacy of the buildings, and denied any knowledge of the buildings being unfit for winter quarters.¹ In the session of 1876, Schultz again made reference to the unsatisfactory condition of the barracks, and recommended that tenders be called for such work in the future. Mackenzie's answer was that future buildings would also be constructed by government officers and insisted that the results obtained had been satisfactory.²

Despite Mackenzie's protestations the government had obviously become reconciled to the fact that Swan River was unsuitable as the headquarters of the force. While the exact date is uncertain it appears that the decision to transfer headquarters to Fort Macleod was made about the same time that Commissioner French was relieved of his duties on July 22, 1876, and succeeded by Assistant Commissioner Macleod.

Having been appointed by Macdonald, it is not surprising that Commissioner French's relationship with the Mackenzie administration should be strained, particularly when French quickly established a reputation for frankness in his communications with Ottawa, and a "disregard for expediency

¹Ibid.
²Ibid., March 21, 1876, pp. 760-61.
and tact." His son G. A. French, later wrote that his father's problems were compounded by the political appointments without any regard to ability or suitability, and constant wire pulling from Ottawa. No one will ever know what my father had to go through in the early days of the Force in this respect. More especially as he was a personal friend of Sir John A. Macdonald and that held against him in the regime that came into power shortly after the Force's birth. 

Similarly, an original member of the force characterized French as a thorough soldier and disciplinarian ... who seemed to be here, there, and everywhere, giving special attention often accompanied by devastating remarks, to some of the incompetents wished on him by the Ottawa gang. ... These same incompetents—fortunately for the Force they were few in number—by means of their "influence" supported by many a mean slander, eventually forced French to resign. ... 3

Prime Minister Mackenzie early revealed his doubts about French. In a letter to Lieutenant-Governor Morris in August, 1874, Mackenzie stated "some of the men and Officers complained that he had too much of the military martinet in


his manner."¹ In December, 1874, in another letter to Morris, Mackenzie said,

We have had a great deal of trouble with Colonel French. His letters and general mismanagement seem apart from the mere . . . march very bad. He appears to have insulted Mr. Nixon and to have shewn the worst possible spirit in speaking to his officers. Bernard . . . is very much mortified at his conduct.²

Perhaps Mackenzie was referring to French's talent for sarcasm, which he often displayed in his communications to the government, and which enabled him to write to Macdonald in 1878:

"What a blessing it is that the change of Government took place before the new Govr General went out--Fancy the Queen's daughter being received by Mrs. Mackenzie!!!"³

French experienced considerable frustration in his relationship with the force, and the government. His communications with Ottawa reveal his deep concern for the efficiency and general conduct of the force under his command. Major-General Smyth had praised French highly in his report following his tour of inspection in 1875. Smyth wrote: "Lieutenant Colonel French . . . applied all the intelligence of a cultivated Military Officer, and the result of much experience to effect the object with which he was entrusted,"⁴ and, "his services to the Dominion have been valuable, his whole desire

¹Mackenzie to Morris, August 6, 1874, Morris Papers.
²Mackenzie to Morris, December 11, 1874, ibid.
⁴Smyth's Confidential Report, p. 43.
Early in 1875, the portions of the force at Forts Walsh and Macleod were, in French's own words, "virtually removed" from his command. This was undoubtedly done for sound reasons including the fact that the most important policing activities were being carried out by the detachments at these posts, and also because they were much closer to contact with Ottawa by telegraphic communication from Helena, Montana. Nevertheless, French was most displeased, and in a letter to the Minister of Justice wrote,

I hope there was nothing in any report of mine which led the Department to suppose that I approved of two thirds of the Force being virtually placed beyond my command and rendering unity of action (in case of great emergency) impossible or that considering the importance of the country between Swan River and Edmonton, and the fact that the Govt are about to erect telegraph lines through that territory without having first extinguished the Indian title, it is my opinion that a Force in that section is unnecessary. Such certainly is not my opinion, and I fancy my reports cannot mislead you in the matter.

French's opinions were not overly-welcome in Ottawa. On an earlier occasion he complained of "being kept in entire ignorance of the policy of the Government, relative to the employment or distribution of the Force." And, in

1Ibid., p. 44.
4French to the Minister of Justice, February 15, 1875, R.C.M.P. Records, Comptroller's Office, file No. 51-75.
spite of French's offer to pay his own expenses to Ottawa to discuss a variety of matters affecting the North-West, his requests to visit the capital in this connection were refused.¹

Not long after, the government decided to dispense with his services. An Order-in-Council by which French was obviously dismissed was issued, based on the recommendation of Prime Minister Mackenzie, who reported that

the Committee of Council have had under consideration the correspondence which has passed between the Department of Justice & Lieut Col G. A. French the Commissioner of the North-West Mounted Police Force, and also the correspondence ... between that officer and the Secretary of State subsequent to the transfer of the Police Force to his Department, from which it appears the condition of the Force and particularly of those two Divisions more immediately under the command of Colonel French is very unsatisfactory and the Committee believe that it will be absolutely necessary in order to maintain discipline and to introduce the necessary reforms in the management of the Force that a change must be made in the Command. The Committee therefore recommend that Colonel French be informed that his services will be no longer required and that Lieut Colonel J. F. Macleod CMG formerly Assistant Commissioner be appointed in the room of Colonel French.²

Thus, although the public was apparently left with the impression that French had resigned, he had not. French had not been in the West long enough to establish much of a reputation with the settlers, although anonymous letters to the press from Swan River referred to him as "the would be autocrat of the North-West Mounted Police,"³ as "the sour despot

¹French to the Minister of Justice, March 4, 1876, A.C.M.P. Records, Commissioner's Office, RG1883c, Vol. 46, p. 159; and March 26, 1876, Comptroller's Office, file No. 118-76.
²P.C. 718, July 22, 1876.
³Manitoba Daily Free Press, November 20, 1875, p. 3.
who is not only hated by his own Force, but by others also," and, with his brother Captain John French as "two tyrants."

French was obviously more popular with the men at Swan River than such statements indicate. On his departure, the non-commissioned officers there presented him with a gold watch and Mrs. French with a breakfast service, the total value of which was set at $500, and expressed their thanks to French for the invariable impartiality and justice we have always experienced at your hands . . . during the time we have had the honor of serving under your command, and to express our great regret, both individually and collectively, that circumstances have arisen which have occasioned your withdrawing from the Force.

On his departure from Winnipeg, in August, a few policemen then present in Winnipeg and members of the Militia bade French farewell as he embarked by steamer down the Red River.

"When Colonel French made his appearance on the hurricane deck he was loudly cheered and the demonstration continued until the boat turned the point."

Officially, French's dismissal stood until October, 1876, when an Order-in-Council was passed providing, at French's request, for the alteration of the reasons given in July for the change in command, and accepting French's resignation. Thus French's connection with the force was offi-

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1 Ibid.; also November 6, 1875, p. 3.
2 Ibid., August 24, 1876, p. 3.
3 Ibid., August 30, 1876, p. 3.
4 Ibid.
5 P.C. 914, October 7, 1876.
cially closed, and some redress given a man who had made a significant contribution in the establishment of law and order in the North-West. As the *Manitoba Free Press* stated, his role in this connection would "permanently identify him with its history."¹ On his return to Britain, French rejoined the Imperial service, and subsequently served in Queensland, India, and New South Wales. In 1900, he was promoted to Major-General, and in 1902, retired. In the same year he received the honour of being installed as a Knight Commander of St. Michael and St. George.² While it is tempting to dismiss French's removal as strictly the result of vindictiveness on the part of Mackenzie, sound arguments can be advanced for the government's decision: first, the need for the relocation of headquarters to some point in the heart of the Blackfoot country had become increasingly evident; second, French was a non-entity as far as the Indians of the southern plains area were concerned, while Macleod had become a well-known and popular figure amongst them. In light of these facts, it could well have been most injudicious for the government to have transferred French, in the role of Commissioner, to that area.

James Farquharson Macleod, C.M.G., French's successor as of July 22, 1876,³ was an obvious choice for the position,

¹ *Editorial, Manitoba Daily Free Press*, August 26, 1876, p. 2.
³ *P.C.* 713, July 22, 1876.
and one which was popular throughout the force. Born in 1836 on the Isle of Skye, Macleod came to Ontario with his father, and was educated at Queen's College, Kingston. Called to the Ontario Bar in 1860, he became a practicing lawyer in Bowmanville, Ontario. A member of the Canadian Militia since 1856, he was appointed Brigade Major under Colonel Wolseley, and distinguished himself in the Red River expedition in 1870, for which he was awarded the C.M.G. On September 25, 1873, Macleod was appointed a Superintendent in the Mounted Police, and on May 28, 1874, Assistant Commissioner. Upon the organization of the Government of the North-West Territories Macleod was named a Stipendiary Magistrate, and relieved of his duties as Assistant Commissioner effective January 1, 1876. In the course of his Assistant Commissionership, Macleod had established excellent relations with the Blackfoot, and had acquired an intimate knowledge of the situation prevailing in the southwest, the most critical area of the force's activities. Smyth, on his tour of inspection in 1875, had formed a most favorable impression of Macleod. Smyth wrote,

It may not be out of place to mention here that by the American officers in their northwest outposts as well as

2Ibid.
3P.C. 1230, September 25, 1873.
4P.C. 628, May 28, 1874.
5P.C. 1138, November 15, 1875.
by the white inhabitants, half-breeds, and Indians with whom I came in contact, Lieutenant Colonel Macleod is held in very high estimation; he has gained the respect, esteem, and confidence of all classes—and the intimate acquaintance formed in company with him in 700 miles of my journey has similarly impressed me in his favor, as an officer eminently adapted for the post he occupies.  

Macleod remained as Commissioner of the force until October 1, 1880. During the interval between his appointment as Commissioner and his departure from the force, Macleod had continued to act as Stipendiary Magistrate in the Bow River Judicial District, and as a member of the North-West Council. The official reason given for his removal from the command of the force was that it was the Minister of the Interior's opinion that the duties required of the Stipendiary Magistrate in that district could not be satisfactorily performed by one officer and as ... Macleod is so well known by, and appears to have the confidence of the Indians and settlers in the Southern portion of the North West Territories, the Minister recommends from 1 October next he be relieved of his duties of Commissioner ... and ... resume his old duties as Stipendiary Magistrate.  

Macleod's departure was lamented by the force, a departure which may well have been hastened by Macdonald's expressed conviction in 1879 that Macleod "thought more of the efficiency of your service than you have of the public treasury."  

Macdonald, advising Macleod that he was "horrified" at the apparent "want of economy," stated that "I am quite convinced

1 Smyth's Confidential Report, p. 44.

2 P.C. 1041, June 19, 1880.

... that the expenditure ... would not stand investigation before a parliamentary committee on public accounts; and this would involve discredit on all concerned." Macdonald added: "I brought you into the force and am much interested in your success, and therefore act the part of a real friend in giving you this most serious warning."¹ Macleod did not reply until October 23, 1879, when he denied Macdonald's charges of waste and inefficiency.² The fact that Macleod was removed from his command a year later strongly suggests that Macdonald continued to be dissatisfied with Macleod's management of affairs.³

The appointment of Assistant Commissioner Acheson Gosford Irvine as Macleod's successor ended speculation that a member of the Imperial service or of the Canadian Militia might succeed to the command. Irvine, a native of Quebec, joined the force with the rank of Inspector on May 7, 1875, with specific instructions to assist Macleod in the apprehension and prosecution of the wolfers accused of having perpetrated the Cypress Hills Massacre.⁴ Irvine had received a military education, and on December 30, 1864, was appointed a Lieutenant in the Eastern Administrative Battalion under the

¹Ibid., pp. 292-93.
²Macleod to Macdonald, October 23, 1879, ibid., Vol. 361, pp. 167099-111.
³Following his departure from the force, the date of which was changed to October 31, 1880, by P.C. 1637, October 13, 1880, Macleod gave full attention to his magisterial duties. In February 1887, he was named Judge of the Judicial District of Southern Alberta, a position he held until his death on September 5, 1894.
⁴P.C. 465, May 7, 1875.
command of Colonel Wolseley. In March, 1866, he was appointed
Captain of No. 1 Company, Fifty-fifth Megantic Light Infantry,
which he had organized. In June, 1867, he was promoted to
Major, and he served with the Red River Expeditionary Force
in 1870. On the reduction of that force in 1871, Irvine was
given the command of the Provisional Battalion of Rifles which
remained in Manitoba, a position he held until his retirement
with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in 1875. Six months
after joining the force, Irvine was appointed Assistant Com-
missioner in place of Macleod, effective January 1, 1876, a
position he held until his appointment as Commissioner effec­
tive November 1, 1880. On January 24, 1882, Irvine was con­
firmed in the rank of Commissioner from the date of his tem­
porary appointment. Macdonald expressed a conviction that
Irvine would improve the force's efficiency because he had
more of the martinet about him. Irvine served with rela­
tively little controversy, and apparently amicable relations
with Ottawa, during the balance of the period under review
in this thesis, but subsequently his command of the police
in the North-West Rebellion evoked criticism. His performance
of his duties in general was attacked by Lieutenant-Governor

No. 2 (1934), pp. 4-7.

2P.C. 1138, November 15, 1875.

3P.C. 1637, October 13, 1880.

4P.C. 93, January 24, 1882.

5D.H.C., March 10, 1881, p. 1327.
Edgar Dewdney in correspondence with Macdonald,¹ and he was retired in 1886.

The selection of Fort Macleod as the new headquarters, in July, 1876, was a good one. It was in the heart of the Blackfoot country, and not far distant from the Cypress Hills which were frequented by many Assiniboines and Crees, and it was close to the boundary line. The move would enable the Commissioner to have better control of the force under his command, and appears to have been met with universal approval. Following Macleod's appointment as Commissioner no time was lost in removing the bulk of the force stationed at Swan River. On July 29, 1876, Macleod left Winnipeg for Swan River,² which he reached on August 7.³ On his arrival, Macleod gave orders for the removal of the force, except for a portion of "D" Division,⁴ and the sorry experience with Swan River Barracks as headquarters was over. Fort Macleod had become the third post to be named headquarters, a distinction it would hold until 1878, when headquarters was transferred to Fort Walsh.

While the new site was a more strategic one, in terms of physical accommodation it was hardly an improvement. Fort Macleod had been built by the police, beginning with their

²Manitoba Daily Free Press, August 3, 1876, p. 3.
³Ibid., August 24, 1876, p. 2.
arrival in October, 1874. The barracks, or huts as they were often referred to, were constructed from cottonwood pickets, which had been plastered with mud. The roofs were covered with sods and sand. They were in reality mud huts. In 1875 the post was provided with a portable saw-mill which was not in operation until 1876. The mill provided lumber for flooring and roofing, but the cottonwood pickets rapidly deteriorated, and over the years repairs were made, and similar buildings added. From 1876 on the erection of new quarters was recommended, but this recommendation was not carried out until 1883, when new barracks were built at a different site in the vicinity.

Fort Walsh, the fourth headquarters of the force within four years, had been named after and constructed under the supervision of Inspector James Morrow Walsh in 1875. The decision to establish a post there was made in April, 1875, by the Minister of Justice, and Assistant Commissioner Macleod subsequently despatched Walsh with "B" Division to erect the post at a suitable site in the Cypress Hills. The need for a post in that area was obvious. It had long been the gathering place of Cree, Assiniboine, and the Blackfoot, on the trail of the buffalo, and while Fort Macleod had proved effective in the control of the liquor trade in its area, it

1 Memorandum of the Minister of Justice, April 10, 1875, R.C.M.P. Records, Comptroller's Office, file No. 203-75.

2 Macleod to the Deputy Minister of Justice, April 12, 1875, ibid., file No. 150-75.
was still being conducted at Cypress. In August, Walsh advised the Department of Justice that quarters for the officers and men had been completed, along with mess rooms, a kitchen and store room. "The location," Walsh said, "has proved to be a good one in every respect, it is in about the centre of the mountain and the heart of where the whiskey trade has been carried on. Within a few miles of the Fort there are the remains of 6 or 7 of these posts." Walsh added: "I can safely say that although there has been large camps of Indians all about the Mountain, that there has not been a whiskey trader in this section of the country since our arrival." 1 From the time of its establishment Fort Walsh played a significant role in the area, which greatly increased in importance following the arrival of Sitting Bull and the Sioux in the winter and spring of 1876-77. In May, 1878, Fort Walsh became the headquarters of the force, 2 and although Commissioner Macleod remained at Fort Macleod, Fort Walsh continued to be a focal point for police activities until its abandonment in 1883. 3 The post was described in 1880 as a square, enclosed by a stockade ten feet high, with covered bastions sixteen feet high at the north-west and south-east corners, with gates facing east, west, and south. Entering the eastern gate, on either side are the

1Walsh to H. Richardson, Department of Justice, August 28, 1875, ibid., file No. 393-75.
2Turner, op. cit., p. 390.
officers quarters (all the buildings are of logs), opposite, across the square, is the guard house, and on either side of it are four brass field guns. Behind it are the quartermaster's store and store houses. Parallel with the stockade on both sides are "F" troop quarters, and at the right angles with them "B" troop quarters and stables. Along the western side are "F" troop stables, at the north-east corner are the orderly room, officer's mess and hospital, with magazines close to the western bastion.

In May and June of 1883 the post was dismantled in order to discourage the Indians from remaining in the area. Prior to its abandonment headquarters had been removed to Regina, effective December 6, 1882. While the facilities provided at Forts Macleod and Walsh at no time gave rise to such strong objections as had been voiced about Swan River Barracks, they had obvious deficiencies. It appears, too, that the rough-and-ready nature of their construction was not repeated at several new divisional points where new quarters were constructed at Fort Calgary in 1882, Regina in 1882-83, and Maple Creek, Medicine Hat, and Fort Macleod in 1883. Although the buildings initially used at Regina were prefabricated in eastern Canada, all of the new facilities were of a more substantial and permanent nature, and overcame most of the deficiencies which prevailed at the earlier posts. Nevertheless, throughout most of the period there were complaints at most establishments of insufficient space, inadequate heating, lack of sanitary arrangements, and

2 D.H.C., John A. Macdonald (Carleton), April 3, 1884, p. 1296.
3 General Order No. 668, December 6, 1882, R.C.M.P. Records, RG18D4a.
the utter absence of recreational facilities.

The period 1875-1883 saw a number of new posts and many sub-posts established. Some were to exist only temporarily, while others became permanent installations. In general, the need for these stations was determined by the movements of the Indians and by the growth of settlement. An additional factor, beginning in 1882, was the extension of the Canadian Pacific Railway across the prairies to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. Besides the headquarters established at Swan River, and subsequently at Fort Macleod, Fort Walsh, and Regina, posts established at Fort Calgary, Fort Saskatchewan, Battleford, Fort Qu'Appelle and Wood Mountain, were of particular importance throughout the period, with the addition of prominent posts at Maple Creek and Medicine Hat in 1883.

Fort Saskatchewan, temporarily known as Sturgeon Creek Post, originated in May of 1875 with the removal on Commissioner French's instructions of the detachment at Edmonton to a point twenty miles distant from the latter place. In the summer, during the course of Smyth's tour, Assistant Commissioner Macleod despatched a force to a point on the Bow River where Fort Calgary, originally called Fort Brisebois, and often referred to as Bow River Post, was established. In 1876, Battleford was selected by French in anticipation of the removal of the seat of the Territorial Government from

\[1\] Smyth's Confidential Report, p. 50.

Swan River to that point as the place for another strong post to be established. With the erection of these posts, the government found it practical in 1876 to divide the North-West Territories, as far as the force was concerned, into two districts to be known as the Northern and Southern Districts. The Northern District was to consist of Swan River, Battle River, and Edmonton, together with their respective outposts, and the Southern District was to be made up of Fort Macleod, Fort Calgary, and Fort Walsh together with their respective outposts.

Prior to this a number of sub-posts had been established. Tail Creek at the junction of that stream and the Red Deer River was established by a detachment sent out from Fort Saskatchewan in 1875. In the same year French established mail-carrying posts at Palestine, Shell River, and the Little Saskatchewan, as well as a "strong post" at Shoal Lake, all on the trail from Winnipeg to Swan River, and despatched in September of the same year a small detachment to Fort Qu'Appelle. Other sub-posts were established under

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2 Memorandum of the Secretary of State, August 14, 1876, ibid., file No. 162-76.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., p. 8. This post was usually referred to simply as "Qu'Appelle," in both newspapers and official documents.
Battleford at Carlton, Duck Lake, Fort Pitt, and Prince Albert at various times, and in 1880, Fort Saskatchewan was placed under Battleford.

In the Southern District, numerous sub-posts were established under Fort Walsh including Wood Mountain, which was of particular importance following the arrival of Sitting Bull, and the Sioux in the winter and spring of 1876-77, East End, Pinto Horse Butte, Milk River (usually referred to as Kennedy's Crossing), plus a number of summer camps. From Fort Macleod numerous sub-posts and summer camps were posted, primarily to prevent cattle killing, horse stealing and smuggling at such points as the Blackfoot Crossing, the Blood Indian Reserve, Crow's Nest Pass, Whoop-Up, Stand-Off, the Piegan Reserve, Kootenay, Padmore, The "Gap," and St. Mary's. A large number of detachments were "on command" on or near the route of the C.P.R. in 1882-83, at such points as Broadview, Moosomin, Troy, Moose Jaw, Maple Creek, Ten-Mile Crossing, and the "end of the C.P.R." chiefly to control the navvies employed in its construction, and to prevent their being supplied with intoxicants. The relative significance of the principal posts is reflected in Table 1, showing the strength deployed at each post during the period. The growth in the number of posts was, as indicated in Table 1, accompanied by an increase in the total number of police in service in 1882. The increase in the strength of the force from three hundred officers and men to five hundred officers and men had been authorized by the 1879 Act, and was made in response to
## Table 1

### Strength and Distribution of Officers and Men at Principal Posts and Sub-Posts, 1875-1883

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Feb 1875</th>
<th>Mar 1876</th>
<th>Apr 1877</th>
<th>Nov 1877</th>
<th>Dec 1878</th>
<th>Dec 1879</th>
<th>Dec 1880</th>
<th>Dec 1881</th>
<th>Dec 1882</th>
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<td>3. Ft. Edmonton</td>
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<td>4. Ft. Qu'Appelle</td>
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<td>9. Swan River</td>
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*No separate figures available.*

1. Quartered here temporarily until removal to Swan River in 1875.
2. Became a district headquarters in 1882, previously under Fort Macleod.
3. Force removed to Fort Saskatchewan in 1875, from which small detachments were posted to Edmonton.
4. Usually referred to as Qu'Appelle became headquarters of "eastern" division in 1880, and placed under Regina in 1882.
5. A sub-post of Battleford.
7. A sub-post of Battleford.
8. Became headquarters of "eastern" division in 1878, and placed under Fort Qu'Appelle in 1880, and under Regina in 1882.
9. Placed successively, under Shoal Lake and Fort Qu'Appelle.
10. Quartered here temporarily until removal to Swan River in 1875. A recruiting station was established here in 1883.
11. A sub-post of Fort Walsh, until placed under Regina in 1882.
frequent recommendations made by the press "irrespective of party," members of the public, and by the Commissioner. The official reasons given for the increase were the disappearance of the buffalo, the Indians main food supply, the rapid influx of settlement, the return of approximately 4,000 Blackfoot Indians from the United States after a three years' absence, and the demands made on the force by the construction of the railway. This combination of factors led the government to conclude that the force of three hundred men was inadequate to "maintain order in the event of Indian troubles." The increase, confirmed in the new Act, passed in May, 1882, resulted in the disappearance, until 1885, of "F" Division, for it was determined that the force should now consist of five divisions, each composed of one hundred officers and men. The maintenance of an efficient force for the operation of these posts and the carrying out of the attendant police duties in the whole area presented serious problems throughout the period.

The establishment of new posts and, eventually, the expansion of the force resulted in increasing expenditures for the operations, as is indicated in the following table:

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1 P.C. 89, January 31, 1882. See also P.C. 93, January 24, 1882.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Statutes of Canada, 45 Victoria, chapter 29.
TABLE 2

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<td>June 30, 1883</td>
<td>477,825.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30, 1884</td>
<td>499,599.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^a$Taken from *Sessional Papers*, "Public Accounts."

These figures reveal, however, a significant reduction in 1880-81, consistent with the economies undertaken in various programs by the Macdonald government at that time. The government attempted to reduce expenditures by establishing farms about the posts, with the Fort Macleod farm at Pincher Creek being the most ambitious project, and although these operations were often favourably reported on, Macdonald and Irvine finally concluded that such efforts were unprofitable, as they took men away from important duties, and despite the fact that men were given additional pay for such work, caused a certain amount of dissatisfaction.\(^1\)

Expenditures on the force were, of course, always a matter of concern to the legislators. However, it was not simply the total expenditures which were at issue, but the whole question of the provisioning of the force, and the granting of contracts in particular. An economical means of

\(^1\)D.H.C., John A. Macdonald (Carleton), March 24, 1882, p. 543.
provisioning the force presented very real problems, with posts scattered across the North-West, at great distances from each other, and hundreds of miles from adequate sources of supply.\(^1\) As early as 1875, recommendations were put forward for the establishment of a central supply depot, but nothing came of them.\(^2\) The lack of railway communication was the real key to the problem, and until such was provided little could be done to alleviate the situation. From 1874 on, I. G. Baker & Co., at Fort Benton were the principal suppliers of the police (see Table 3), and the payment of large sums annually to this American firm brought the successive governments, Macdonald's in particular, under criticism from the opposition, and the public press.

**TABLE 3**

Payments made to I. G. Baker & Co.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal year-ends</th>
<th>Expenditures(^a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 30, 1875</td>
<td>$23,395.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30, 1876</td>
<td>102,286.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30, 1877</td>
<td>122,057.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30, 1878</td>
<td>115,949.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30, 1879</td>
<td>108,821.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30, 1880</td>
<td>104,848.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30, 1881</td>
<td>88,686.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30, 1882</td>
<td>97,214.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30, 1883</td>
<td>117,770.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30, 1884</td>
<td>77,239.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)Taken from *Sessional Papers,* "Public Accounts."

\(^1\)For example, the cost of transporting supplies valued at $26,007.56 to Swan River in 1874-75, was $18,459.58. See P.C. 187, March 5, 1875.

\(^2\)For example, see Smyth's General Inspection Report, p. 60; and French to the Minister of Justice, March 4, 1876, R.C.M.P. Records, R318B3c, Vol. 46, p. 159.
Recurring criticism was made of the contracts issued to I. G. Baker & Co., of the high costs of forage, and of the price and quality of horses purchased for the force.\(^1\) It was frequently charged that Canadians were not given an equal opportunity to tender for police contracts,\(^2\) and there were charges of fraudulent activities by members of the force connected with the sale of cast horses.\(^3\)

In this period no elaborate establishment relating to the North-West Mounted Police was created at Ottawa, but gradually ministerial control, particularly of the financial aspects of the police, was expressed through the development of the Comptroller's office. Initially responsible to the Minister of Justice, the force was transferred to the Department of the Secretary of State on April 20, 1876,\(^4\) where it remained until November 14, 1878, when it was transferred to the Department of the Interior.\(^5\) On October 17, 1883, the

\(^1\) For example, see D.H.C., Edgar Dewdney (Yale), April 12, 1877, p. 1438; John Schultz (Lisgar), April 12, 1877, pp. 1435-36; April 25, 1878, p. 2198; Peter Mitchell (Northumberland), April 27, 1878, p. 2198; James Trow (Perth), March 24, 1882, pp. 542-43; and the following newspapers, Manitoba Daily Free Press, January 6, 1881, p. 1, and March 11, 1881, p. 1; editorial, Saskatchewan Herald, May 9, 1881, p. 2; Globe, November 15, 1882, p. 1, and December 23, 1882, p. 4.

\(^2\) For example, see D.H.C., David Mills (Bothwell), March 10, 1881, p. 1328, and the following newspapers, Manitoba Daily Free Press, June 1, 1880, p. 3; Bulletin (Edmonton), January 10, 1881, p. 3; Fort Macleod Gazette (Fort Macleod), September 4, 1883, p. 2.

\(^3\) Leader (Regina), May 17, 1883, p. 1, May 31, 1883, p. 2.

\(^4\) P.C. 364, April 20, 1876.

\(^5\) P.C. 957, November 14, 1878.
force was transferred to the President of the Privy Council in his capacity as Superintendent General of Indian Affairs.\textsuperscript{1} On August 16, 1876, the staff employed by the Department of Justice in administrative work connected with the force was transferred to the Department of the Secretary of State, and under that department a North-West Mounted Police Branch was established on that date.\textsuperscript{2} This staff, consisting initially of Frederick White and one other employee, and totalling three as of March 1, 1879,\textsuperscript{3} moved with the force in subsequent transfers. On June 23, 1880, White, who had been the chief clerk of the branch since its inception, became the force's first Comptroller,\textsuperscript{4} and on July 1, 1883, was named Comptroller and Deputy Head of the force.\textsuperscript{5}

The reasons for placing the force under the Minister of Justice, and later under the Department of the Interior were sound enough, as Macdonald and the Hon. Edward Blake on occasion made clear. However, the reasons for transferring the force to the control of the Secretary of State remain obscure. In connection with the transfer of the force from his control, Blake, the Minister of Justice wrote in 1876:

\textsuperscript{1} P.C. 2122, October 17, 1883.
\textsuperscript{2} P.C. 721, August 16, 1876.
\textsuperscript{3} Sessional Papers, "Public Accounts," 1880, No. 2, Part II, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{4} Political Appointments - Parliaments - and the Judicial Bench in the Dominion of Canada, 1867 to 1895, ed. by Narcisse Omer Coté (Ottawa, Thoburn and Co., 1896), p. 135.
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid.
"The original design in charging the Department of Justice with its organization and control was to avoid anything of a military character. ..." Blake added that in his opinion the force should be placed under the Minister of the Interior since he was responsible for the administration of public lands in the North-West, the carrying out of surveys, the oversight of the Indians, and the making of treaties with them, and the carriage, delivery and payment of annuities to them—all matters involving the force. However, Blake's opinion apparently was not shared by his colleagues as the force was placed under the Secretary of State. With regard to this transfer, Macdonald later observed that it was fitting that the organization of the force, the selection of officers, the apportioning of their duties, the general supervision of affairs, ought to have rested with the Minister of Justice, but with respect to matters of supply which did not fall properly within the office of the Secretary of State, any more than the duties imposed upon the police force as a force helping to enforce justice, he did not think the matter of supply should have been thrown on the Secretary of State. That ought to have been kept in the Department of the Minister of Justice, or to have been transferred to the Minister of Militia.

The result of the changes in departmental responsibility for the N.W.M.P. during this period was that no less than six ministers during the Liberal regime, 1873-1878, directed the operations of the force, and the Prime Minister was also concerned with its operations and in a change of Commissioner,

2 Ibid.
3 D.H.C., March 14, 1878, p. 1143.
while during the Conservative ministries, 1873, and 1878-1883, Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald himself assumed control. 1

While ministerial control gave rise to charges of political favoritism in the granting of contracts, 2 and in the making of appointments to the force, 3 there is little evidence to suggest that political patronage was a major influence.

There is, on the other hand, ample evidence that, while the officers were appointed by Orders-in-Council the men selected were usually promoted from the ranks, or were well qualified because of their previous military experience or education. 4

On one occasion, the Minister, Edward Blake, in approving the promotion of W. D. Antrobus to the rank of Inspector, welcomed the fact that it would oblige one of the Prime Minister's friends, but nevertheless sharply declared that all such

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1 The responsible ministers and departments during the period 1873-1883, were as follows: Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald, Minister of Justice, May 23, 1873 - November 5, 1873; Hon. A. A. Dorion, Minister of Justice, November 7, 1873 - May 31, 1874; Hon. Sir Albert James Smith, Minister of Justice (Acting Minister), June 1, 1874 - July 7, 1874; Hon. T. Fournier, Minister of Justice, July 8, 1874 - May 16, 1875; Hon. Edward Blake, Minister of Justice, May 19, 1875 - April 19, 1876; Hon. Richard W. Scott (Senator), Secretary of State, April 20, 1876 - October 9, 1878; Hon. James Cox Aikins, Secretary of State, October 19, 1878 - November 13, 1878; Rt. Hon. Sir John A Macdonald, Minister of the Interior, November 14, 1878 - November 16, 1883; Rt. Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald, Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, November 17, 1883 - As cited in Guide to Canadian Ministries Since Confederation, July 1, 1867 - January 1, 1957 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1957).

2 See above, pp. 96-97.

3 See above, p. 76.

4 For example see P.C. Nos. 314, March 26, 1874; 328, March 29, 1874; 338, April 3, 1874; 759, August 16, 1876; 762, October 2, 1878; 854, October 5, 1878; 93, January 24, 1882.
appointments "would be made only on the ground of merit."¹ If patronage existed to the extent suggested by the Leader,² there is little or no evidence that it was of a detrimental nature.

The frequent transfers of the force from one department to another, the fact that no less than seven cabinet ministers were made responsible for its operations, the selection of five different sites as headquarters, and the three changes in the force's Commissionership accounted for some instability and inconsistency in the force's direction and deployment. Aggravating all such difficulties was the lack of a quick means of communication with Ottawa until the railway and telegraph reached Regina in 1882. In addition, attempts to reduce expenditures on the force, including reductions in pay scales, and the government's refusal, for understandable reasons, to authorize any significant expenditures on barrack facilities, until the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway had, as we shall see, an adverse affect on the force's morale. Made, no doubt, in response to the prevailing depression, and to the demands on the public treasury by the builders of the railway, the economies imposed did not completely destroy morale, and the authorized expenditures did, in fact, permit the continued expansion of the force's operations and an increase in personnel necessary to perform its

¹Edward Blake to W. Buckingham, January 29, 1876, Alexander Mackenzie Papers, microfilm reel No. M.198, pp. 1139-40, PAC.
²See below, p. 211.
functions. In spite of the various difficulties, the force managed to maintain its strength, and carry out its duties with a high degree of success throughout the period. It must be noted too, that despite the difficulties the first two Commissioners experienced with Ottawa, and Irvine's later reputation, the force in this period was commanded by men of impressive credentials, particularly in military experience, and that the force under their command, as we shall see, established an enviable reputation in the performance of its duties. That performance was facilitated by the establishment of a network of police posts, moved and increased in number as the needs of the area required. Most important the headquarters of the force, at the Commissioners' insistence, was moved progressively to areas of the Territories where the presence of the Commissioner and a large body of police would be of strategic advantage. As we shall see the effectiveness of the force, despite these handicaps, was particularly evident in its pacification and management of the native population.
CHAPTER IV

THE POLICE AND THE NATIVE POPULATION, 1874-1883

The issues which first concerned the North-West Mounted Police, and which remained predominant throughout its first decade, arose out of the many problems faced by the native population of the Canadian plains. The Indians, consisting of four principal tribes: the Blackfoot, Assiniboine, Cree, and Saulteaux, while widely dispersed throughout the Territories, congregated in considerable numbers about such Hudson’s Bay Company posts as Forts Ellice, Pelly, Carlton, and Edmonton, and in the Cypress Hills and Bow River valley areas near the American border. The total number of Indians is in question, but was probably of the order of thirty thousand souls,¹ whose tribes were not only in conflict with each other, but whose way of life contrasted sharply with that of the white settlers throughout the period under review. While the Métis presented no special problem in this period, and, indeed, facilitated relations with the

¹In 1873, John Schultz, M.P., referred to 68,000 Indians in the Territories (see above, p. 15). Census figures for Indian population in the Territories for this period are imprecise. The 1881 Census of Canada gives the total as 47,472, derived from a combination of estimates and treaty payments, while the 1885 Census sets it as 20,170, based on reports from Indian agents, for the districts of Assiniboia, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. See below, p. 175, footnote 2.
Indians, the police had at once to contend with those elements which had perpetrated the Cypress Hills Massacre, with the lingering manifestations of inter-tribal enmity among the Indians, and with the illicit liquor traffic, which had so demoralized them. The police became an instrument of the government in carrying out the terms of the treaties reached with the Indians. While the police were not responsible for Indian policy, they were involved in the process of moving Indians to reserves, in treaty annuity payments, in rendering emergency relief when near-starvation occurred, and at times, in specific areas, in administering all Indian affairs. Midway through the period the incursion of the American Sioux into Canada posed a serious threat, demanding great tact and diplomacy on the part of the force. The traditional Indian practice of horse stealing was a continuing problem, and, as settlement increased, cattle stealing and killing added to it, but there were few other serious crimes involving the native population. In their relations with the Indians the police were able to secure their respect and co-operation, and were, on the whole, remarkably successful in contending with these problems, doing much to better the lot of the Indians of the Canadian plains and making possible the peaceful settlement of the region.

It might have been anticipated, after the events of 1869 and 1870, that the Métis population of the West would have constituted an especial source of difficulty for the police. In general, quite the reverse was the case during
the first ten years of the force's existence, although the activities of the Métis under Gabriel Dumont at St. Laurent caused some excitement in 1875. The incident involving Dumont occurred while Major-General Smyth was commencing his tour of inspection. Lieutenant-Governor Morris having received a letter from Lawrence Clarke, the Hudson's Bay Company factor at Carlton, to the effect that Dumont had attempted to set up a local government over the hunters in the vicinity and to impose fines on individuals not belonging to his camp directed Smyth to go to Carlton from Swan River with a strong force to establish order amongst the Métis. On July 28, Smyth and Commissioner French left Swan River accompanied by the General's staff, Inspector Crozier, three sub-inspectors, a surgeon, a veterinary surgeon, and thirty-eight men. Soon after their arrival on August 6, Smyth and French interviewed Dumont and satisfied themselves that there was no cause for alarm. French, in reporting the results of their investigations, stated,

As I expected there is no reason for alarm with reference to the affair of Gabriel Dumont. It is customary for the half-breeds when organizing buffalo hunting parties to place themselves voluntarily under rules and regulations framed by certain officers whom they elect. These regulations usually impose fines for various offences and disobedience of orders, particularly when in the immediate vicinity of, or in chase of the buffalo.

In the case reported by Mr. Clark [sic] it appears Gabriel Dumont a President or Captain of a band mostly

2Ibid.
from St. Laurent undertook to punish and fine certain who did not belong to his camp.\(^1\)

Later, French advised the Minister of Justice that he had found the Métis "a well-disposed, law-abiding people," who broke laws only through their ignorance of them.\(^2\) At the same time French recommended that further action should not be taken, unless Dumont failed to return the fines and losses they had imposed on others. Smyth agreed with French, and at the same time stated that "the sudden and unannounced arrival of this force had the best possible moral effect, proving so convincingly that power lay within easy reach to enforce the Laws upon the slightest infraction."\(^3\) In addition, French's decision to leave twelve men under Crozier at Carlton was undoubtedly a wise one. On September 6, Crozier and his party returned to Swan River; however, on instructions from Ottawa French shortly ordered Crozier to return to Carlton to supervise the distribution, on French's recommendation,\(^4\) of $5,000 in presents to the Indians with whom it was intended to make Treaty Six in 1876.\(^5\)

\(^1\)French to the Minister of Justice, August 6, 1875, Great Britain, Colonial Office file No. 42/131, N.W.M.P., photocopy in A03.

\(^2\)French to the Deputy Minister of Justice, September 4, 1875, p. 86, R.C.M.P. Records, Commissioner's Office, RG1833c, Vol. 46.

\(^3\)Smyth's General Inspection Report, 1875, p. 52a.

\(^4\)Wm. Haley to the Earl of Carnarvon, September 6, 1875, Great Britain, Colonial Office, file No. 42/737, N.W.M.P., photocopy in A03.

While the Métis posed few serious problems for the force in the first decade, they made a significant contribution to the force's success in carrying out its duties. The employment of Métis scouts and interpreters throughout the period enabled the police to bridge the gap between the white and Indian civilizations. In addition, they facilitated the passage of the police across the plains on the march west in 1874, and on patrols and expeditions in unfamiliar country for many years following their arrival. While many Métis served the police well in these activities the most famous was Jerry Potts who remained in the force's employ from 1874 until his death on July 14, 1896, at Fort Macleod. Potts' uncanny ability for finding his way in the dark of night and through blizzard conditions made him a legend in the force. In 1878, Potts was described as

the ablest man on the prairies. . . . This man's knowledge of the country is marvelous. Every headland, butte, ridge, stream, swamp and trail from the Boundary Line to Red Deer River, east of Cypress Hills, are as well known to him as the streets in a village to the oldest inhabitant. He carries the map of the country in his brain. . . . When on the prairie, he rides about a quarter of a mile in front of his party, quietly observing or taking in the surrounding country with our field glasses, or mentally laying out new routes. When thus employed he is as reticent as an Indian, and will scarcely reply to a question if put to him, but when camp is made, and the duties of the day are finished, he unbends, and over the camp fire becomes a most communicative and friendly companion.1

Potts never lost this reputation.

1Globe, February 16, 1878, p. 2.
police reflected its concern as to the reception the force would receive from the native population, a concern which the force no doubt shared. It is evident that both the government and French viewed the apprehension of the wolfers considered responsible for the Cypress Hills Massacre in the vicinity of Abel Farwell's trading post near Battle Creek in May, 1873, as fundamental to the establishment of good relations with the Indians. Efforts in this direction involved the force in its first international manhunt. American, British, and Canadian authorities expressed an interest in their apprehension, even before the police reached the West. Lieutenant-Governor Morris, in numerous communications to Ottawa in the summer of 1873, emphasized the importance of bringing the wolfers to justice. Morris was supported by a number of American officials, including the Indian agent on the Milk River reservation, Fort Peck, Montana Territory, who said the Assiniboines had belonged to his agency, and that it was an unwarranted, cowardly attack on peaceful and defenceless Indians for which there had been no provocation. His view was substantiated by the statements of Edward McKay of Fort Qu'Appelle and Narcisse Lacerte of St. Norbert, Manitoba, which they had

1 For a detailed discussion of this incident see Paul Sharp's Whoop-Up Country (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), chapter IV, "Massacre at Cypress Hills."

2 See above, pp. 19, 21-22.

3 A. J. Lemmons to Thomas A. Cox, Secretary, Board of Indian Commissioner's, July 12, 1873, Records of the Governor-General's Office, No. 27, PAC.
made to Morris under oath.\(^1\) Subsequently, the American government arranged to co-operate with Canada to apprehend the wolfers. The Canadian government initially instructed Gilbert McMicken, the Commissioner of Dominion Police, at Fort Garry, to seek the extradition of the wanted men.\(^2\) However, with the organization of the mounted police this responsibility was placed on the force. Commissioner French lost little time in pursuing this objective. While he and Macleod were in Fort Benton in October, 1874, they obtained valuable information as to the identity of the wolfers from officials of I. G. Baker & Co.\(^3\) Little more was done on the case until A. G. Irvine, the future Commissioner, was appointed a Superintendent in the force for the express purpose of assisting Assistant Commissioner Macleod in the apprehension and prosecution of the "murderers."\(^4\) Macleod, a few days previously, had been made responsible for seeking the extradition of the accused men.\(^5\)

Irvine was instructed to report to Macleod, who had preceded him to Helena, Montana Territory. On May 7, 1875, the British Minister in Washington requested warrants for the arrest and extradition of fourteen men, and shortly after,

\(^{1}\)Turner, op. cit., pp. 85-85.
\(^{2}\)Sir A. Campbell to Morris, October 28, 1873, Morris Papers.
\(^{4}\)P.C. 465, May 7, 1875.
\(^{5}\)Ibid.
the American government instructed the Governor of Montana and two United States Marshals to co-operate with Irvine and Macleod. On June 21, seven of the men were arrested at Fort Benton. However, the local officers, overawed by public opposition, refused assistance to the police. As a consequence the federal marshals, assisted by the military, made the arrests. Subsequently the accused were taken to Helena for an extradition hearing. The United States Commissioner, in view of the conflicting evidence, and the obvious unreliability of Abel Farwell, the prosecution's chief witness, discharged the prisoners. Shortly after, Macleod was arrested on a charge of false arrest by Jeff Devereaux, one of the accused. However, the charge was quickly dismissed by Chief Justice D. S. Wade, who found that Macleod had acted "strictly under orders of his own government and with the approval of the United States."¹ Despite this setback, the police did not abandon the case. Shortly, three men were arrested in Canada, two at Fort Macleod, and one at Fort Walsh, where he had been employed by the police at gathering hay.² These men, taken across the plains by Irvine, languished in jail at Winnipeg until their trial in June, 1876. Again, the accused were released because of the inconclusive nature of the evidence. Nevertheless, the Canadian government felt that its efforts had been rewarded, a view shared by members of the public. On May 28, 1876, a

¹Sharp, op. cit., p. 72.
²Walsh to H. Richardson, Department of Justice, August 28, 1875, A.C.M.F. Acords, Comptroller's Office, file No. 393-75.
correspondent at Telegraph Flat wrote, "the arrest of parties supposed to be implicated in the Cypress Hills murder has had a beneficial effect towards confirming their long christened hope of justice, fair dealing and protection from their Great Mother."²

In the House of Commons in 1877, John Schultz expressed the opinion that the expenditure of over $14,000 on the case was unwise, and had resulted in nothing more than incurring "the ill-will of the neighbouring state of Montana."³

Richard Cartwright, the Minister of Finance, defended the government's action in pursuing the prosecution of the wolfers, stating,

> the action of the Government had, at all events, convinced the Indians and the American outlaws along the frontier, who had been concerned in the outrage, that the Government would not spare any expense to punish such an atrocious crime as it undoubtedly was."⁴

Still more to the point was the comment of the Prime Minister, Alexander Mackenzie in support of Cartwright's reply:

> Governor Morris had told him that when he was talking over one of the treaties with the Indians, Colonel White came into the room with some of the whites handcuffed for trial, at Winnipeg, and the effect of their being taken through the room impressed the Indians with a sense of justice and power of the Canadian Government more than anything else could have done."⁵

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¹ Battleford.
² *Manitoba Daily Free Press*, June 23, 1876, p. 3.
³ *D.H.C.*, 1877, April 12, John Schultz (Lisgar), p. 1436.
⁴ Ibid., Richard Cartwright (Lennox).
⁵ Ibid., Alexander Mackenzie (Lambton), p. 1437.

Mackenzie's views were endorsed by Donald Smith (Selkirk), who had an intimate acquaintance with the West, ibid., p. 1438.
Throughout the period 1874-1883, the members of the force displayed a high degree of intelligence in their dealings with the Indians. The detachments, particularly at Wood Mountain, Forts Walsh, Calgary, Saskatchewan, and Macleod, and at Battleford did their utmost on numerous occasions, particularly after the disappearance of the buffalo, to save the Indians from starvation. The medical officers of the force, one-half of whose salaries were paid by the Indian department, treated sick Indians, and vaccinated them against smallpox. Courageous action was characteristic of the police, instances of bravery, many involving Walsh, were numerous as the force strove to impress upon the Indians that law and order must prevail. The action taken by Walsh against United States Assiniboines following their attack on a Saulteaux encampment about thirty miles from Fort Walsh is a notable example. On this occasion about 250 lodges of South Assiniboines encamped near the Saulteaux in May, 1877, and gave notice that they intended to impose their will in the Cypress Hills. Little Child, the Saulteaux chief refused to obey, and when the Assiniboines attacked their camp, went to Fort Walsh. When Walsh received Little Child's report he, accompanied by Surgeon Kittson, Sub-Inspector Edwin Allen,

1 See P.C. 1071, October 25, 1875; P.C. 72, February 7, 1876.

2 See reports of police surgeons, annual reports of the force, 1875-1883.

fourteen men and Louis Léveillé, a Métis guide, immediately headed for the scene of the outrage. As Turner says, "Walsh knew that one breach of faith would create a crisis in Indian circles unpleasant to contemplate. In a case like this there could be no choice and no wavering."¹ On reaching the scene, the police found the Assiniboines had moved on. Walsh followed their trail, and just before dawn the Assiniboine camp was sighted. Walsh determined to take the leaders by surprise. Stealthily entering the camp, the police located the lodge of the head chief and arrested him. Quickly another chief and twenty of their followers were arrested without a shot having been fired. Walsh then returned to Fort Walsh with the head chief, Crow's Dance, and twelve others. The remainder were released. On the day following their return to Fort Walsh, Walsh discharged eleven of the group. On the following day, Commissioner Irvine sentenced Crow's Dance to six months at hard labour, and Crooked Arm to two months imprisonment. The action of the force in this episode was repeated time after time during the force's first ten years. A grateful Secretary of State thanked Walsh for his action, and that of his men.²

¹Turner, op. cit., p. 324.
Cypress Hills Massacre.  

Although less dramatic than the quelling of inter-tribal disputes, the stamping out of the illicit liquor trade with the Indians was no less important to their welfare. Liquor had long been the staple of trade of both the Hudson's Bay Company and the free traders in the Territories. While the Company had stopped dispensing it prior to the coming of the police, the free traders had continued to distribute it in exchange for furs, with lamentable and disastrous results. Before the police came, it was said, "A man's life was worth a horse, and a horse was worth a pint of whiskey." This appraisal was not much of an exaggeration for it is doubtful that liquor had ever been a more important item of trade in any country. Certainly the enforcement of the prohibitory laws could not have been achieved without great difficulty in the vast, sparsely populated regions of the North-West. The police acted under Dominion legislation to rid the country of this evil. An Act in 1873 prohibited the importation into or the manufacture in Manitoba and the North-West Territories of any form of intoxicant. A new Act, in 1874, confirmed these prohibitions except on the "special permission in writing of the Lieutenant-Governor of the said Territories."

1 Turner, op. cit., p. 326.
3 Statutes of Canada, 36 Victoria, chapter 39.
4 Ibid., 37 Victoria, chapter 7.
This provision was confirmed by "The North-West Territories Act, 1875."¹ In 1876, another Act provided that either the Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba, or of the Territories could grant such permission,² however, this Act was amended in 1877, restoring this power to the Lieutenant-Governor of the Territories alone.³ In 1874 French and Macleod, and Inspectors Winder, Jarvis, Carvell, Walsh, and Crozier, were appointed Preventive Officers in Her Majesty's Customs "for the purpose of securing payment of the legal duties chargeable upon goods imported into their respective districts, and for the prevention of illicit trade."⁴ As early as 1874, the police set about to stop the liquor trade with the Indians, and amongst the whites. From May to December 1874, one thousand carts were searched by the Fort Ellice detachment alone,⁵ and between July 1 and September 9, 1875, the Shoal Lake detachment searched an equal number.⁶ Soon after his arrival at the site of Fort Macleod, the Assistant Commissioner wired the Minister of Justice:

Have sent for and seen several Blackfeet chiefs, all most friendly and delighted at our arrival, have captured five liquor traders, and fined them seven hundred dollars, five hundred paid; one hundred and twenty-five skins for-

¹Ibid., 38 Victoria, chapter 49.
²Ibid., 39 Victoria, chapter 22.
³Ibid., 40 Victoria, chapter 7.
⁴P.C. 1250, October 10, 1874.
feited, hold one on charge of murder of a Blackfoot Chief, identified also as an escaped murderer from Chatham, named Bond.1

While the authorities at Ottawa were unable to obtain confirmation that Bond was the wanted murderer, and Bond, in December, became the first prisoner to escape the force's custody, his arrest, along with the others had a significant effect.2 In his report for 1874, French stated,

The establishment of a strong post in the very heart of the whiskey trading community near the Belly River has completely paralyzed the trade in that vicinity; law and order now prevail where last winter drunkenness, bloodshed and murder were rife.3

Illicit trade had not, however, been entirely stamped out by the end of that year. One of the largest seizures was made by Macleod in January, 1875. Acting on information supplied by the Rev. McDougall, the Assistant Commissioner seized a large number of wagons and furs of Messrs. Wetzel and Co., of Fort Benton at two posts on the Bow and High Rivers. An Indian told Macleod that whiskey had been traded at both posts since the fall of 1874. A large number of furs were confiscated, and Weatherwax, a company employee, jailed.4 By and large the efforts of the police had effectually ended the illicit trade with the natives. In March, 1875, Surgeon Nevitt wrote from Fort Macleod:

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1 Macleod to the Minister of Justice, October 18, 1874, R.C.M.P. Records, Comptroller's Office, file No. 170-74.

2 Macleod to French, December 4, 1874, ibid.


4 Macleod to French, February 2, 1875, R.C.M.P. Records, Comptroller's Office, file No. 115-75.
We have not moved on any further since we built our fort. Two or three expeditions have started out after whiskey traders et hoc genus omnes, and have come back generally successful. I think that we have thoroughly broken the back of that illicit trade.\(^1\)

As we have seen, Walsh was instructed to build a fort in the Cypress Hills in 1875, and soon after reaching there reported that the liquor trade in that area had been brought under control.\(^2\)

The immediate success of the North-West Mounted Police in suppressing the illicit liquor trade was widely recognized. In 1875, Major General Smyth observed:

> The benefit to the Indians from the presence of the Mounted Police is strikingly apparent. Formerly they bartered horses, clothing, buffalo robes, everything, for the maddening "fire-water" the result was drunkenness, squalor, murder, and robbery, chaos let loose all among the tribes. What a change has been the immediate result of the power of the law to repress crime.\(^3\)

In the same year, an American living at Fort Macleod wrote,

> The liquor traffic has been almost entirely suppressed, and its suppression has worked a considerable change in the Indian character. . . . The presence of the Police . . . has saved the Indian race from a fate similar to that which has befallen their kindred in the United States.\(^4\)

An Edmonton resident stated,

> The presence of a small body of the North-West police, who have wintered at this place, has had a very beneficial effect in keeping order in this vicinity. . . . As for the whisky trading, that is already a thing of the past and the Indians are already beginning to feel

\(^1\)Globe, April 6, 1875, p. 2.
\(^2\)See above, pp. 87-88.
\(^3\)Smyth's General Inspection Report, 1875, p. 72.
\(^4\)Globe, September 17, 1875, p. 2.
the benefit of its absence from among them.\footnote{Ibid., June 2, 1875, p. 2.}

The Rev. George McDougall, who had been prominent among those requesting the organization of the force observed:

I am now in a position to state that from personal observation and also from authentic information received from intelligent persons, that they have accomplished a noble work. The whiskey trade has been broken up, the frontier rowdy has re-crossed the line, the bowie knife and the six-shooter are no longer flaunted about as formerly. The poor plundered Blackfoot has now obtained a respite from the spoiler. I do not pretend to say that no mistakes have been made in connection with the force, but I feel assured that I express a general sentiment when I say they have been a great benefit to the country.\footnote{Manitoba Daily Free Press, January 3, 1876, p. 4.}

Similar statements came from other residents of the area, and others in close contact with affairs in the North-West.\footnote{See for example Globe, May 10, 1876, p. 2; Manitoba Daily Free Press, June 4, 1875, p. 3; Benton Record (Fort Benton), March 16, 1877; D.H.C., 1875, March 12, Donald Smith (Selkirk), p. 659.}

The effect of the police on the whiskey traders was soon felt in the United States Territories to the south. The Indian agent at Fort Peck Agency, Montana Territory advised Washington in March, 1875:

Driven out of the British territory, by the Mounted Police many of these traders from Whoop-Up and Woody Mountain, appear to be establishing themselves and pursuing their villainous avocations along the southern border of this reservation. . . .

I am convinced that this whisky traffic will never be effectually suppressed until our Government shall adopt means for its suppression similar to those inaugurated, and now being so successfully carried out by the British authorities on our northern frontiers.\footnote{William Alderson to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, March 1, 1875, R.C.M.P. Records, Comptroller's Office, file No. 484-75.}
From the summer of 1875 on, although a few cases of liquor trading with the Indians came to light, the police were chiefly concerned with the enforcement of the prohibitory laws amongst the white population.

Simultaneous with the arrival of the police in the Territories the government began negotiating treaties with the Indians. While the police were not involved in the signing of Treaty No. Four at Fort Qu'Appelle, made with the Indians of southern Saskatchewan in 1874, they played an important role in the negotiation of Treaties Six and Seven under which the Indians of northern Saskatchewan and almost all of Alberta ceded their rights in the public domain, in return for annuities, reservations, and other benefits. As a result of the treaties the police were charged with the difficult task of removing the Indians, particularly from the vicinity of Fort Walsh, to their reserves well to the north and east of that post. While the treaties contributed to the peaceful transition of the plains from a vast, largely unpopulated area, to that of a settled region they posed new duties for the force. Indeed, the force was directly responsible for the administration of Indian affairs in the area covered by Treaty No. Seven until relieved of that responsibility in 1880, and for a short period of time for Treaty No. Six, and throughout most of the period at Fort Walsh, where many of the adherents to Treaties Four and Six continued to congregate, along with those bands such as Big Bear's who had refused to sign Treaty Six. The police not only provided a colorful
backdrop for the negotiations of Treaties Six and Seven by providing escorts for the treaty commissioners of 82 men¹ and 108 men² respectively, but by their presence enabled the negotiations to be conducted peaceably. Indeed, Commissioner Macleod, was, along with Lieutenant-Governor Laird appointed a treaty commissioner to negotiate Treaty Seven with the Blackfoot confederacy, the Stonies and the Sarcees in 1877,³ and at the request of the principal chiefs of the confederacy and on Laird's recommendation the police were instructed to administer this treaty⁴ until Norman Macleod, the Commissioner's brother was appointed Indian agent in 1880.⁵ The government showed wisdom in giving the police this responsibility. As Chief Red Crow of the Bloods stated at the time of the treaty,

Three years ago, when the police first came to the country, I met and shook hands with Stamixotokon (Col. Macleod) at Belly River. Since that time he made me many promises. He kept them all—not one of them was ever broken. Everything that the police have done has been good. I entirely trust Stamixotokon, and will leave everything to him. I will sign with Crowfoot.⁶

On the same occasion, Crowfoot, the famous Blackfoot Chief

¹"Report of the Secretary of State, 1876," Appendix D, Sessional Papers, 1877, No. 9, p. 21.
⁴Ibid., p. XLI.
⁵Ibid., 1881, No. 3, p. 24.
The advice given me and my people has proved to be very good. If the police had not come to the country, where would we be all now? Bad men and whiskey were killing us so fast that very few, indeed, of us would have been left today. The police have protected us as the feathers of the bird protect it from the frosts of winter. I wish them all good, and trust that all our hearts will increase in goodness from this time forward. I am satisfied. I will sign the treaty.¹

With the conclusion of these treaties, the police were directly involved in the issuing of rations to starving Indians, the annual payments of annuities, and in the area of Treaty Seven, in the herding of Indian cattle. Even following the appointment of M. G. Dickieson and Captain Alan McDonald as Indian agents for Treaties Six and Four respectively in May, 1877,² the police continued to perform a variety of services for the Indian Department, particularly in the payment of treaty annuities.³ At Fort Walsh, Superintendent Walsh was assigned the duty of taking adhesions to Treaty Four of any Indians in that locality, and in September, 1877, alone took the adhesions of 634 Assiniboines, while also being responsible for the payment of annuities to the bands

¹Ibid., p. 272.
³Although Superintendent James Walker is often referred to in secondary sources as having been Indian Agent for a time in Treaty Six, he was never so-appointed. His statement that "in a measure I acted the part of Indian Agent" bears this out. See, Walker to Macleod, August 4, 1880, Walker Letterbook "3," p. 125, Fort Battleford National Historic Park.
frequenting that area. Throughout the Territories the police continued to provide escorts for the agents in paying annuities, in making the payments themselves, and in issuing rations.

While most of the Indians accepted life on reservations, the adherents to Treaty Seven largely remained south of the border on the trail of the buffalo from 1878 to 1881. As well, a few of the chiefs proved difficult to handle. The Cree Chiefs, Beardy at Duck Lake, Big Bear, who belonged to the Fort Pitt area, and Piapot, created particular problems for the force. Beardy, who had attempted to prevent the conclusion of Treaty Six, before adhering to it on August 28, 1876, continued to misinterpret the terms of the treaty, and long remained a disturbing element in that area, necessitating the frequent stationing of small detachments at Duck Lake. With the exception of Sitting Bull, Big Bear undoubtedly caused the force more annoyance than any other Indian. He and his roving band did not adhere to Treaty Six until 1882, and even then refused to go to the reserve set aside for him near Fort Pitt, northwest of Battleford. Big Bear, for years had roamed the country from the Saskatchewan to the Missouri creating dissension amongst other bands, frequenting Fort Walsh in search of food, and interfering with railway surveyors. Indeed, he and his followers were among the chief reasons for the abandonment of Fort Walsh in 1883. Big Bear's


2Ibid., 1882, No. 18, p. A.

3Morris, op. cit., p. 176.
adherence to Treaty Six on December 8, 1882, was the end result of the untiring efforts of Commissioner Irvine. The abandonment of Fort Walsh finally led in the summer of 1883, to Big Bear's departure for Fort Pitt. However, he continued to be a source of concern to the authorities, and in September, 1883, a detachment of twenty-five men under Inspector Francis Dickens was ordered there to maintain control over him, at Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney's request.

Piapot, who had adhered to Treaty Four on September 9, 1875, also proved troublesome, although he was generally considered a "better Indian" than Beardy and Big Bear. Piapot, having left the Qu'Appelle Valley, frequented the vicinity of Fort Walsh and refused to go to his reservation until 1882, when he left for Qu'Appelle, which he reached in July of that year. However, to the great surprise and chagrin of Commissioner Irvine he and his band returned in September, complaining both of the treatment they had received at the hands of the officials of the Indian department at Fort Qu'Appelle,

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1Irvine to White, October 26, 1878, R.C.M.P. Records, Commissioner's Office, RG18B3c, Vol. 49, p. 62.


3P.H.C., 1884, April 3, John Macdonald (Carlton), p. 1296. The "North-West Territories Act, 1875," 38 Victoria, chapter 49, provided that the Lieutenant-Governor should, subject to the orders of the Governor-General have local disposition of the force in the North-West Territories.

4Morris, op. cit., p. 338.

and of the reserve set aside for them.¹ Irvine had a higher opinion of Piapot than he had of Big Bear. Following Piapot's departure in June, 1882, Irvine wrote White,

Some time ago Piapot promised me he would go to Qu'Appelle and settle upon his allotted reservation. The delay that has arisen since that promise... does not reflect discredit upon the chief as regards any inclination on his part to act otherwise than in perfect good faith, but was purely owing to our lack of ability to aid him in transport. Such aid was imperative on our part, as the Indians were wretchedly poor and... without horses.²

Big Bear and Piapot, along with a few lesser chiefs, constituted a serious problem for the police at Fort Walsh. From its inception, they and their followers frequented the area, often on the verge of starvation. The police did all in their power to save the Indians from starvation, and on occasion were faced with the issuing of rations, and maintaining order amongst thousands of Indians camped in the Cypress Hills. The problem at Fort Walsh is reflected by the fact that 1,541 adherents to Treaty Four were paid their annuities there in 1878,³ about 5,000 in 1881,⁴ and about 2,000 in 1882,⁵ and these figures did not include those followers of Big Bear, and a few other bands belonging to Treaty Six. At times a similar situation prevailed at Fort Macleod, where in 1879, as

⁵Ibid.
many as 7,000 Indians applied for relief to avoid starvation. The government's desire to abandon Fort Walsh in order to remove the Indians from the boundary is readily understood. In the summer of 1882, the police met with considerable success in this regard as numerous bands left the area for their reserves. Long Lodge and The-man-that-took-the-Coat moved to the Qu'Appelle area, and The Poor Man and Bear's Head went to Battleford, despite the efforts, Irvine said, of various quarters to induce the Indians to remain south in order that they should be paid their annuities in that area. The departure of Bear's Head and Poor Man for Battleford led to a story which over the years has become part of the folk-lore surrounding the force. These bands, comprising about 1,100 Indians were indeed escorted by a single constable, D. W. "Peaches" Davis, who, the popular story says, met a group of Cree Indians under an escort of American soldiers and, when asked where his regiment was, said "I'm the regiment." The fact was that Davis did escort the Indians from Fort Walsh, but did not meet them at the border. As the R.C.M.P. Quarterly points out, he was well-stocked with provisions to feed the Indians and was, consequently in no danger, and "similar responsibilities were discharged by members of the Force in their stride and were not considered unique."^1

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It is significant that the Commissioner attached so little importance to Davis' role that he did not even mention him by name. Another story, which has been told and retold concerns Piapot. Piapot, it is said, pitched his camp on the railway right-of-way in 1883, halting construction. When the police, in the persons of Corporal William Brock Wilde and a constable reached the scene Piapot refused to move, resulting in Wilde giving him fifteen minutes to break up his camp. When Piapot failed to act, Wilde personally dismantled the chief's lodge, amidst gunfire and jeering from the Indians.\(^1\) Turner quotes "One who long ago recorded the episode" as having written,

Piapot had either to kill the corporal—stick his knife into the heart of the whole British nation by the murder of this unruffled soldier—or give in and move away. He chose the latter course, for Piapot had brains.\(^2\)

Curiously, this incident is not described in the annual reports of either the Commissioner of the force or the Indian Commissioner for that year.

The situation created by the roaming bands frequenting Fort Walsh was seriously aggravated by the arrival of the Sioux and Sitting Bull during the winter and spring of 1876-77. The first contingent, fleeing the wrath of the Americans following the annihilation of General Custer and his force, arrived in December, 1876, and before they began to return to the United States their numbers on Canadian territory reached a total of about 5,600.\(^3\) Shortly after the arrival of the

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\(^1\)Turner, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 5-7.

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 7.

first group, Inspector James Morrow Walsh, who became internationally famous as "Sitting Bull's boss," despatched parties of police to observe the Sioux, and ordered the erection of a number of outposts in order to establish communication with them, as well as the re-establishment of the post at Wood Mountain. In late May of 1877, Sitting Bull accompanied by 135 lodges joined the earlier arrivals. From then until Sitting Bull's departure in July, 1881, the police were occupied in maintaining control over the Sioux, in keeping order between them and the Canadian Indians, and in constant efforts to persuade the Sioux to return to the United States. The Sioux, whose efforts to effect an alliance with the Blackfoot confederacy in 1876, in a war of extermination against the whites in the Canadian and American West had been rejected, claimed that they sought only peace. As early as May, 1876, Assistant Commissioner Irvine was instructed by the Department of Justice to keep watch for Sioux refugees from the United States. Irvine, however, had already ordered Inspector Crozier to watch for such an eventuality. In August, Crozier reported that he had been advised by a Métis scout that Sitting Bull would soon reach Canada or go to Mexico. However, for a time no Sioux crossed the border,

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
5 Ibid., pp. 25-26.
despite numerous rumours of their pending arrival. In December, 1876, a party, under Sub-Inspector Edmund Frechette found that fifty-seven lodges had reached Wood Mountain where about 150 lodges of Sisseton Sioux under White Eagle had lived peacefully following the Minnesota massacre in 1862. That same month another fifty-two lodges, under Black Moon, hereditary chief of all the Sioux, joined the first arrivals. In all, the encampment now consisted of about 500 men, 1,000 women, and 1,400 children, along with 3,500 horses and 30 U.S. army mules.¹ Their arrival signalled the beginning of a critical five year period along the boundary. The officers of the police shared the fears of the Canadian government that a highly explosive situation existed. Not only did it complicate relations between Canada and the United States, it also increased the threat of an alliance between the Indians of both countries against the whites, or the outbreak of war between the tribes themselves. From their arrival, until the departure of the last remnants under Sitting Bull in 1881, the Sioux roamed the country lying between Wood Mountain and Fort Walsh, long the hunting grounds of the Canadian Crees, Assiniboines, and Blackfoot who resented the inroads of the Sioux on the fast-diminishing herds of buffalo.² As he had

¹Walsh to Macleod, December 31, 1876, ibid., p. 28.

²"An Ordinance for the Protection of the Buffalo," passed by the North-West Council in 1877 was rescinded in 1878, when Macleod found it "almost impossible," "inadvisable," and "impolitic" to enforce against the Sioux, and unwise to enforce it against Canadian Indians and Métis alone. See Macleod to Scott, May 4, 1878, R.C.M.P. Records, Commissioner's Office, RG1833c, Vol. 47, p. 103.
done with the first arrivals, Walsh visited Sitting Bull's camp and advised him that while in Canada, the Sioux must obey the laws of the "Great White Mother," and must not use Canadian soil as a base of operations against the American army. Sitting Bull, as had the others, promised to comply, and reiterated the statements of those preceding him that the Sioux were British subjects and desired to live in peace in Canada.¹

Shortly after Walsh's visit, Commissioner Irvine decided to interview Sitting Bull, but before he could leave Fort Walsh word reached him that three Americans were being held in Sitting Bull's camp. On arrival there, Irvine found that the Americans had been sent on a mission to persuade Sitting Bull to return to the United States. The Americans, led by the Rt. Rev. Martin Marty, who had been active in establishing schools at various Indian agencies in Dakota Territory failed in their purpose. Sitting Bull, distrustful of American promises, as he had reason to be, adamantly rejected their entreaties.² In order to keep the Sioux under surveillance Walsh now spent most of his time at Wood Mountain whose detachment had been strengthened. Again and again Walsh tried to persuade Sitting Bull to return to the United States, and through these negotiations became an internationally


²Irvine to the Secretary of State, June 6, 1877, ibid., pp. 35-36; Report of the Council held by Irvine, Marty, and Sitting Bull, ibid., pp. 37-41.
famous, and controversial figure.

In October, 1877, new arrivals, some 100 Nez Percés, swelled the ranks of the refugees. In the same month another emissary arrived from the United States, in the person of Father Jean Baptiste Genin, a Roman Catholic missionary beloved by the Indians of Dakota and Montana. Genin's unofficial mission also failed, causing him later to write, "I regret sincerely that the Canadian officers of police petted Sitting Bull so much instead of reinforcing our work by advising him to surrender and put an end to all the trouble." This charge was grossly unfair, as the police had, from the beginning, done all in their limited power to rid Canada of the Sioux. However, even before Genin's visit, Commissioner Macleod received word that the "United States Peace Commission" under General A. H. Terry would be sent to Fort Walsh to negotiate the return of the Sioux. The Minister of the Interior reflected Ottawa's concern and accurately appraised the existing crisis when he wrote Macleod that it is feared that should they remain in Canada they will be drawn into hostile conflicts with our own Indians; that in going upon the hunting-grounds of the Blackfoot, Assiniboines, or Crees they will excite the opposition and resentment of these tribes; and that ultimately, from a failure of the means of subsistence and from other causes, they will become a very considerable expense to the Government of Canada. It is not at all improbable they may also be disposed to make hostile incursions into

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the United States and in this way become a source of international trouble. . . . It is therefore important that you should use your influence to promote, so far as you well can, the object of the United States commissioners in securing the return of those Indians to their own reservations.1

The force's dilemma is reflected by the Secretary of State's instructions to Macleod to co-operate with Terry, but not to place undue pressure on the Sioux.2

The selection of Terry to head the commission was unfortunate, although it is likely that no other individual could have been successful. Terry, along with Custer, had led the army which left Fort Abraham Lincoln in May, 1876, to attack the Sioux. In any event, Terry's efforts were doomed to failure from the beginning. Sitting Bull had advised Walsh and Macleod while being escorted to Fort Walsh for the meeting that he would not consider returning to the United States, and it took considerable persuasion on their part to get him to meet with the commission.3 Finally, the Sioux representatives including Sitting Bull, Bear's Cap, Flying Bird, Spotted Eagle, Storm Bear, The Crow, The-Bear-That-Scatters, Little Knife, Iron Dog, and a squaw, whose presence reflected Sitting Bull's disdain for the Americans, left their encampment at the Pinto Horse Buttes. The Commission, consisting of Terry, the Hon. A. G. Lawrence, Terry's aide, and a

2R. W. Scott to Macleod, ibid., p. 42.
3Macleod to the Minister of the Interior, October 27, 1877, ibid., p. 45.
secretary reached Fort Walsh on October 16. On the seventeenth the conference was held. As the Indians filed in they shook hands and embraced the police, but refused to take the hands of the Americans. Terry, advising the Sioux that he had come at the request of the Canadian government, told them that the President of the United States had authorized him to grant the Sioux a full pardon should they surrender their horses and arms and return to live on Indian agencies where they would be supplied with cattle, food, and clothing. After a long harangue Sitting Bull said,

You came to tell us stories, and we do not want to hear them; I will not say any more; you can go back home; that's enough—say no more. I shake hands with these people; that part of the country we came from belonged to us, and you took it from us; now we live here.¹

In the ensuing months and years the police attempted through friendly persuasion to induce the Sioux to leave, and further efforts were made by the Americans. In March, 1878, Assistant Commissioner Irvine visited Sitting Bull's camp then located at "East End," but the Sioux were determined to remain in Canada. Sitting Bull told Irvine "that it made his blood boil at the very thoughts of them [the Americans] and that the sight of them made him crazy with passion."² Soon after Irvine's visit Father Genin came on another unofficial mission to persuade them to return. Once again Genin failed, and again he charged the force with coddling the Sioux, and


claimed that Sitting Bull desired to return. Genin was soon reprimanded by Major Guido Ilges of the 7th Infantry at Fort Benton who wrote firmly,

I am instructed to say to you that you must hereafter abstain from meddling with any of our Indians . . . and that your offer to bring through your own instrumentality, the hostile Sioux into submission is respectfully declined.1

By 1878, the Sioux were located in numerous camps extending all the way from Wood Mountain to the north of Fort Walsh, and about forty lodges wandered as far as the vicinities of Battleford and Prince Albert, causing alarm among the settlers there. Following the lead of the police in the south, Superintendent Walker at Battleford established outposts in 1878 to control them, at Duck Lake where Beardy and his band had encouraged the Sioux to congregate, and at Prince Albert where their presence disturbed the settlers.2 These Sioux, rationed under Lieutenant-Governor Laird's authorization,3 made themselves useful by working for the settlers during harvest, and by cutting timber for the mills and the steamboats, and generally conducted themselves well.4 In the spring of 1880, the American Sioux left the north and returned to the Wood Mountain area.5

1 Turner, op. cit., pp. 388-89.


3 Ibid.


5 Ibid.
By 1879, many of the Sioux, driven by hunger, began to weaken in their determination to remain on Canadian soil. In March and April about 200 lodges left Wood Mountain for the United States. Nevertheless those that remained constituted an ever-present threat to the police. In October the United States made another abortive effort to induce the Sioux to return by sending Father Marty on another mission but Sitting Bull and the Sioux refused all his entreaties. Nevertheless about twenty-five lodges left the very next month. The exodus continued throughout 1880, as bands under Spotted Eagle, Low Dog, Minnicangon, and others made their departure, until by the end of that year no more than 150 lodges remained on Canadian territory.

In July, 1880, an event occurred which greatly disturbed Sitting Bull, whose influence over the remaining Sioux was already on the wane. Walsh was to be transferred from Wood Mountain to Fort Qu'Appelle. The stated reason for Walsh's transfer was that it was simply part of the government's decision to shift officers and men every two years in order to improve discipline. However, Walsh's removal was quite likely related to the charge, which became popular in

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1 Turner, op. cit., p. 447.


the public press, that he was guilty of persuading Sitting Bull to remain in Canada, and to go on an exhibition tour of Canada and the United States. Whatever the truth of the improbable charge, it was evident that Walsh provided the chief with a sense of security, for, on receiving the news of Walsh's imminent departure, Sitting Bull implored Walsh to intervene for him with the Canadian and American governments. Before leaving, Walsh seems to have left him with the impression that he would do so. Crozier, who succeeded Walsh at Wood Mountain, met with considerable success in his efforts to reduce Sitting Bull's influence by holding interviews with other chiefs, and appealing to them to think of their starving women and children. In October, 1880, the American authorities made a last attempt to persuade Sitting Bull to return with the few remaining Sioux by sending the famous scout and Sioux interpreter, E. H. Allison, to confer with them. Sitting Bull was now more receptive to the idea of returning south, and Allison may well have succeeded had word not reached the Sioux that General Miles was waiting at the border with a strong force to escort them to their agencies. Nevertheless, by the end of 1880, the Sioux were rapidly making their way across the line. Only a few remained to do the bidding of the once great but now "crestfallen and vacillating leader." 

1 See for example Manitoba Daily Free Press, June 1, September 7, October 7, November 7, 1880, p. 1; Saskatchewan Herald, July 5, 1880, p. 3.
3 Ibid., p. 547.
Throughout the winter of 1880-81, Crozier continued his efforts to persuade Sitting Bull and his reduced following to leave. The situation facing the police was graphically described by Crozier:

A camp of starving savages is not a very desirable lot to have in the vicinity of a fort, with so few men as we have here. However I am in hopes that in a few weeks our territory will be rid of these troublesome intruders; we will then breathe more freely and I for one will with all my heart say goodbye to the old warrior.¹

Undoubtedly Sitting Bull continued to hold out in the forlorn hope of hearing from Walsh of the result of the hoped-for interviews with the Canadian and United States authorities. In May, 1881, Sitting Bull decided to go to Fort Qu'Appelle to see Walsh, but on reaching there learned that Walsh had not returned from the East where he had gone on sick leave in July, 1880.² On Sitting Bull's arrival, Inspector Steele wired Indian Commissioner Dewdney just then at Shoal Lake. Dewdney immediately went to Fort Qu'Appelle, where he refused to ration the Sioux and ordered them to return south. Sitting Bull, however, refused to go until, under further pressure, he finally departed in late June under an escort from "B" Division.³ On reaching Wood Mountain on July 2, Sitting Bull found that Inspector A. R. Macdonnell had replaced Crozier,⁴ now in command of Fort Macleod since the dismissal from the

¹Ibid., p. 549.
³Turner, op. cit., p. 574.
⁴Ibid., p. 575.
force of Superintendent W. D. Jarvis. Macdonnell continued Crozier's policy, refusing to ration the Sioux, and insisting that they return to their native land. Previous to Sitting Bull's departure for Fort Qu'Appelle, Jean Louis Legaré, the well-known French-Canadian trader, and a Justice of the Peace in the area since 1873, acted on the Canadian government's request to intervene directly in an effort to get the Sioux to leave. Legaré, who had moved his trading post from Wood Mountain to Willow Bunch, had frequently fed the starving Sioux at his own expense, and was vitally interested in seeing them go. In April and May, Legaré managed to persuade about sixty of the refugees to go with him to Fort Buford to surrender. Sitting Bull sent parties of his followers to stop them, and they managed to induce half of them to remain; however, sixteen continued on. Wisely, Legaré brought a few of them back from Fort Buford with the good news that they had been well received. Legaré continued his efforts, and by July 10, after many frustrations, managed, along with Macdonnell, to persuade the old chief and his followers to leave. Shortly, the party of about 235 Sioux were under way, accompanied by Legaré, some Métis of the area, and a number of carts carrying provisions.

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1White to Macdonald, August 19, 1881 Macdonald Papers, Vol. 295 (1-6), pp. 134829-848.
3Turner, op. cit., pp. 573-75.
4Ibid., pp. 581-84.
Buford was alerted, and he instructed Captain W. Clifford to go out to meet the party with a train carrying additional provisions. Finally, on July 21, the party reached Fort Buford where they were met by Inspector Macdonnell. Legaré and Macdonnell had succeeded where others had failed, although Crozier had laid the groundwork. Many tributes were paid to Legaré, who took all the credit for the final surrender.

Captain Clifford commented that much credit here is given to Legaré for his faithful service to the government in finally inducing Sitting Bull to come with him. He has used his own means fully in providing transportation and supplies, and should be liberally rewarded for his work.

Commissioner Irvine, expressed the same sentiments to Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney, and later, in his annual report for 1881, observed,

From 1877, we maintained a supervision and control of the Sioux. . . . Every movement of the Sioux was carefully noted and reported upon. The severity of the north-west winter was never allowed to interfere in the slightest degree with the duty considered necessary to perform. . . . I cannot refrain from again placing on record my appreciation of the services rendered by Supt. Crozier who was in command at Wood Mountain during the past winter. I also wish to bring to the favourable notice of the Dominion Government the loyal and good service rendered by Mr. Legaré, trader, who at all times used his personal influence with the Sioux in a manner calculated to further

1Ibid., p. 583.
2Irvine to White, August 10, 1881, R.C.M.P. Records, Commissioner's Office, RG1833b, Vol. 3, p. 239.
4Turner, op. cit., p. 585.
5Ibid.
the policy of the government, his disinterested and honourable course being decidedly marked, more particularly when compared with that of other traders and individuals. At the final surrender of the Sioux Mr. Legaré must have been put to considerable expense, judging from the amount of food and other aid supplied by him.\(^1\)

Legaré was, however, badly used by both governments concerned in the Sioux question. As compensation, the Dominion Government appropriated $2,000 for his services while the Sioux were in Canada.\(^2\) Later, Legaré petitioned the Court of Claims of the United States for payment of $13,1412, which he claimed he had expended on the Sioux.\(^3\) This claim was refused on a number of occasions until Congress appropriated $5,000 in settlement of the claim, a cheque being issued for this amount in April, 1905.\(^4\) In looking back on the episode, Inspector Steele disagreed with the popular interpretation of Legaré's role, and wrote,

This surrender ended our troubles with Sitting Bull and his Sioux, and I may say in connection with it that not one word appeared in the official reports of that year to say that Macdonnell had even seen the chief; and an officer [Crozier], who was many hundreds of miles away, and Mr. Legare [sic], the trader, who certainly did not supply the Indians for love, were honourably mentioned. The officer was one of the best fellows in the Force, and Legaré a good citizen, but they had, at the actual surrender, nothing whatever to do with inducing the Sioux to


\(^2\)D.H.C., 1882, May 13, p. 1508.

\(^3\)United States. Court of Claims, No. 15,713, Legaré vs. the United States, 353 file No. 34, A03.

return to their homes in the United States. This honour belongs to Macdonnell.¹

Through his involvement with the Sioux and Sitting Bull James Morrow Walsh became not only famous, but notorious as well. Accused in the press of being in collusion with Sitting Bull, Walsh remained a most popular figure with the public until his retirement in 1883, an event much lamented by many admirers.² Despite Walsh's vigorous denials of the charge that he had persuaded Sitting Bull to remain in Canada to go on exhibition, and that he had anything but the country's interests in mind, in promising Sitting Bull that he would try and act as an intermediary for him with the American government,³ Walsh was definitely suspect as far as Prime Minister Macdonald, Commissioner Irvine, Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney, Crozier, and many others were concerned.⁴ On Macdonald's instructions, Irvine advised Sitting Bull that Walsh would not return, and discouraged him from waiting any longer to see him.⁵ Irvine, himself, subscribed to the rumour that Walsh had, indeed, tried to put Sitting Bull on exhibition, and that by his "dishonest representations" had thwarted

¹Steele, op. cit., p. 160.
²See for example Leader, March 22, 1883, p. 2; Manitoba Daily Free Press, June 2, 1883, p. 1; July 26, 1883, p. 2.
⁴Sharp, op. cit., p. 290.
efforts to induce Sitting Bull to leave.¹ That Macdonald was disturbed by Walsh's activities, is evident through his note to Fred White appended to a communication from Dewdney, "Write Col. Irvine or the officer nearest Sitting Bull that Walsh is not to return to Fort Walsh and has no authority to go to Washington."² Thus it is apparent that it became part of the government's policy, in striving for a solution to the Sioux problem, to keep Walsh in eastern Canada until the problem had been resolved.

Horse stealing and cattle killing by Indians, as well as whites, posed difficult problems for the force during the period. It was a problem aggravated by the close proximity of Forts Walsh and Macleod, about which the Indians congregated, to the boundary line. The Indians called the boundary the "medicine line" as security lay beyond it, particularly on the American side where the authorities failed to put forth the same effort to control horse stealing as did the police. Macleod soon found that horse stealing was rampant in the country lying between Fort Macleod and Fort Shaw on the American side, and that there were monumental difficulties in combatting it. Macleod blamed Assiniboines from the United States for the frequent raids in 1875, and urged French to have the matter referred to Thornton, the British Minister at Washington, in an effort to persuade the American government to adopt measures similar to Canada's in order to prevent

¹Ibid.
²Sharp, op. cit., p. 290.
similar occurrences in the future.\(^1\) While Thornton obtained promises of co-operation,\(^2\) Macleod continued to complain that such was not forthcoming,\(^3\) and while expressing the hope that the treaties of peace effected by Inspector Walsh between the different tribes in the vicinity of the boundary would at least significantly reduce the incidence of horse stealing,\(^4\) it continued, and appears to have grown worse as the first decade of the force's existence drew to a close. It was a complicated situation. Not only were raids perpetrated across the border by Indians of both countries, but between the various tribes on Canadian soil, and by white men from the United States. With the growth of ranching, cattle killing became another frequent crime, particularly following the virtual disappearance of the buffalo.

The recovery of stolen horses often proved the mettle of the police. An instance, typical of the courage always displayed by the force in its dealings with the natives occurred in May, 1882, when two hundred armed Blood Indians appeared at Fort Walsh bent on recovering horses they claimed had been stolen by the Crees. Irvine, stating that the object of the Bloods was to enter the Cree camp to recover the horses,

\(^1\)Macleod to French, April 26, 1875, R.C.M.P. Records, Comptroller's Office, file No. 249-75.

\(^2\)Cadwalader to Sir E. Thornton, June 12, 1875, ibid.

\(^3\)Macleod to the Deputy Minister of Justice, October 4, 1875, ibid.

\(^4\)In his General Inspection Report, 1875, p. 56, Smyth refers to a treaty of peace effected by Walsh between the South Piegans, Assiniboines, and Blackfoot.
described the episode as follows:

Feeling assured that if this was done, serious trouble would ensue, I told the Bloods I would not allow this, informing them at the same time that I would send an officer and party, with a small number of their representative men, to the Cree camp, and that if their horses were there they would be returned to them. To this the Indians agreed.

I detached Inspector Frechette for the duty; six Blood Indians accompanied him to the Cree camp.

This officer returned on the following day with three horses belonging to the Bloods. I was satisfied that with the exception of two other horses, which were afterwards returned by the Crees, the horses the Bloods had lost were stolen by American Indians.¹

The aspect of horse stealing which the police found particularly frustrating was the failure of the American authorities to reciprocate in the apprehension of the guilty parties to the same extent as did the police. The fault, however, lay not with the American officials along the boundary nearly so much as it did with the American government. The police were empowered by an act of 1869 entitled "An Act respecting Larceny and other similar Offences" to apprehend and prosecute those suspected of horse stealing.² The American authorities were not similarly equipped to cope with the situation, thus the result throughout the period was consistent with that experienced by the detachment at Fort Walsh in 1879. In that year the police recovered twenty-seven horses belonging to American citizens, while the number returned to Fort Walsh by United States officials was two.

²Statutes of Canada, 32-33 Victoria, chapter 21.
belonging to Sitting Bull.  

There were frequent efforts made to persuade the American government to pass legislation similar to the above-mentioned Canadian Act. Several Orders-in-Council were approved at Ottawa in 1883, and transmitted to Washington in an attempt to show the American government the services of the police in apprehending and punishing Canadian Indians, and also to impress on that government the frequency of raids by American Indians and whites on Canadian territory. The police frequently complained that the officials of the United States Indian Department did not show the same disposition to aid the police as the police had aided them, although they felt that American military authorities had done as much as possible. Nevertheless, the police recognized that the Americans operated under a handicap. Thus, when Superintendent Shurtliff at Maple Creek complained bitterly that reports of horse stealing incidents appearing in the Montana press gave the impression that Canadian Indians were the only offenders, Irvine commented:

>The Montana press could not be expected to take up the subject of the losses suffered by us, on this side of the line, if in fact, the particulars of such losses ever became known in that country.


2See for example P.C. 129?, June 14, 1883; P.C. 138F, June 14, 1883; P.C. 160F, June 14, 1883; P.C. 194F, July 24, 1883.

I have already had occasion to remark that the United States troops have, upon all occasions, been most anxious to aid us in the recovery of stolen property, and afforded every assistance in their power, which it is to be regretted is much more limited than our own, noticeable from the fact that a horse thief, on crossing Canadian territory into the United States, cannot be arrested and punished for the crime committed, though the property in his possession may be recovered.

Shurtliff's charge against the Montana press was probably correct, however, the *Benton Record* frequently called for more co-operation with Canada to control the problem, and, indeed, suggested that legislation similar to Canada's be passed by the Montana legislature. As early as 1877, the paper stated:

> The Mounted Police have authority to arrest, and punish any person or persons committing certain offences on this side of the boundary line and escaping into the North West Territories. A law providing for the arrest of criminals escaping from British soil into Montana Territory should be passed by the present legislature.

Similar views were expressed by the same paper as late as 1882, and the police were praised for their efforts to stamp out this crime. Cecil Denny, an ex-member of the force, as Indian agent in Treaty No. Seven made efforts to combat the crime by organizing a band of Indian Police on the Blood Reserve in 1882.

The growth of horse stealing and cattle killing was a factor in the increase in the strength of the force in 1882,

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1Ibid., p. 19.
3Editorial, ibid., November 16, 1882, p. 5.
4Denny to Dewdney, June 15, 1882, p. 1140, Dewdney Papers, 1861-1926, Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Calgary, Alberta.
and to the stationing of men at various outposts such as Stand-Off, St. Mary's, Kootenay, Pincher Creek, and the Piegan Reserve in 1882-83. On numerous occasions the police were praised for the manner in which they had controlled cattle killing. The Indians, frequently accused of killing large numbers of cattle in the vicinities of Forts Macleod, Walsh, and Calgary were often defended by the police. In 1879, a year in which the Indians suffered from a shortage of food, brought on by the virtual disappearance of the buffalo, Macleod stated, "it is undoubtedly the case that they killed some, but nothing like the numbers claimed. It is the opinion of many responsible stockmen that whites had more to do with it than the Indians."¹ Macleod went on to explain that many cattle had strayed across to Montana, that a large number had perished in the severe storms of March, 1879, and that the ranchers were largely responsible since they allowed their stock to roam unattended. Many ranchers credited the police with having done a good job under difficult circumstances. One rancher wrote, "I have been a settler for more than a year, and since I have been in the country, have uniformly heard settlers, stock-men, and others remark on the efficiency and readiness of the police on all occasions."² Another, the Secretary of the Southwestern Stock Association, wrote from Fort Macleod that the police had "traced every culprit guilty

² Globe, October 13, 1883, p. 7.
of cattle killing." Nevertheless, the Fort Macleod Gazette commented in the same year, "If we are obliged to fight the Indians to stop their depredations let the entertainment commence." This attitude notwithstanding, the police reports suggest that operating under many handicaps the force had managed to cope with the raiders to a marked degree.

Aside from horse stealing and cattle killing, the native population was charged with surprisingly few serious crimes. There were, however, two cases involving Indians which received widespread publicity. In 1879, Swift Runner was convicted by the police of the murder of his family, and of having eaten their bodies. Swift Runner became the first individual to be executed in the Territories when he was hanged at Fort Saskatchewan. The other case involved the murder of Constable Marmaduke Graburn near Fort Walsh in 1879. Indians were generally held responsible for this murder, although in some quarters a white man "holding a lucrative position" was believed to have been the killer. This was the only incident of its kind in the ten year period 1874-1883, and while Star Child was arrested, and tried in 1882, he was

1Manitoba Daily Free Press, October 10, 1883, p. 2.
2Editorial, Fort Macleod Gazette (Fort Macleod), July 14, 1883, p. 1.
5Manitoba Daily Free Press, March 24, 1881, p. 4.
acquitted\(^1\) even though he confessed to the murder,\(^2\) and Commissioner Irvine was convinced of his guilt.\(^3\)

When the North-West Mounted Police came to close out its first decade of operations in the North-West, it could look back on its dealings with the native people with justifiable pride. The force had secured their respect at the very beginning. Through its tenacity in bringing the wolfers to trial, it demonstrated that it would enforce the law without distinction of race. That respect was enhanced through its firm settlement of intertribal disputes, and its successful suppression of the illicit liquor traffic, which Indian leaders had recognized as contributing to their demoralization. This respect was accompanied by the co-operation of the Indians, without which the police could scarcely, without serious resistance, have carried out the arrangements provided under the treaties. The Indian policy of the government has been the subject of much discussion and adverse criticism, but the police must be credited, insofar as they were charged with carrying out that policy, with fair-dealing and compassion. Given the incursion of the white man at all, the police did much to better the lot of the Indians. The police themselves in some measure represented a problem in Indian-white relation


\(^2\)Steele, op. cit., p. 151.

\(^3\)Irvine to White, June 1, 1881, R.C.M.P. Records, Commissioner's Office, RG1833b, Vol. 3, p. 101.
The conduct of some members (to be discussed later in this account)\(^1\) and their loose alliances with native women could in certain cases be criticized as immoral. The effect in some cases, however, may have been analogous to that resulting from inter-marriage which the natives actually sought with the fur traders.\(^2\) The amicable relations of the police with the powerful Blackfoot confederacy and other bands, served the country well. Those Indians did not join in the North-West Rebellion. The force's courageous and skillful handling of the Sioux controlled a serious threat to the peace. Less dramatic, but nonetheless requiring courage and diligence were continuing cases of horse stealing and cattle killing. As the force's first decade was ending new problems arose to engage its attention. The Canadian Pacific Railway was thrusting across the plains, and in its wake, white settlement was growing.

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\(^1\)See below, chapter VI.

\(^2\)See for example A. S. Morton, Under Western Skies (Toronto: Thomas Nelson & Sons Limited, 1937), pp. 110-13; and Wm. Bleasdell Cameron, "Peaceful Invasion," The Beaver, March, 1948, pp. 37-38. Cameron argues that inter-marriage of Hudson's Bay servants and Indian women had created "a bond of blood and amicable relationships" with the company's personnel, who, apprised of the impending arrival of the force "had prepared the Indians to accept the intrusion (of the force) as designed largely for their benefit."
CHAPTER V

THE POLICE AND SETTLEMENT, 1874-1883

The advance of settlement imposed minimal duties upon the North-West Mounted Police in its first years, but as the decade progressed the force was required to devote more and more time and personnel to problems settlement brought with it. The population, exclusive of natives, could still be calculated in the hundreds in 1874. The official census of 1881, probably inexact for the Territories, enumerated 6,974 settlers.1 Their numbers increased to 23,344 in the census of 1884-85.2 Initially there had been small groups of settlers about such fur trading posts as Fort Pelly, Fort Qu'Appelle, and Fort Edmonton, and there were only two other settlements of consequence, Prince Albert, founded as a mission in 1866, and Battleford which grew rapidly after its designation as capital in 1876. Police posts became focal points for settlement, but it was the construction of the railway across the Territories, 1881-1883, which brought a stream of settlers into the southern districts of Assiniboia and Alberta. Colonization companies located groups of

1See below, p. 175, footnote 2.

2Ibid.

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settlers in 1883 in areas beyond the railway belt, north of the Qu'Appelle Valley, and notably at Saskatoon and Yorkton. Farmers took up land in close proximity to the railway, while ranching became quite widespread in southern Alberta. Towns and villages sprang up along the railway: Moosomin, Broadview, Indian Head, Qu'Appelle, Regina, Moose Jaw, Swift Current, Maple Creek, and Medicine Hat, requiring the establishment of new detachments of police. Meanwhile, the construction of the railway had introduced a temporary population of workers, associated with which were serious problems of law enforcement. The police rendered many services to the new settlers, in addition to their official responsibility for enforcing the prohibitory liquor laws, the criminal code and other federal laws, and various territorial ordinances. Settlers were often critical of the force, but they showed no desire to be without it, and the force's record in dealing with the problems of settlement and settlers approximated its success in dealing with the native population.

Throughout the period, the force, through contracts with I. G. Baker and Co., and with individuals, provided for the transmission and distribution of mail not only for the force but for the settlers, and for other government agencies.\(^1\) French established mail-carrying posts between Winnipeg and Swan River Barracks, and arranged for the sharing of expenses

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between the force, the Canadian Pacific Railway, and the Department of Public Works. In the south the force awarded contracts for the carrying of mail in each direction between Fort Benton and Fort Walsh, Fort Walsh and Battleford, Fort Walsh and Wood Mountain, and Fort Walsh and Fort Macleod. From the latter place the mail was forwarded to Forts Calgary and Saskatchewan. With the coming of the railway mail was forwarded from the end of steel to Calgary and Fort Macleod. At each of these points the mail was handled by the police at the posts. As late as 1883, members of the force acted as postmasters at various points, and the post office was located at the barracks. These arrangements continued when the police established themselves at Maple Creek, Medicine Hat, and Regina, although the police opened a temporary post office at the latter place, close to Market Square. In 1882, the police mail run between Battleford and Fort Walsh was discontinued, and the mail between these points was transmitted via Winnipeg, Bismarck and Fort Benton. In 1880, the force was

1French to the Deputy Minister of Justice, November 16, 1874, R.C.M.P. Records, Comptroller's Office, file No. 143-74.
2Edmonton Bulletin, November 19, 1881, p. 2.
3Irvine to White, June 20, 1883, R.C.M.P. Records, Commissioner's Office, RC18B3b, Vol. 4, p. 556.
4See for example, White to Irvine, June 13, 1883, ibid., file No. 334-1883; McIlree to Irvine, n.d., ibid., file No. 162-1883; White to Irvine, January 8, 1883, ibid., file No. 42-1883.
5White to Irvine, January 16, 1883, ibid., file No. 45-1883.
relieved of the burden of paying the entire expense of this service, when it was provided that the costs should be charged in equal proportions to the force, the Indian Department, and the government of the North-West Territories.\(^1\) It is safe to say that throughout most of the period the mail routes were purely police institutions. For a period of time, the force took meteorological readings for the government. However, in 1883, this service was discontinued, in view of the fact that it had never been satisfactorily carried out, and interfered with more vital police work.\(^2\)

In addition to caring for the Indian population the surgeons of the force provided medical attention to the general public,\(^3\) and, of course, examined lunatics, and those suspected of being insane. When found necessary the police were responsible for their transfer to Manitoba.\(^4\) Many prisoners were also taken to Manitoba. Others were imprisoned in the guard-rooms at the police posts to serve out their sentences as there were no gaols established in the Terri-

\(^1\)P.C. 951, May 10, 1880.
\(^2\)Irvine to White, March 10, 1883, R.C.M.P. Records, Commissioner's Office, RG18B3b, Vol. 4, p. 375.
\(^3\)Saskatchewan Herald, February 17, 1883, p. 1; "Medical Pioneering in Alberta," Historical Bulletin (Calgary Associate Clinic), Vol. 5, No. 2 (1940).
\(^4\)See for example Saskatchewan Herald, March 15, 1880, p. 1; September 27, 1880, p. 4; October 10, 1880, p. 1; October 28, 1882, p. 1.
tories, Commissioner's requests, notwithstanding. These duties increased the expenditures by the force which provided the public with an unfair picture as to its costs. The fact that the police, acting as Customs Agents, had not only collected thousands of dollars annually for the government coffers, but had contributed significantly to the welfare of businessmen in the Territories by stopping illicit trade, was seldom if ever credited to the force. The force also came to the assistance of other government agencies. As early as 1876, French, at Swan River Barracks, gave assistance to parties constructing the telegraph line by furnishing supplies without which they could not have continued their work, and the force was called upon to check supposed Indian interference with the telegraph following its construction to Edmonton via Battleford. A government surveyor, said of the police,

"I consider them a great service to the country. They keep the Indians and horse-thieves in check. Why, were it not for them one would never be able to get along. Our horses would be stolen, and our lives depend on our horses, as we could not carry supplies without them."

As settlement increased, the duties of the force


2 French to the Deputy Minister of Justice, March 4, 1876, R.C.M.P. Records, Commissioner's Office, RG18B3c, Vol. 46, p. 159.


became more complex and brought them increasingly into contact and sometimes conflict with the white population. The force had the unpleasant task of removing squatters from Indian reserves and from rangeland which had been leased from the government by the ranchers in the Bow River district.  

The police were called on to enforce the provisions of a wide range of ordinances passed by the government of the North-West Territories, which Macleod and Irvine as members of the North-West Council had helped to pass. The ordinances touched on almost every aspect of pioneer life. There were ordinances for the control of contagious diseases, the prevention of prairie and forest fires, the control of glanders, the licensing of billiard and other tables, the prevention of gambling, and others respecting the fencing over of established trails, the marking of stock (branding), control of stallions, poisons, and marriages, among many others. The enforcement of these ordinances required the police to play a vital role in the life of the average citizen. As an ex-member of the force, who joined it in 1879 wrote,

The duties of the Mounted Police were somewhat an unwritten law. They covered every phase of law, civil or criminal, of that of right and wrong, where authority was involved. Every commissioned officer, and every member in charge of a post, in many cases a single constable, was ipso facto a justice of the peace. We acted as magistrates,

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2 Macleod and Irvine served as members of the North-West Council. Macleod from 1877 to 1887, and Irvine from 1882 to 1887.

3 "A dangerous, contagious disease of the mucous membrane of the nostrils of horses," which can also be contracted by man and other animals.
sheriffs, constables, collectors of customs, postmasters, undertakers, issuers of licenses. We married people and we buried people. We acted as health inspectors, weather Bureau officials, Indian treaty makers; but above all, as diplomats, when it came to dealing with either Indians or half-breeds.1

Undoubtedly the force's major contribution in furthering the government's desire to see the West settled, aside from the general imposition of law and order and the removal of the Indians to their reservations, was the facilitating of railway construction. Under the watchful eye of the force, the railway was extended across the prairies to the summit of the Rockies by the end of 1883. The force not only did a remarkable job of keeping liquor away from the construction camps, but stopped gambling amongst the navvies whenever possible, quelled strikes, or threats of strikes when they arose, prevented the stealing of the contractors' horses, and the interference of Indians with the work of the company's surveyors. By 1882, more than 5,000 men and 1,700 teams were employed on the construction,2 and at the end of that year had completed 417 miles of track across the prairies, to a point about twelve miles east of Maple Creek, and only eighty-three miles short of the goal set for the year by W. C. Van Horne, the General Manager.3 In gratitude for the services rendered by the police Van Horne wrote Commissioner Irvine:

Our work of construction for the year of 1882 has just closed, and I cannot permit the occasion to pass without

2Turner, op. cit., p. 679.
3Ibid., p. 686.
acknowledging the obligations of the Company to the North-West Mounted Police whose zeal and industry in preventing traffic in liquor and preserving order along the line under construction have contributed so much to the successful prosecution of the work. . . . On no great work within my knowledge, where so many men have been employed has such perfect order prevailed.1

As the track reached across the prairies the police established numerous outposts along the line, where settlements had risen up. By 1882, detachments were on duty at Moosomin, Broadview, Troy, Moose Jaw, Maple Creek, Ten-Mile Crossing, "End of C.P.R. Track," and at the new headquarters at Regina.2 The idle navvies at the end of track near Maple Creek required constant supervision during the winter months of 1882-83. The Indians who had gathered there had to be watched as well, particularly as they interfered with contractors in the hope of obtaining food, tobacco, and other presents, and stole horses and beef cattle belonging to the contractors and the company.3 The detachments on the line of construction were placed under the direct command of Inspector S. B. Steele in 1883, who, with the resumption of work in the spring, was despatched to Maple Creek with twenty-seven men. This detachment was posted at the request of the Assistant Commissioner who feared the possibility of a clash between the Indians in the area and a party of some 130 strikers,

2Ibid.
formerly in the company's employ. In the summer of 1883, these strikers posed the threat of a serious disturbance. However, when their leader struck the foreman of a construction crew, Steele promptly arrested him and imprisoned him for seven days. "This arrest," said Irvine, "and other determined steps taken by us, had the effect of restoring quietude." The detachment at Calgary performed similar duties. Strikes were settled, and Superintendent McIllree was called upon to handle numerous complaints by the navvies concerning the non-payment of wages. In reporting the situation to Irvine, McIllree stated:

In nearly all cases they were working for small subcontractors. For some weeks we were literally besieged with applicants for non-payment of wages. A good many of these cases were decided in court under the Masters' and Servants' Act, but by far the greater number were settled by sending a man to the contractor's camp, getting a statement of the claimant's account, and demanding the balance due him, which was generally at once given to save costs of court. This entailed a great lot of work, as summonses had to be issued in case the contractor would not pay what was due, and I often had to send out many different parties. The detachments stationed along the line did good work in this respect also, as they were able to settle little questions of wages and other things without the parties having to come to the post.

In December, 1883, the Canadian Pacific Railway, in financial difficulty, reduced the wages of its engineers and firemen. This action led to a strike against the company,
which, in view of the stoppage of work, and malicious damage to railway property, appealed for police assistance. The Regina Leader and Manitoba Daily Free Press were not in sympathy with the strikers. In the opinion of Davin, editor of the Leader, the strikers were receiving "enormous" pay, and would still receive "splendid" remuneration under the terms offered by the company. The strikers, Davin said, "merit the strongest repudiation," and termed their action "the folly and criminality of the men who have put the country to so much inconvenience." The editor of the Free Press expressed similar sentiments. In response to the company's appeal, Irvine despatched two officers and thirty-five men under Superintendent Herchmer to Moose Jaw. With their arrival the company was able to make up a train, carrying not only passengers and mail, but also Herchmer with nineteen men, to Broadview at the eastern end of the railway division. Following their stay at Broadview, Herchmer reported:

On arrival there, I took charge of all the railway property. There was a good deal of excitement among the

3 Ibid.
strikers, and I have no hesitation in saying that if it had not been for our men there would have been serious trouble. . . . Besides guarding the round house, every engine which left the yard was guarded. ¹

Similar work was performed at Moose Jaw by the detachment under Inspector Deane, whom Herchmer had left in charge at that point. ² Before the year ended, the strikers returned to work, and accepted the wage proposals of the company. ³ In closing his report of the incident Irvine stated: "I shall only add that the prompt and I trust effectual, quelling of what at one time appeared to be a universal railway strike is . . . a matter of the utmost congratulation."⁴ The force's satisfaction in quelling the strike was not simply the result of a desire for self-congratulation. In an editorial reviewing the events of 1883, Davin wrote,

the Mounted Police have progressed in efficiency, and on several occasions—especially in connection with the late railway strike—have shown how admirably adapted they are to meet the needs of a country in the position of the North-West.⁵

When track-laying ended November 28, 1883, the terminus was within one and one-eighth miles of the summit of the Rocky Mountains.⁶ Again, the Company thanked the force for its contribution to the success of the project. John M.

¹Ibid.
²Ibid.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid.
Egan, General Superintendent wrote Irvine:

Gratitude would be wanting did the present year close without my conveying, on behalf of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, to you and those under your charge, most sincere thanks for the manner in which their several duties in connection with the railway, have been attended to during the past season.

Prompt obedience to your orders . . . contributed in no small degree, to the rapid construction of the line. The services of your men during recent trouble among a certain class of our employees, prevented destruction to property, and preserved obedience to law and order in a manner highly commendable. Justice has been meted out to them without fear or favour, and I have yet to hear any person, who respects same, say ought against your command.\(^1\)

The force's roles in the administration of justice, and the enforcement of the prohibitory liquor laws often resulted in it coming under public criticism. The force, as we shall see,\(^2\) had its own problems with liquor, and the duty of controlling its use amongst the white population made it unpopular in some quarters. Its enforcement of these laws had been of inestimable value to the Indians, the railway navvies, and the C.P.R. itself, but the value of these laws as applied to white settlers was often a subject of debate.

The force was placed in a difficult position on more than one occasion, it was claimed, by the actions of Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney in the granting of permits. A correspondent to the *Manitoba Daily Free Press* complained that Dewdney acted

in plain disregard of the law—of its spirit certainly—and grants unlimited permits, that is, permission to import, or bring, liquor into the Territory without a word as to quantity. I am assured that of these unlimited

\(^{1}\)Ibid.

\(^{2}\)See below, chapter VI, pp. 205-207.
permits more than 30 are known to the Mounted Police to be in the possession of certain parties, to be retained by them, and merely to be exhibited to the police as the liquor passes on. I am further told that the police are becoming disgusted with the duty of one day seizing perhaps a pint of liquor from a poor man or woman who had no permit, and the next day seeing large quantities enter the territory under the good favor of the Governor. This is a grave statement, but I have reliable authority for it. . . .1

On another occasion, the Winnipeg correspondent of the Globe attacked Dewdney in an article captioned "Dewdney's disgraceful interference with the Mounted Police." The correspondent wrote,

Unless I have been grossly misinformed, the usefulness of this body in keeping intoxicating liquor out of the Territory is being to a great extent neutralized by the extraordinary conduct of the individual known among the Indians as the "Big To-Morrow". . . . Whether from legal enactment or custom it has been generally supposed that this distinguished land speculator could or would only grant two gallon permits to parties about to travel in the Territory, and as long as he confined himself to these he did not seriously interfere with the usefulness of the Mounted Police. I have been informed, however . . . that this "man with four tongues" (as the simple-minded black-feet affectionally term him) has been in the habit of giving special permits, which do not in any way limit the quantity of liquor the holder may bring into the Territory. . . . At all events, it is nonsense to have the Mounted Police scouring the country and searching trains merely for the sake of catching unfortunates, when it is well known that there are permits in force that would authorize the bringing in of a whole train of liquor.2

The correspondent continued by citing the case of a "plain-clothes" policeman who on a train out of Winnipeg, became aware that a group of young men had considerable liquor in their possession. The young men, the correspondent said, realizing the policeman was on the train appealed to a

2Ibid., July 20, 1883, p. 2, reprinted from Globe.
prominent gentleman known to be a friend of Dewdney's who was on board. When the constable went to make an arrest, the gentleman is supposed to have said: "I'll save you that trouble . . . all the liquor in this car belongs to me, and here's a permit that'll cover it all whatever the amount may be." If such was the case, the force operated under serious handicaps. However, the Regina Leader immediately defended Dewdney, and, stating that police were not allowed to search traveller's valises unless in uniform, termed the story the product of "the wild hiccuping and miserable slobbering of tavern gossip." The charges made in the Globe would, if true, have reflected seriously on the force's effectiveness in the enforcement of the liquor laws. However, the statements of others, attesting to the efficiency of the police in this duty, suggest that the police were not handicapped to the extent implied by the Globe correspondent. A Moosomin resident wrote in 1882: "We are honored with the presence of two . . . Police, and thanks to the . . . energetic officer in charge . . . are . . . without stimulants these cold days." A Fort Walsh resident stated, "Christmas was quiet and decidedly dry this year . . ." while the Calgary Herald commented that "the liquor dealers . . . at least in the vicinity of Calgary, are complaining a great deal of the vigilance of the

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1 Ibid.
2 Editorial, Leader, July 26, 1883, p. 2.
4 Globe, January 17, 1881, p. 3.
Mounted Police—their deepest laid plots, and most secret hiding places being ferreted out."

The enforcement of these laws did, however, create resentment among segments of the population. In a letter to Sir John A. Macdonald, a Moosomin hotel keeper complained bitterly of being arrested for selling cider, which he believed to be a non-intoxicant. "I came here," he wrote, "believing it to be a free country, and governed by proper laws. I find it not second to autocratic Russia for tyranny and oppression." The writer was likely correct when he stated that the laws did "more harm than good, as they incite the people to evade and set them at defiance." That the police were operating under some difficulty seems evident from a letter of Superintendent Crozier at Fort Macleod to Dewdney in August, 1883. Crozier, in requesting that an ordinance be passed "to make drunkeness in the streets and other public places punishable by fine or imprisonment," told Dewdney:

As the law stands at present there is no way of punishing such an offense, so that really though this is considered a country from which liquor is prohibited, yet at times there is more drunkeness in a settlement than is ever seen in another country. The permit system of course accounts for this somewhat anomalous condition of affairs, but if persons who abuse the privilege of being permitted to bring liquor into the country by getting drunk or getting others drunk could be summarily punished as persons are punished in every other community there could be a very

1*Calgary Herald* (Calgary), September 21, 1883, p. 2.

great check upon those who invariably become intoxicated when any "Permit Liquor" arrives.¹

The enforcement of the liquor laws was undoubtedly the cause of most harassing and unpleasant duties for the force. The attitude of Inspector Steele was probably shared by the majority of the members of the force. Steele later wrote,

The same old law for the suppression of intoxicating liquor was in force, and proved excellent for the purpose of preserving peace on the railway construction and keeping the Indians from deterioration, but it should not have been forced upon the rest of the community against the will of the majority. It was intended for the prevention of the Indian trade, and our powers under it were so great that we could enter or search a place at any hour of the day or night. The officers and men hated this detestable duty, which gave them much trouble and gleams of unpopularity. . . .²

The most celebrated liquor case occurred in 1883, with the prosecution of Nicholas Flood Davin, editor of the Regina Leader, for bringing in liquor without a permit from Manitoba. Davin, who had subjected the police in Regina to considerable criticism in the early months following their arrival there in December, 1882, accused the police, particularly Superintendent Herchmer of seeking revenge.³ Davin, assuming the role of one being persecuted by the authorities, vigorously denied any wrong-doing, and he received the sympathy of a


²Steele, op. cit., p. 176.

³See for example Leader editorials, August 16, 1883, pp. 2, 4; August 30, 1883, p. 2.
number of newspapers across the country. However, he was convicted and fined fifty dollars and costs. Irvine had no doubt of Davin's guilt. In a letter to Fred White, Irvine referred to letters received by Superintendent Herchmer from eye-witnesses, and to verbal reports made to himself. Irvine stated that the reports of the trial in the Leader were twisted in a manner purposely calculated to carry with them the impression that the Stipendiary Magistrate trying the case was himself in sympathy with Mr. Davin and of the opinion that the liquor law had been strained, in order to bring about the conviction. Irvine told White that he believed Davin pleaded guilty "Not as he states for the purpose of waving all technicalities but solely to prevent evidence being taken in open court which would have been disgusting and scandalous in the extreme." Irvine added, "This is not the first occasion upon which I have received reports of Mr. Davin's drunken dissolute and indecent conduct while travelling on the train from Winnipeg." In a letter to Macdonald, Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney commented, "Davin is ... very hard on the Police. I think when he found that he had got into the mess he did it would have been better if he

1 See for example Manitoba Daily Free Press, August 20, 1883, p. 4; Fort Macleod Gazette, September 4, 1883, p. 6; Manitoba Daily Free Press, August 29, 1883, p. 2, reprinted from London Free Press.


4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., p. 670.
had let it drop." "Davin," Dewdney added, "had been in a beastly state of intoxication . . . and behaved in a most indecent manner. . . . I really don't think Davin knows the exhibition he made of himself."¹ In denying the charges, Davin told Macdonald, "When I commenced to criticize them they were in a state of all but hopeless demoralization. Now they are in pretty good trim."² In a related memorandum, Fred White advised Macdonald, "Herchmer and Davin have shaken hands and probably have sealed their new bonds of friendship by a draught from the historical flask."³ In any event, Davin freely praised the force in future editions.⁴

While much of the force's work in the latter years of the period was of a routine nature, the colour and pageantry associated with treaty-making was repeated in 1881, when the force provided an escort for the Governor General on his visit to the North-West. The escort, under the Command of Superintendent Wm. Herchmer had met His Excellency at Fort Ellice on August 13, following his voyage up the Assiniboine from Portage la Prairie where Herchmer had greeted him on August 8. In addition to providing an escort, the force was called on to care for the baggage and equipment, the pitching and taking down of tents, the storing of oats along the trail taken by

⁴See for example, editorial, Leader, October 25, 1883, p. 2.
the party, and the furnishing of relays of horses at the various police posts to be visited. After visiting Fort Qu'Appelle, Carlton, Prince Albert, Battleford, Calgary, and Fort Macleod, the Governor General was escorted to Fort Shaw, Montana Territory which he reached on September 28, and from whence he made his way east through the United States. The tour excited interest wherever it went. His Excellency had held Indian Councils at most of the points he visited; he had received effusive welcomes from Chief Beardy at Duck Lake, and Chief Crowfoot at the Blackfoot Crossing. He had visited Government House at Battleford, and the homes of settlers along the route. Throughout the tour, which covered 1,229 miles, and involved the escort in travelling a total of 2,072 miles, the force had made a most favourable impression.¹

Prior to His Excellency's departure from Fort Macleod, Commissioner Irvine received the following communication from Lt.-Col. F. Dewinton, the Governor's aide:

I am commanded by his Excellency the Governor General to desire you to express to Superintendent Herchmer, his entire satisfaction with the admirable manner that officer has performed his duty while in command of the force of Mounted Police which has escorted His Excellency from Winnipeg to Fort Macleod. I am further to request you to convey to the non-commissioned officers and men who formed the escort, His Excellency's thanks for the services rendered by them while on the march, and the pleasure it has afforded him to witness the discipline and efficiency of the corps.²


The role of the police in the administration of justice was a controversial issue in the latter years of the period. The Act of 1873, which authorized the establishment of the force, gave the police broad powers. Under the Act the Commissioner and every superintendent became *ex officio* a Justice of the Peace. By the amended Act of 1874, the Commissioner was granted all the power of a Stipendiary Magistrate, and in 1879, the Assistant Commissioner was also given these powers. The police could in effect, as it has been said, "Arrest an offender, act as his prosecutor, sit in judgment on him, and then become his jailer, thus performing all the functions of a judicial system."\(^1\) It is surprising that there was not more questioning of the propriety of the police acting as the sole instrument of both arrest and trial, than there appears to have been. As an American observer commented, "As Justices of the Peace they can hear and determine any charge manufactured by themselves, as policemen, and punish for any offense so charged."\(^2\) This was, indeed, a possibility, but it is highly doubtful that the police took advantage of the situation, and if they had done so, that such action would have been countenanced by any of the Commissioners. If the conduct of McIlree in handling complaints of non-payment of wages by C.P.R. contractors is any criterion, the


police no doubt endeavoured to carry out the spirit rather than the letter of the law, whenever possible. That this is likely is supported also by the attitude of Superintendent Walker at Battleford, who, in 1879, advised Macleod that in his magisterial capacity he had "made it a point" ever since reaching Battleford that

when people came to lay information and when the matter did not amount to compounding a Felony to try and get the parties to settle their disputes between themselves rather than go into Court which I believe is the most desirable course to persons in a new settlement like this.¹

On more than one occasion, the police were criticized for their role in law enforcement, and accused of retarding the administration of justice. In November, 1883, the force came under fire for its failure to enforce the laws at Prince Albert, where considerable discontent prevailed over the delay in granting homestead patents to settlers. On the basis of communications from J. F. Campbell, Justice of the Peace at Prince Albert, and Hayter Reed at Carlton, Dewdney telegraphed Macdonald, "Prince Albert reported in a very rowdy state. Magistrate insulted in execution of duty. Police there of little use. Firm officer should be sent. Liquor there in large quantities sold openly."² In December, Dewdney wrote Macdonald that he had been advised that a policeman had been seen "drunk and driving about in mufti with some of these


²Dewdney to Macdonald, November 13, 1883, Macdonald Papers, PAC, transcripts in AOS.
rowdys," and that when these rowdies had created disturbances in Court the Police had made no effort to stop them but "had left fearing they would be called in."¹ The situation complained of was shortly brought under control when Inspector Antrobus and new men replaced the old detachment at that point.²

Charges of police laxity, as had occurred at Prince Albert, were accompanied by others of undue harshness and martial law. An editorial in the Fort Macleod Gazette in 1883, complained of the force's activities in law enforcement as follows:

One of the reasons for calling this a police force was that the people of this country would not submit to military rule, and neither they will, but as matters stand at present, this is just what we are getting. If a civil process is to be served, it is a policeman who does it, a soldier, with a red tunic, riding breeches and spurs; a wagon train comes into the country, it is a man rigged out in all the paraphernalia of war who goes and searches through them; the people on a railway train have their pockets turned out, by a man in the full regimentals of Her Majesty's military service, and in fact, every duty which lies within the province of the municipal or county officers, is now executed by men who have every appearance of being soldiers, and as which strangers and especially foreigners regard them. This state of affairs caused the remark so often made here: "We are under martial law" and there is more truth than poetry in it.³

A similar complaint had been made three years before, when a

¹Dewdney to Macdonald, December 25, 1883, ibid.


³Editorial, Fort Macleod Gazette, June 4, 1883, p. 5.
correspondent stated:

It is understood that the Government's proposition to increase the strength of the . . . force does not meet with approval from the settlers in the North-West Territories. . . . The settlers object to their interference in the administration of justice, and by settlers the common complaint is they do not want "martial law." The meaning of the latter expression is made clear when it is learned that the Mounted Police with their red coats and revolvers stuck in their belts are employed even for such simple matters as serving subpoenas in civil suits. Their presence undoubtedly irritates many settlers. . . . The administration of justice by police officers is generally stated to have been in numerous cases harsh and unnecessarily arbitrary. They appear to forget that the functions of a peacemaker by an unwritten law form a portion of the duties of the magistrate.1

The implication that the settlers generally resented the presence of the police, however, is not supported by the available evidence. A few whiskey traders undoubtedly did, and as we have seen a newspaper correspondent or editorial would be critical of some of their activities, but the prevailing attitude was one of appreciation of their services. Indeed, while it may be said, that if there was some justification in principle for the criticism of the force's roles in the administration of justice and law enforcement, in practice such criticism appears unjustified. When the Ottawa Free Press attacked the force, the Saskatchewan Herald rallied to its defence. Accusing the Free Press of trying "to make a little political capital by traducing the Mounted Police . . ." the editor stated,

The Free Press may be an authority upon Ottawa matters, but when it undertakes to speak for the people of the Territories it should make sure of its position. No greater slander has been issued against the Territories than is contained in the assertion made with reference to

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the mounted police that "the settlers of the North-West dislike and distrust them." This feeling has no existence; but on the contrary the utmost good feeling prevails.¹

This opinion was undoubtedly close to the truth, for when Superintendents Jarvis and Herchmer were transferred from the Edmonton and Battleford districts respectively, their departures were regretted by the residents of those areas.² It is supported, too, by the successful petition of the people of Prince Albert against the planned withdrawal of the detachment from their midst.³ Indeed it seems that the people of the new towns were generally law-abiding, and that, because of the presence of the N.W.M.P., those elements which may have been inclined otherwise, had little rein from the beginning. The effect of the force's presence in early Regina was described by Major H. Smith, former aide-de-camp to the Commander of the Canadian Militia:

There is perfect order, no rowdyism, no gambling, none of that wild lawlessness and flourishing of bowie knives and revolvers that marks new western towns on the other side of the line. The place is as quiet as any town in Ontario. Yes more so--this is due to good magistracy supported by a strong police force but more to the absence of liquor. In addition to all that, the settlers are of a good class from the best sections of Ontario. They have brought industry and refinement and culture.⁴

In spite of the criticism it was subjected to throughout the period, the force's effectiveness was reflected in

¹Editorial, Saskatchewan Herald, October 31, 1881, p. 2.
³Ibid., October 17, 1881, p. 1.
⁴Earl G. Drake, Regina: The Queen City (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1955), p. 32.
what, despite the small population of the Territories, appears to have been a fairly low incidence of serious crime in the Territories during the years 1874 to 1883. The tables of crimes tried before the officers of the force and stipendiary magistrates, which accompany the annual reports of the Commissioner for the years 1878-1883, show that only five murder cases were tried during the last six years of the period. The vast majority of crimes involved horse stealing, cattle killing and infractions of the liquor laws.

With the exception of the latter, the situation as far as theft was concerned was similar to that in the American West. W. P. Webb noted, "Of petty thievery there was practically none on the Plains. Property consisted of horses and cattle. There were horse thieves and cattle thieves." On both sides of the international border the "unlocked door" was the practice of the time. Wanderers were expected to help themselves to food and shelter even if the owner was absent, and few, if any, took advantage of the opportunity for theft or vandalism. In 1883, when the picture was distorted by scores of cases concerning non-payment of wages by sub-contractors engaged in railway construction, there was a total of only 376 cases tried in the North-West Territories. In addition to ninety-eight cases of non-payment of wages, there were ninety-five charges of liquor infractions, twenty-nine of gambling, twenty-five of assault, seventeen of horse steal-

ing, twelve of cattle killing, nineteen of larceny, twenty-seven of possession of stolen property, four of malicious injury to property, two of murder, and miscellaneous cases, including three charges of setting prairie fires. While there were many convictions arising from these charges, a large number of defendants were acquitted, and many charges dismissed. Considering that there were some 30,000 Indians, and at least 7,000 Métis and whites in the Territories in 1881, and without allowing for the significant increase in the white population from 1881 to 1883, or the many cases involving wages, the incidence of crime was probably low.

There is no doubt that through its presence in the North-West Territories the force had helped the country pass through a remarkable transition in ten short years. Lands hitherto unknown had been explored and settled, and frontiers pushed back. The main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway had been completed across the Territories. The native people and the scattered settlers lived in peace together, thanks to the presence of the force, which had also enabled the growth


2The Census of 1881, showed 6,974 French (probably Métis) and whites, figures which may be as imprecise as those for Indians (see above, p. 103, footnote 1), since the Census of 1890-91 in an historical table shows 25,515 whites in the Territories in 1881. The 1885 Census enumerated 23,344 whites and 4,848 Métis.

3There is no record of cases investigated, in which no charges were laid.
of new towns wherein law and order prevailed. Dominion statutes, the criminal code, and territorial government ordinances had been effectively applied. True, there had been difficulty in enforcing the prohibitory liquor laws, which had obviously little support among a considerable segment of the new populace, and there were valid questions about the role of the police in the judicial processes of the law, but over all the police had played a worthy role in effecting the peaceful opening of the West by the end of its first decade of operations.
CHAPTER VI

INTERNAL PROBLEMS AND PUBLIC CRITICISM, 1874-1883

The North-West Mounted Police, while on the whole successfully carrying out its official duties in relation both to the native population and the new settlers, experienced in this period a variety of internal problems arising in part from isolation and frontier conditions, and in part from inadequate provision by the authorities for the conduct and welfare of the force. The maintenance of discipline and high morale was thus imperilled. Desertions, resignations, and instances of improper conduct, particularly in informal relations with the population of the area, all have a place in the first decade of North-West Mounted Police history. Internal dissatisfaction and criticism was matched by public criticism of arrangements for the force and, at times, by spirited attacks upon and defence of the force itself in the press and parliament.

The problem of retaining personnel in the force became evident at an early stage. In December, 1875, Commissioner French advised the government that due to desertion and other problems there were only sixty-nine men whose engagements would expire in 1876.¹ This meant that more than half of

¹French to the Deputy Minister of Justice, December 17, 1875, R.C.M.P. Records, Commissioner's Office, RG18B3c, Vol. 46, p. 115.
the approximately 150 men recruited in the fall of 1873 had already left the service. Failure of initial pay arrangements at Fort Macleod had resulted in eighteen desertions at that place by March, 1875. The failure to pay the men at all for months following their arrival nearly led to open revolt, as well as to more desertions. The men had been forced to buy on credit any clothing or other necessities at greatly inflated prices from the traders who appeared on the scene. Macleod wired Ottawa, "Great dissatisfaction amongst men at non-arrival of pay eighteen have deserted." The difficulty was overcome when Macleod was authorized to draw, at Fort Benton, $30,000 on the Bank of Montreal to pay the force under his command, and to purchase supplies and clothing for immediate wants.¹ However, the major reasons for the loss of men throughout the period were the inadequacy of medical examinations conducted by local practitioners in such recruiting centres as Toronto, Ottawa, Halifax, Quebec, Montreal, and Kingston, the lack of adequate training, prior to, and following the arrival of recruits in the West, and desertions due to the effects of isolation and other hardships. In later years reduced rates of pay and the availability of better-paying jobs in the North-West Territories and in the neighbouring Territories of the United States contributed to the loss of personnel.

The findings of a Medical Board held at Fort Garry on January 26, 1874, illustrated the difficulty created by hasty

¹For communications between French, Macleod, and Ottawa see ibid., Comptroller's Office, file No. 150-75.
recruiting and obviously superficial medical examinations. The Board found that two men recruited in the previous year were blind in the right eye, five suffered from acute heart disease, one from stiffness of the right elbow, one from tuberculosis, one from debility, one from varicose veins, one from syphilis, and one from a fracture of the upper part of a leg—all of which conditions existed previous to enlistment.

The problem of inadequate medical examinations, as well as false statements on the part of the examining physicians, persisted. In his report of 1879, Surgeon George Kennedy, at Fort Macleod, referred to two recruits who had been suffering from asthma for years before entering the service, and stated that one of the men was told by the examining physician "that the climate of this country was an excellent one for asthmatics." In 1880, Kennedy, then at Fort Walsh, reported that of thirteen men invalided during the year, at least five should never have been engaged for medical reasons. Furthermore, a General Order was issued on June 18, 1883, to the effect that in future no transport allowance would be paid to men invalided as the result of injuries or diseases contracted prior to enlistment. The rather high incidence of illness

1 Memorandum, January 26, 1874, ibid., file No. 8-74.


noted by the force's surgeons was not all attributable to pre-enlistment conditions. For years, seeing a possible cause in the youthfulness of recruits, the surgeons called for the raising of the minimum age from eighteen to twenty-one, except in cases where men younger than twenty-one were of exceptional physical strength. Indeed, the rigorous life led by the police led Surgeon Augustus Jukes to recommend in 1882 that the minimum age be set at twenty-three. Irvine endorsed Jukes' statement that

a better limit to the age for this service would be from 23 to 40, by adopting which . . . the efficiency of the Force would be materially increased, and the sick reports materially decreased, and the number of men annually required to be invalided reduced to a minimum.¹

However, this suggestion does not appear to have been given serious consideration.

Hasty selection of recruits and the lack of a training depot were also blamed for the difficulty in retaining men and in bringing the force to a peak of efficiency. Smyth stressed the importance of establishing a training depot in 1875,² and in subsequent years the same recommendation was made from time to time by Commissioners and other high ranking officers. In his annual report for 1882, Commissioner Irvine stressed the need for careful selection, and put the problems created by lack of training in clear perspective.

Now that headquarters have been established, with railway communication to the Eastern Provinces, I intend to carry

²Smyth's Confidential Report, 1875, p. 45.
into effect my previous recommendation to form a depot of instruction. Recruits on arrival will be drilled and instructed in their duties, and as they become efficient, will be drafted into the different divisions in which they are required. I would recommend that recruits be engaged from time to time to fill vacancies as they occur in the Force.

Heretofore, owing to the difficulty of forwarding recruits to the Territory, except at stated periods, it was necessary to engage them in large bodies in Canada. This was attended with evil consequences. A large number of undisciplined men, associated together for a considerable length of time, naturally formed intimacies which were objectionable, for on arrival at a post they thus formed a distinct "clique," apart from the older men. The change of life which they experienced, their surroundings, the discipline, the arduous duties they were called upon to perform, gave rise to imaginary grievances, which were nursed and talked over among themselves; not mixing up with the older hands, who would otherwise have imparted a desirable influence, they became dissatisfied. This was in a great measure the cause of so many desertions taking place among the recruits. It is worthy of note that all the desertions have, "without exception" been men of but a few month's service.¹

Although no training depot was established in this period, when detachments had time, there was training in horsemanship, foot, target, and skirmishing drill. The latter conducted for a time at Fort Walsh, by Inspector S. B. Steele, "a very clever man," was said to have been adapted from that of the United States Army.² In addition, artillery drill was conducted at Forts Walsh and Macleod, the only posts to have such armament. However, instruction in the interpretation of laws, the application of legal processes, and generally any training in criminology remained for the future. When it is considered that as late as June 12, 1880, provision was made for the

²Globe, April 17, 1880, p. 6.
issue of only 120 rounds of ball ammunition, annually, to each man for target practice it should not be expected that the average man became a crack marksman.¹ However, the Committee of the Privy Council, in a fit of "generosity" did approve the Minister of the Interior's recommendation that "members . . . be allowed to purchase . . . ammunition for target practice and rifle matches . . . such quantities as may be approved by the Commissioner."²

The Toronto Globe's correspondent probably assessed the adequacy of training, some causes of desertion, and the foolishness of some of the government's actions quite accurately, when he wrote,

> From what I have been able to observe here and at other posts I have visited, the force appears to be in first-rate working order, though some improvements might be made in the mode of training and mounting the men that have already been strongly urged upon the attention of the Government. The men should be trained up to a certain point before they come west of Toronto. . . .

One of the greatest annoyances to which the officers of the Mounted Police are subject is the desertion of men, who have often to be placed in such a position that they can easily get across the line if they wish to. The men who desert are almost invariably recruits, who become disheartened with their first experience of real "soldiering" and indeed it is not surprising that they should get sick of it. They are taken to a new country far away from friends and old associations, they are subjected to the rigours of a training that is calculated to develop them into useful men just as rapidly as possible, they find there is much in the life of an "N.W.M.P." much that is decidedly dull prosy hard work. The recruit finds that in the matter of riding his views differ very materially from those of the sergeant major, and that the latter is strongly disposed to have his way, though it may make the

¹P.C. 1015, June 12, 1880.
²Ibid.
bones of the former ache after every lesson. The recruit finds that though he is a "mounted policeman" he has much to do that is not at all like the programme he had mapped out for himself when he decided to enlist. He does not eat a daintily prepared game breakfast, and then spend the forenoon in carefully adjusting a gorgeous uniform, mounting a gaily caparisoned charger, and cantering over the dewy prairie. His riding is generally confined to the riding school, where he is directly under the eye of the sergeant-major, and the rest of his time is pretty well taken up with a variety of duties and exercises that he had never dreamed of entering into the programme of a mounted policeman. It is a notorious fact that nearly all whoever desert do so during their first year in the service. If these men were put in barracks at Toronto and trained for two or three months by a competent officer they would either desert there, where they had good opportunities for doing so, or else they would become trusty and useful men. There are also many young men sent up here, who go to the hospital within the first fortnight and stay till they are finally invalided and sent home. Now if the plan suggested were adopted both these classes would be weeded out before the Government had gone to the expense of sending them up to the North-West. The best of recruits is seldom worth anything for the first three or four months of his term of service, and even if it were certain that he would be useful after the Government had gone to the expense of sending him here he could be trained much more cheaply in Toronto than in the North-West. While the cost of transportation would in that case never be wasted on men in any way unfitted for the service. It appears to me very strange that this reform (which has again and again been recommended by officers of the force) has not ere this been adopted.1

The lack of adequate provision for maintaining discipline also created many problems, both for officers and for morale in the ranks. If anything, the originating act encouraged insubordination. Under that act misconduct was punishable simply by suspension or dismissal, or for fines of up to thirty days pay. As a result, men desiring to leave the force could misbehave intentionally, or merely walk out of barracks. In a letter to the Deputy Minister of Justice,

1Globe, December 23, 1882, p. 4.
the paymaster described the ease with which thirty-one men left the force prior to its departure west in 1874, and cited a particular case:

So in the meantime Stone is walking about at large, and the force . . . held up to ridicule. . . . At present any of the men . . . may desert and even if I meet them on the streets of this city [Winnipeg] I have no power to arrest them. . . . Owing to false statements as regards the force made by a great number of the deserters, and persons not favourable to it, there appears . . . to be a feeling in favor of the deserters. . . .

Although a new Act was passed in 1874, no provision was made for the punishment of deserters, but it did provide that failure to deliver up Crown property on suspension or dismissal was, in addition to the fine provided under the old Act, now punishable by up to six months' imprisonment in default of payment. In 1875, a further revision of the Act provided for the punishment of deserters by the imposition of a fine not exceeding one month's pay, or for imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months at hard labor, or both.

Commissioner French had been optimistic about the provisions for discipline in the originating act. On January 14, 1874, he had advised the Minister of Justice that applying military rules for the punishment of Policemen, I think inadvisable. Imprisonment, solitary confinement, or sack drill, would I think degrade the men in their own eyes—According to Section 20 heavy fines can be inflicted and any punishment beyond this will rarely be required.

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1E. D. Clark to the Deputy Minister of Justice, August 8, 1874, R.C.M.P. Records, Comptroller's Office, file No. 67-74.

2Statutes of Canada, 37 Victoria, chapter 22.

3Ibid., 38 Victoria, chapter 50.
French added: "Dismissal would usually be a severe punishment, but in certain cases men might wilfully mis-conduct themselves in order to get discharged."¹ To deal with such cases, French recommended that men dismissed should be required to refund the value of their kit and second-class fare from Ottawa to Winnipeg, and that failure to do so should be liable to imprisonment of up to six months.² Some of these recommendations were incorporated in the 1874 Act, but by 1875 French clearly considered his earlier views on the adequacy of the disciplinary provisions of the Act overly optimistic.

In April, 1875, he advised the Minister of Justice that

> fining does well enough for trivial offences ... but for serious offences against discipline, desertion, etc. (of which the civil law would not ordinarily take any cognizance) the system of fining must I think be considered little better than useless.³

French cited the case of a deserter and said it was "useless for me to apprehend him, as I would not have any means of punishing him."⁴ Thus it appears that the provisions placed in the 1875 Act were in line with French's recommendations. Although the new provisions did not stop desertions altogether, Major General Smyth observed following his inspection in 1875 that

> until the recent changes in the law, the proper main-

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¹ French to the Minister of Justice, January 14, 1874, R.C.M.P. Records, Comptroller's Office, file No. 2-74.
² Ibid.
³ French to the Minister of Justice, April 7, 1875, ibid., Commissioner's Office, RG18B3c, Vol. 46, p. 2.
⁴ Ibid.
The lack of adequate provisions for discipline often placed the force's superiors in a ridiculous position, and caused the government needless expense. In a memo to Superintendent Jarvis, November 24, 1873, Acting Commissioner W. Osborne Smith authorized him to grant discharges to twelve men who refused to be attested, and to grant them full payment from the date of their engagement. Smith had no alternative. Eight years later, Commissioner Irvine appealed to the authorities at Ottawa that the pay of men enlisted in the eastern provinces should not be commenced until their arrival in the West, and cited the case of one man who, on his arrival at Fort Walsh refused to sign articles of agreement and took up other employment. There were, Irvine stressed, "No laws by which the man could be forced to serve." 

In spite of the fact that desertion had been made punishable by imprisonment in 1875, men continued to desert, and by 1882 this had become such a serious problem that the Act was again amended, extending the term of imprisonment from six months to one year. This was a most necessary step, 

1 Smyth's General Inspection Report, 1875, p. 60. 
4 Statutes of Canada, 45 Victoria, chapter 29.
Macdonald explained.

The reason of increasing the term is that men put under arrest all winter were, when the six months were up, quite ready for spring work. The clause forfeiting pay during imprisonment was introduced, because it was held by the Commissioner that under the law the prisoner had a right to draw full pay while in confinement. There ought to be some check on that, and this provides that in all cases of sentence the pay of the offender shall be forfeited.¹

This Act also did away with the requirement that a man deserting to any point in Canada other than the North-West Territories had to be served with a notice requiring him to return to duty, before he became liable to punishment. However, the desertion rate remained a problem,² owing chiefly to the proximity of the United States, for if men could cross the boundary they could evade prosecution. Another problem created by having posts near the boundary was that the opening of silver and other mines in Montana, provided jobs at high wages, prompting Irvine to take upon himself the responsibility of "granting a substantial reward out of the Fine Fund to" those instrumental in apprehending deserters.³

While there is no substantial evidence that the conditions which gave rise to desertions seriously affected the force's efficiency, they undoubtedly made more difficult the maintenance of morale at a high level. There were serious

¹D.H.C., 1882, April 11, John A. Macdonald (Carleton), p. 802.
causes for complaint by the men of the force. It is surprising that there were not more cases of insubordination and desertion than appear to have taken place. Not only were their posts isolated, they were often inadequately constructed to withstand the rigors of the prairie climate. Hospital facilities and medical attention were deficient. They had improved since the day, in 1875, when the Surgeon at Fort Macleod advised a friend that he was without as much as a pair of teeth forceps.\(^1\) Nevertheless, while three surgeons were employed during most of the period, hospital facilities at the posts, if there were any at all, were, like the barracks themselves, exceedingly primitive. Sick men from some posts had to be transported considerable distances for medical attention. From its inception Fort Walsh proved a particularly unhealthy spot, and there was more serious illness there than at any other post, although Macdonald's statement that the sick lists there were greater than for all the other posts combined, was likely a slight exaggeration.\(^2\)

The chief cause of the long sick lists at Fort Walsh, a typhomiasmatic condition, called by the miners "mountain fever," and prevalent at many of the military posts in Montana, first appeared in 1876, and subsequently reached Wood Mountain. The surgeons who served at Fort Walsh frequently recommended the relocation of the post, and blamed the condition on an

\(^1\)\textit{Globe}, April 6, 1875, p. 2.
unhealthy water supply and on overcrowded barracks. The year 1879 was a particularly bad one at Fort Walsh, and Surgeon Kittson concluded that Battle Creek, which supplied the post with water was the source of the disease. In his report for that year, Kittson stated, "a retrospective view of the past year, considered from a medical standpoint, is anything but satisfactory."\(^1\) Kittson placed particular emphasis on the creek into which poisonous wastes which developed in the carcasses of horses and buffalo on the valley floor made their way, and conditions at the post itself. "A noxious cesspool," Kittson wrote,

was found in the blind alley extending the whole length of "E" Division huts, where the sergeants' mess cook was in the habit of throwing slops, vegetable garbage, etc. The first victims of typho-miasmatic fever were the sergeants' mess waiter and an "E" Division man in the adjoining building, who complained that a bad smell came from underneath the floor in the corner where his bunk stood.\(^2\)

Kittson added

The overcrowding of huts no doubt was an important factor in producing the typhoid element. Some of the rooms allowed less than 200 cubic feet of breathing space. Experience has taught us that each of a body of men occupying one room should be allowed at least 600 cubic feet.\(^3\)

Steps were taken in 1879 to prevent the spread of the disease. Huts were whitewashed and disinfected, additional windows installed, ventilators placed in roofs, trestle beds substi-


\(^2\)Ibid., p. 29.

\(^3\)Ibid.
tuted for bunks, and all possible sources of infection removed or abandoned, and a well was dug to replace the creek as a source of water. Kittson expressed confidence that the fever had been mastered, but while the situation showed some improvement, the disorder persisted until the abandonment of the post.

Fort Walsh, although not alone in this respect, experienced a considerable incidence of venereal disease. An ex-member of the force stated,

Now, I know a chap out there who's very bad with a loathsome disease. The doctor reported against him but he was sworn in all the same. There's a lot of them like that in the force, and they spread disease among the Indians. Nothing of that sort was known here before the advent of the Mounted Police. I know one man against whose swearing in Doctor Kennedy sent a strong protest, saying that he was totally unfit for duty. He was very far gone with a similar disease, but he was sworn in, and when I left was acting as cook at Fort Walsh.  

That some of the charges contained in the above statement were well-founded is supported by Surgeon Kittson's report for 1874 in which he states, "Gonorrhoea and Syphilis increased the Daily Sick Report notably," and, "Syphilis as a distinct disease has caused us more trouble, vexation and loss of time than any other disease." In his annual report for 1881, the medical officer at Fort Walsh stated,

a feature in the medical history of the past year ... is the introduction of syphilis among the men. ... It was

1 Ibid., p. 30.
3 Annual Report of the N.W.M.P., 1875, p. 32.
4 Ibid., p. 37.
brought over from the other side of the line by the Cree and Assiniboine camps on their return here a year ago last fall.¹

A similar situation existed at Fort Macleod in 1882.² Whether or not a man so infected actually served as a cook at Fort Walsh has not been confirmed. However, on February 13, 1883, the Comptroller, Frederick White, wrote to Irvine regarding the "questionable propriety of re-engaging specially for the duties of a hospital servant, a man who was known to have constitutional syphilis."³

Although "mountain fever" caused considerable illness, perhaps permanently affected the health of some of the men, and likely had an adverse affect on morale, only two deaths occurred from it amongst members of the force. Indeed, the numbers of deaths occurring in the eleven year period 1873-1883 is remarkably low. Only twelve deaths from all causes appear to have taken place.⁴ Two men were accidentally shot, two drowned, two froze to death, one was murdered near Fort

⁴Scarlet and Gold, Diamond Jubilee Edition, 1933-34, pp. 13-16 contains lists of officers, non-commissioned officers and men who died since the force's inception. These lists are inaccurate as they list only nine deaths as having occurred 1873-1883. They should include the death referred to in General Order No. 3, May 8, 1874, R.C.M.P. Records, Comptroller's Office, RG18340a, Vol. 10, and the two deaths by freezing referred to in Macleod to French, January 4, 1875, R.C.M.P. Records, Commissioner's Office, file No. 63-75.
Walsh, presumably by Indians, and in addition to the two who succumbed to the "mountain fever" at Fort Walsh, one other, a newly-appointed officer, died of natural causes while en route to the West.

While inadequacies of physical facilities, privations, and illness were a fruitful source of complaint, they were considerably outdone by grievances over such issues as rates of pay, the government's handling of land warrants, hospital stoppages, the lack of a pension plan, and inadequate compensation for accidents. Following its return to power, the Macdonald government's efforts to reduce expenditures led to considerable dissatisfaction. Its inability to make any significant reductions in the costs of provisioning the force, led it to reduce the pay of the men, to make reductions in the free kit, and to abolish land warrants. The new Police Act, passed in 1879, increased the term of engagement from three to five years, and abolished the granting of land warrants to new recruits effective July 1. Prior to the passage of this Act, the pay of constables had been reduced from seventy-five cents per day for the whole term of service to fifty cents per day for the first year, and seventy-five cents per day for the ensuing two years. However, the Government, finding that applications for engagement continued to be far in excess of the number of vacancies, provided by an Order-in-Council approved in April, 1880, that the pay of constables engaged after April 1 be reduced to forty cents per day for

\[1\text{P.C. 590, June 25, 1877. See also P.C. 607, April 5, 1880.}\]
the first year, and fifty cents per day for the ensuing four years. The Order also provided for new rates of pay for non-commissioned officers promoted after April 1, 1880, and also for non-commissioned officers and constables re-engaging for a further period of service. Another Order of the same date also was passed with a view to economy. Since March 22, 1877, it had been possible for members of the force to obtain their discharge upon the payment of one hundred dollars, however, this Order enabled men desirous of leaving the force to do so free of charge, because "under the revised terms of re-engagement, to fill the vacancies thus created, a very considerable saving will result." This Order too, proved inimical to morale. The "revised terms of re-engagement" referred to had been provided by an Order-in-Council passed in 1879 which provided that the "only inducement which should in future be offered members of the Force to re-engage should be the privilege of naming the period of their second term of service, either three, four or five years. . . ." The previous arrangement for re-engagement, which had proven most popular, had allowed those re-engaging for a new term of three years, a bonus of forty dollars, a second land grant, and three months furlough during the period of re-engagement.

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1 P.C. 607, April 5, 1880.
2 P.C. 603, April 5, 1880.
3 Ibid.
4 P.C. 955, July 10, 1879.
5 General Order, No. 1, June 11, 1876, R.C.M.P. Records, Commissioner's Office, RG18B4a.
Taken together, these new provisions made possible situations which could not help but lead to dissatisfaction, and create considerable problems for those in positions of command. In particular, the Order-in-Council reducing the pay created all sorts of incongruous possibilities, and led to a number of desertions, particularly across the boundary where pay in the mines was said to be at least three times better.\textsuperscript{1} Under the revised regulations it was actually possible for a man who joined in 1879 at seventy-five cents per day, to receive the same pay if promoted to Corporal, and to continue to receive the same rate if promoted to Sergeant, while constables who joined the force previous to, or at the same time as himself also received seventy-five cents, and an additional fifteen cents for extra work. Another possible situation was that a constable who had re-engaged at the opportune time, and had later been promoted to Corporal could draw eighty-five cents a day, while a Sergeant, fourteen months his senior as a non-commissioned officer received seventy-five cents a day. Years later, S. B. Steele wrote regarding the reduction of pay to forty cents a day,

The consequence of this remarkable regulation was that none of the old hands would re-engage to get less pay than the recruits. . . . The result was that the Force was given a blow from which it took some years to recover. . . . There were frequent arguments on the subject. A trial of the class advocated proved how foolish it was . . . and the pay had to be raised again by a sliding scale to 75 cents per day.\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1}\textit{Saskatchewan Herald}, February 28, 1881, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{2}S. B. Steele, op. cit., pp. 143-44.
In a letter to Macdonald in February, 1881, Irvine stressed that the question of pay and kit had a direct bearing on discipline. While agreeing that the rate of pay provided upon the organization of the force was too high, he stated that the reduction made in April, 1880, was "too great," that constables receiving only forty cents a day were getting less than those serving in any force ever organized in Canada, and that the demand for mechanics and laborers at high wages in both the North-West Territories and the United States "cannot fail to lead to influences tending to create dissatisfaction upon a body of men paid in accordance with our present scale." Irvine recommended specific pay increases, and while agreeing that a considerable reduction in expenditures should be possible added, "I cannot, however refrain from expressing the belief that too serious a reduction in kit and clothing, can only prove a saving which will unquestionably be obtained at a much decided and marked loss of efficiency." To offset this, Irvine had previously recommended the provision of pay increases based on length of service and good conduct, particularly as the land grants were no longer being awarded in recognition of satisfactory service.

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1 The intervention of depression conditions no doubt made such a judgment tenable, even if comparisons to other trades might not.


3 Ibid.

The dissatisfaction resulting from these economy measures together with an upturn in the economy led the government to make some adjustments. Consequently, by an Order-in-Council of April 5, 1881, provision for good conduct pay was made.¹ This Order provided that non-commissioned officers and constables re-engaging for a further term of service should receive good conduct pay at the rate of twenty-five cents per day, and that non-commissioned officers and constables who had engaged at the reduced rates of pay provided in the Order of April, 1880, be granted good conduct pay at the rate of five cents per day for each year of service after the first year, up to a maximum of twenty-five cents a day. This adjustment, however, did not eliminate the problem, as Irvine was quick to point out. In a letter to White on July 25, 1881, Irvine referred to a previous letter in which he had stated,

If only Non-Commissioned Officers who re-engaged this year are to receive the 25 cts per day, Good conduct pay, it will, I am satisfied be the means of causing general discontent, discontent too founded on perfectly good ground, and went on to say,

I now find my surmise was a correct one, and much discontent has been created by Sergeants, who re-engaged this year being paid at the rate of $1.00 per day, while Senior Sergeants, who did not happen to re-engage this year, are being paid at the rate of 75 cts per day.

Irvine called for an immediate rectification, in order to prevent "many of the best Sergeants" from applying "for permission to revert to the rank of Constable."² The adjustment requested

¹P.C. 492, April 5, 1881.
was made a few months later.¹ In January of 1882, another Order was approved which provided that on and after March 1, 1882, the rate of pay of constables during their first year's service be changed from forty to fifty cents per day, thus these men were enabled to reach the maximum of seventy-five cents per day, as provided by all of the "Police Acts" during this period, in the final year of their five year period of service.²

The government appears to have recognized that the granting of discharges without cost, had also resulted in the loss of good men for, by an Order-in-Council of September 6, 1882, discharge by purchase was again called for. Under this Order men could purchase a discharge on the payment of $3.00 per month for the unexpired portion of their term of service, except during the last year for which the required payment was set at $50.00. The Order also provided that the granting of discharges should be subject to approval of the Commissioner and the responsible minister.³

Another provision which caused dissatisfaction was that which called for hospital stoppages. In a letter to the Secretary of State in June, 1876, French, supported Surgeon Kittson's recommendation that all men on the sick list be placed under hospital stoppages at the rate of forty cents a day, that is, that for each day of hospitalization he would

¹P.C. 109, January 24, 1882.
²P.C. 96, January 24, 1882.
³P.C. 1785, September 6, 1882.
have his pay docked forty cents. Giving his reasons, French wrote that

I have much reason to believe that the catarrhs, rheumatism, etc. ... were due mainly to their own carelessness—as, from one-third to one-fourth of the Force have been on the sick list at one time. It appears necessary to abate if possible such an objectionable state of affairs for the future. ... The hospital stoppage is a recognized deduction in most Force's that I am cognizant of.  

On August 16, 1876, an Order-in-Council was passed which provided that "25 cents per diem be deducted from the pay while in the hospital or on the sick list except in cases where injuries were received or illness contracted while on duty." This deduction became a particular aggravation following the reduction in pay. In an interview with the *Manitoba Daily Free Press* an ex-member of the force complained that the pay of a mounted policeman is supposed to be forty cents a day. ... Well, I went into the hospital on the 23rd of September, 1880, and remained there until the 16th day of May this year. That makes 237 days that I was in that hospital. Now what do you think they did with me? ... Out of my forty cents a day they took twenty-five cents for every day that I was in the hospital. ... For 237 days I got fifteen cents a day, which was just about enough to pay for my washing ... which came rather hard on me, considering that I had to pay ten cents a piece for washing. ... Out there the idea is to make as much as you can out of the poor devils of Mounted Policemen. They'll sock it into you for washing and everything of the kind you get done; and then on the other hand, the authorities never lose a chance of taking something off your pay. By-the-way, now that's something that I feel just a leetle bit curious about. You know I don't believe these 'stoppages' are reported to the Department at all.

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1 French to the Secretary of State, June 20, 1876, R.C.M.P. Records, Comptroller's Office, file No. 216-76.

2 P.C. 776, August 16, 1876.

The complainant continued with a criticism of hospital rations.

Yes sir, I wish you could see and smell some of the meat we got. At one time it was so bad that it was perfectly unendurable, and in spite of the terrorism which prevails, we hospital patients entered a protest, and called the doctor's attention to the matter. An investigation ensued and a whole lot of the meat was condemned and the doctor ordered it to be thrown away. That's the sort of stuff they were feeding sick men on all winter. Ugh! You just ought to taste the rotten stuff to get an idea of what we poor beggars had to go through.¹

Nevertheless, despite the reduction in pay, and complaints similar to the above, no reduction in the amount of hospital stoppages was made until 1882. In March, Irvine wrote Ottawa recommending "most strongly" that in view of the pay reduction that the stoppages be reduced to ten cents per day.² While P.C. 92, January 24, 1882, had provided for a reduction to 12½ cents per day, this fact was apparently not brought to the Commissioner's attention. This suggests considerable carelessness on the part of the department responsible for the force. On April 30, 1882, a General Order was issued that effective May 1, 1882, the stoppages would be 12½ cents per day, applicable only to members in the hospital due to illnesses "contracted through their own indiscretion."³

Other problems affecting morale and retention of personnel were the lack of a pension plan and compensation for men invalided in the course of their service. There was no provision for pensions, and none for compensation until 1880,

¹Ibid.


when an annual vote of $2,000 was introduced in the House of Commons as the "probable amount required to compensate members of the North-West Mounted Police for injuries received in the discharge of duty."¹ Previously, a few claims had been paid out of the vote for unforeseen expenses.² In 1879, Macdonald stated that should a policeman be injured in performing his duty he would receive the same treatment as a Militiaman, and in answer to a question as to why no provision was made for compensation in the 1879 Act, he said it would "be infinitely better to leave it as it was."³ Mackenzie, the former Prime Minister, agreed with Macdonald. He said the pay was very good, "and there was no more reason for compensating men who suffered some injury or other while in the police service than any other labouring men."⁴ While the 1879 Act contained a new clause which provided for the superannuation of commissioned officers, no provision was made for the lower ranks. When compensation for injuries was made the amounts granted were small. One man received $360.96 for permanent injury to an ankle,⁵ another $547.50 for badly frozen feet,⁶ and another $100 for injuries.⁷ When the latter died from his injuries

²Ibid., 1882, April 27, Richard Cartwright (Huron Centre), p. 1199.
³Ibid., 1879, March 4, John A. Macdonald (Victoria), p. 129.
⁴Ibid.
⁵P.C. 37, January 12, 1883.
⁶P.C. 1249, June 4, 1883.
⁷P.C. 982, July 10, 1879.
his mother was given an additional $200.00. These sums were typical of the amounts granted. On occasion, the compensation granted to relatives of deceased men included the award to them of the land grants. Other regulations, however, reflected the government's concern with expenditures and adversely affected such awards. Typical were those in 1880 denying transport and the supply of fire and light to the men's families, which had been provided since June, 1875.

Isolation and lack of recreational facilities provided still another problem which successive governments did little to solve until late in the period. French and Macleod had managed to obtain small grants to establish reading rooms at some of the principal posts, but provision for the establishment of libraries and recreation rooms was written into the Act only in 1879. Previous to this, the "Fine Fund" had been used only to provide rewards for good conduct or meritorious services. Commissioner Irvine took full advantage of the new arrangements. In his report for 1881, he observed: "The value and desirability of having good recreation rooms and libraries throughout the force is simply inestimable. . . . I have established a very fair recreation room at headquarters." Irvine stressed the importance of recreation rooms being

1P.C. 1016, June 12, 1880.

2P.C. 604, April 5, 1880.

3For example, see French to the Minister of Justice, November 13, 1874, R.C.M.P. Records, Comptroller's Office, file No. 14474; and Macleod to the Deputy Minister of Justice, ibid., file No. 48475.

incorporated into any new barracks erected. In his report for 1882, Irvine stated,

It is impossible to overrate the good results which have accompanied the establishment of comfortable recreation rooms. At present excellent ones have been provided at Forts Macleod and Walsh. One will be built at Calgary this coming year. A building has been set apart for this purpose at Regina.¹

Irvine pointed out that the billiard tables obtained for Forts Macleod and Calgary prevented the men from frequenting the billiard parlors in the villages, "where they come in contact with many men of questionable character, in a very undesirable manner." "Amusement will be had," Irvine said, "and if not provided will be sought, and many evil effects will result. I intend to establish recreation rooms at all other posts."²

However, it should be noted that the men themselves had made efforts to provide their own recreation throughout the period. Organs and books were purchased,³ bands were organized,⁴ concerts and balls were staged,⁵ and sports days held.⁶ Christmas

²Ibid.
³For example, see French to the Deputy Minister of Justice, October 13, 1875, R.C.M.P. Records, Comptroller's Office, file No. 426-75; and Macleod to the Deputy Minister of Justice, October 11, 1875, ibid., file No. 484-75.
⁴The first band was organized February 23, 1876, at Swan River Barracks. See "William Parker-74 Original," R.C.M.P. Quarterly, Vol. 11, No. 1 (1945), p. 44.
⁵For example, see Saskatchewan Herald, February 28, 1881, p. 2, and December 10, 1881, p. 1.
⁶For example, see Manitoba Daily Free Press, July 30, 1879, p. 1.
was a time for special celebrations, and baseball, cricket, and rifle matches between the police and civilians were a feature at some of the posts. A Maple Creek pioneer recalls that several officers' families were in residence at the Barracks and this increased the population and added to the shopping and general life of the community. One outstanding social event of those early days was the Barracks Ball. The North West Mounted Police sent out invitations to the settlers and village residents to this gala affair, where treasured frocks and dress suits from far-off days and places lent a formal touch to this frontier community party. Later when accommodation was available, a Citizens' Ball was organized to return this hospitality.

Provision was also made for religious observance through the issuance of General Orders which called for compulsory attendance. This compulsion was, of course, frowned on by some members of the force, and while a "Police Young Men's Christian Association" was organized in Toronto prior to the departure of the 1874 recruits, it did not survive, because of the dispersal of the men across the North-West.

All of the conditions which had given rise to deser-

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2 For example, see Saskatchewan Herald, September 13, 1880, p. 1; June 5, 1881, p. 6; November 12, 1881, p. 1.


5 Globe, April 17, 1880, p. 6.

6 Manitoba Daily Free Press, March 24, 1876, p. 3.
tion, complaints, and lowered morale undoubtedly contributed to the improper conduct on the part of individual members of the force which became the subject of severe public criticism. The force was at all times a controversial issue, both in the House of Commons and in the public press. However, while charges of inefficiency, lack of discipline, immoral relations with Indian women, and drunkenness were made at intervals, the conduct of the force was relatively free of much criticism until the latter years of the first decade of its existence.

An early communication adverting to reports in circulation was sent to Commissioner Macleod from Lieutenant-Governor Laird in 1878. Laird wrote,

I fear from what reports are brought me, that some of your officers at Fort Walsh are making rather free with the women around there. It is to be hoped that the good name of the Force will not be hurt through too open indulgence of that kind. And I sincerely hope that Indian women will not be treated in a way that hereafter may give trouble.¹

What Macleod's answer to Laird was has not been ascertained. However, Macleod shortly advised the Secretary of State that the rumours of police consorting with Indian women at Fort Walsh had been denied by Assistant Commissioner Irvine, and added: "I do not think there is any truth whatever to the statement made to you, that there is anything like 'a regular brothel' about the post."² Nevertheless, statistics of illness


among the men, supplied by the medical officer at Fort Walsh, revealed a considerable incidence of venereal disease amounting to fifteen cases out of approximately one hundred men in a period of less than two months in 1882.¹ One would have to conclude that there was some substance to the rumours.

Liquor early became a problem for the force—not simply as a problem of law enforcement, but as an internal issue in the life of the force itself. At an early date the authorities had made efforts to prohibit drinking by members of the force. In 1873, a General Order was issued prohibiting the constables and sub-constables from purchasing liquor at the Hudson's Bay Company's store at Fort Garry,² and in 1876 the Minister of Justice ordered that officers should not be allowed permits to take liquor into the Territories except on a doctor's prescription.³ Nevertheless, the police found ways to overcome these restrictions and the force had been embarrassed by such actions as that of two constables at Fort Walsh who, in 1882, were convicted not simply of stealing liquor from the hospital closet, but of giving it away to their civilian cronies.⁴ There is no doubt that there was

¹"Diseases Treated at Fort Walsh from 19th October to 1st December, 1882," Appendix "Q," North-West Mounted Police Force, Commissioner's Report, 1882, Sessional Papers, 1883, No. 23.


³General Order, No. 4, March 21, 1876, ibid., Comptroller's Office, file No. 45-76.

⁴Shurtliff to Irvine, December 28, 1882, ibid., Commissioner's Office, file No. 52-1883.
a certain amount of excessive drinking at the various police posts. A correspondent of the Benton Record wrote,

The boys by dint of long-continued experiments, have acquired knowledge of several substitutes, which although injurious to health, yet it possesses a sufficient stimulating power, and succeeds admirably in stealing away the brain. . . .

and quoted 'one of the boys' who told him "oh, this is a most excellent drink: it's bay rum diluted with water and flavored with pain killer." Ex-Sergeant-Major Francis, a six year veteran, was quoted as saying that "at Wood Mountain they drink Florida Water, cologne, pain killer, bay rum, and even mustang liniment in cases of great emergency." In the House of Commons, Macdonald admitted on more than one occasion that considerable drinking took place, but said that it could not be prevented. In a letter to Ottawa in December, 1880, Commissioner Irvine, the most sensitive of the Commissioners on the subject, stated,

I am fully determined to take the most rigid step to stamp out the use of liquor or other intoxicating medicine, and to establish effectually a system of stout discipline on all points relating to the force under my command.

On the same day Irvine issued a General Order at Fort Walsh,

2Manitoba Daily Free Press, May 25, 1880, p. 3.
stating that

it has come to the knowledge of the Commissioner that liquor and intoxicating medicine have in the past been freely used at various Police Posts--The attention of the Officer, and Non-Commissioned Officer is called to this. For the future it is to be distinctly understood that most rigid steps are to be taken for the stoppage of the liquor traffic, and punishment of offenders.1

Such offences continued, requiring Irvine to issue a further General Order in the fall of 1883, that

in all cases of drunkenness a report as to where the liquor was obtained is invariably to be forwarded by the officer commanding the Post and will be attached to the monthly defaulters sheet.2

With the range of internal problems experienced by the force, it is perhaps not surprising that criticism of the force became current late in the 1870's. It reached a peak in 1880, when Mr. Royal, the Member from Provengcher, referred, in the House of Commons, to numerous rumours spread against the force's efficiency, and of their immorality, and cited the report of "the agent" who had visited some of the posts in 1879.3 Who this agent was has not been determined. Lieutenant-Colonel Osborne Smith, the former Acting Commissioner of the force visited some of the posts in the fall of that year in connection with the formation of Volunteer Companies of Militia, as did an inspector of the Customs Department. Smith's report


2 General Order No. 1035, October 9, 1883, ibid.

3 D.H.C., 1880, April 21, 28, pp. 1637-38, 1884.
contained no references to the force's conduct, and the Customs official reported that the force was in a good state of efficiency. "All over the North-West," Royal said, the Force is accused of disgraceful immorality; one of the chief traders, who spent the winter at the forts, reporting an open quarrel between an officer and one of the constables for the possession of a squaw. He reported also that he saw another soldier slap his officer in the face on account of a squaw. . . .

A few days later, Royal read extracts from newspapers, and "the agent's" report, which reiterated the frequent rumours that in some cases the force was inefficient, that intoxicating liquors were freely used, and that "many members of the force were living in concubinage with Indian women, whom they had purchased from their parents and friends." In defence, Macdonald replied simply,

I do not believe it is true. I am quite satisfied it is not true. At the same time I may say that I do not think the Force is in so satisfactory a state as it ought to be. It is too much scattered. The points were chosen years and years ago, when the Force was sent out to meet the supposed exigencies of that time. . . . The great fault has been that . . . both officers and men have lived at the same points year after year, and some of the officers,

1"Annual Report of the Department of Militia and Defence," 1879, "Appendix No. 1," Sessional Papers, 1880, No. 8. While the identity of "the agent" referred to by Royal has not been determined, it is interesting to note that Smith, on learning of Macleod's departure, applied for the post of Commissioner, stating, "I think I could be of more use than a stranger in levelling up the efficiency of the Force." See Smith to Macdonald, October 12, 1880, Macdonald Papers, Vol. 370, p. 172136.

2Turner, op. cit., p. 489.

3D.H.C., 1880, April 21, p. 1638.

especially those of a commercial or speculative turn of mind, have been employing themselves looking after herds of cattle, etc., and have thrown off the soldier too much to indulge in such pursuits.¹

Macdonald had earlier told the House, that "at this moment, orders are issued for the redistribution of the Force, so as to prevent some of the evils to which the gentleman has alluded."²

Royal's charges were soon met with denials from the force itself. A correspondent from Fort Walsh wrote,

Much anger is felt among the members of the Mounted Police force at the false statements made in Parliament by Mr. Royal ... who has evidently been misinformed. At this post, where the largest part of the force is stationed, and where there are great numbers of Indians at all times, I must say that there is no foundation whatever for the attack. ... Discipline is not set at naught and men and officers are anything but a disgrace to Canada. The contrary assertion is a vile slander. ... No Indian ever struck a man or officer in defence of their women. ... Any man who insulted a squaw would be as severely punished as if it were a white woman. ... I know of no case where men or officers in the force keep concubines. ... though some men are married to half-breed women, which can hardly be called a crime.³

The Saskatchewan Herald described Royal's remarks as

a gross insult to the men and to thousands of their friends in Canada to speak of them as he did. ... We will not deny that there may have been some acts of misconduct amongst the members of the force since it was first organized; but we venture to say that the conduct of the men has been as good as would be found amongst the same number amidst the higher civilization of Winnipeg, or even of the older cities of the Eastern Provinces. ... It would be altogether without precedent to find such a number

¹D.H.C., 1880, April 28, p. 1814.
²Ibid., April 21, p. 1638.
of men cut off from society for that length of time without some irregularities being committed. We cannot speak from personal knowledge of the men at the south, but from a two year's acquaintance with those at the north we can testify that their conduct will not suffer by comparison with that of any ordinary volunteer camp, either permanent or temporary. . . .1

The comparison may not be altogether reassuring!

Prior to and after the uproar caused by Royal's charges, many others were brought to the public's attention. Ex-members of the force were said to be returning to the East in large numbers, the majority of them being dissatisfied and resentful at the treatment they had received in the force. Amongst their numerous complaints, it was alleged that there was collusion between the supplying companies, particularly I. G. Baker & Co., and the Hudson's Bay Company, and government officials, which resulted in men and horses being often put on short rations while "the profits of these transactions" were being divided between government agents and the companies;2 that their private mail was tampered with, that favouritism was shown in granting leaves-of-absence,3 and that the government had committed a breach-of-faith, in the matter of land warrants guaranteed the men by all acts up until 1879, when they were done away with.4

1Editorial, Saskatchewan Herald, June 21, 1880, p. 2.

2For example, see Globe, September 13, 1879, p. 2; Manitoba Daily Free Press, May 19, 1880, p. 1.

3Globe, September 13, 1879, p. 2.

4The complaints regarding the "bounty warrants" centered around the fact that the land regulations adopted in the spring of 1879 prohibited the men from locating in the railway belts.
Other ex-members accused those in command of the force with "general mismanagement,"¹ that "the amount of drinking in the fort [Fort Walsh] is something that you would hardly credit,"² and that "a 'system of terrorism' prevails in the force . . . which has the effect of keeping members of it silent about their wrongs until after they have left the force."³ The Ottawa correspondent of the Globe asserted that there was collusion between "officers and frontier merchants," that the government was aware of it, and that an officer had been asked to resign.⁴ The Regina Leader accused the police of refusing to do anything about prostitution in Regina,⁵ and on another occasion commented, "many a scalawag and scoundrel, many an idle loafer, many a brainless young blood, has worn its uniform and fed at its trough."⁶ The paper also charged that the force "had not produced very good specimens of officers" because of political appointments, and that Sergeant-Majors had actually called "prostitutes to meet prisoners under cover of night."⁷ As late as 1883, the charges against officers at Fort Walsh to which Macdonald had referred were reiterated in a letter

² Ibid., July 20, 1881, p. 1.
³ Ibid.
⁵ Editorial, Leader, May 17, 1883, p. 2.
⁶ Editorial, ibid., August 16, 1883, p. 2.
⁷ Ibid.
written to the Manitoba Daily Free Press.

There are men holding commissions in this force who are neither officers nor gentlemen, and until some radical change is made in this respect, this force will never be run economically or efficiently. I hope a commission will be appointed without whitewash brushes. ... a commission holding sittings at Regina, Maple Creek and Fort Macleod and asking the testimony of old timers under oath would bring to light some startling revelations as to the modus operandi at work there for the last four or five years. It is about time that officers in this outfit confined themselves exclusively to their duties as such, and left the management of horse and cattle ranches, coal mines, ferry boats, bogus horse sales, chasing half-breeds all over the Northwest with Government horses after land scrip, to those who are not fortunate enough to hold commissions in this force.¹

There appears to be a number of reasons why the force was relatively free of criticism until the late 1870's. In the early years little was known of the West, communication was sporadic and difficult, and the more sensational events relating to policing operations occupied public attention. Most of the criticism seemed to be directed at the government for its "mismanagement" of the force and its "excessive" expenditures. The growth of criticism of the force itself seems to have coincided with the slow but continuous influx of settlement into the region. From 1879 to 1883 criticism increased both in the press and in the House of Commons. It is difficult to evaluate the truth of many of the charges made. The majority of the letters were signed with non de plumes, or were written by the newspapers' own correspondents. Some of the letters may have been written by disgruntled policemen posing as settlers, by settlers posing as policemen, by political partisans, and some of

¹Manitoba Daily Free Press, September 19, 1883, p. 5.
what was written may have been pure invention for a variety of motives. Interestingly enough, but not surprisingly, more of the letters defending the force were signed with proper names, than those which were critical of it. It was perhaps significant that the 1875 revisions to the Mounted Police Act included clauses which provided that any member of the force convicted of "divulging any matter or thing which it may be his duty to keep secret"; "making any anonymous complaint to the Government or the Commissioner"; or "communicating without the Commissioner's authority, either directly or indirectly to the public press, any matter or thing touching the force," would be considered "to have committed a breach of discipline," and be subject to punishment "either by fine not exceeding one month's pay, or imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months in any gaol at hard labor, or both...."1 Despite this provision, such offences obviously continued, for on at least two occasions, in 1878 and 1882, the members of the force were reminded by the Commissioner that communications with the press must cease.2 Nevertheless, whether criticism emanated from members of the force or from outside observers, it is quite obvious that there was substance to some of the charges.

The charges of improper conduct on the part of members of the force, involving drunkenness, prostitution, and alliances

1 Statutes of Canada, 38 Victoria, chapter 50, section 22.

with Indian women, and allegations of mismanagement and dubious outside activities on the part of some officers, do appear to have had some foundation in fact. Surprisingly, the post with which they were most frequently associated was Fort Walsh, the headquarters of the force, where they should readily have come under the eye and corrective action of the Commissioner. However, Fort Walsh was perhaps the most typical "frontier" community on the Canadian prairies. Here the whiskey trading forts where the massacre of 1873 had been perpetrated had given way to an unorganized trading village near the police post, and here the Indians, often half-starving, congregated in great numbers, even hundreds at a time, until the fort was abandoned in 1883. Completely isolated from any populated place during its entire existence, it may not be so surprising that men stationed at Fort Walsh sought escape from their indifferent quarters, lack of recreational facilities, and the recurring fever, in the "pleasures" of the surrounding community.\(^1\) Inter-marriage and alliances with the native population may even have facilitated some aspects of police work,\(^2\) although on the whole the incidence of more casual affairs and prostitution could hardly have had other than a detrimental effect upon the efficiency of the force. If constables can be excused, or

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\(^1\)The fact that since 1877, no married men were engaged for service, see P.C. 604, April 5, 1880, was undoubtedly a negative factor. There is no evidence that men were prohibited from marrying after their enlistment, however the opportunities for doing so were limited in view of their isolation.

\(^2\)See above, p. 149.
understood, less may be said for officers who tolerated or participated in these activities. Probably the total number of men guilty of improper conduct at Fort Walsh, and elsewhere, was not large. In any event it is not readily apparent that this sort of conduct greatly affected the force in the carrying out of its duties, although clearly it cost the force some measure of respect in some quarters of the press and population. Likewise, the difficult living conditions, the inadequate training, the legitimate causes for complaint about pay and benefits, the desertions, and changing personnel, problems which persisted throughout the period undoubtedly extracted from the force a toll in morale which it could ill afford to pay. That the force's operations were not seriously impeded is a tribute to the work of a number of able officers, and the Commissioners who were clearly worried about the level of morale. The performance of the force in carrying out its policing duties amongst the native and white populations, was hindered not only by the various problems it had to cope with but also by its own internal difficulties, and thus it was prevented from doing better what it otherwise was managing to do well. In the last analysis, however, it must be said that the force was more widely acclaimed than it was criticized.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION: THE FIRST DECADE OF
THE FORCE IN RETROSPECT

After ten years in the North-West Territories the North-West Mounted Police had more than adequately fulfilled the hopes of Lieutenant-Governors Archibald and Morris, of Butler and Robertson-Ross, and the expectations of the Dominion government of the benefits to be derived from the institution of such a force. As the end of the year 1883 approached, the frontier period was virtually drawing to a close, with the North-West Rebellion of 1885 to be the final dramatic manifestation of the clash between two alien cultures. When the police first came, there had been only a few hundred settlers and a similar number of Métis scattered about a few isolated settlements such as Prince Albert, Fort Ellice, Fort Edmonton, Fort Qu'Appelle, and St. Laurent. The native population, which pursued a nomadic existence across the plains, still sustained by the dwindling buffalo herds, was being victimized and decimated by the illicit liquor trade conducted by the traders and wolfers from United States territory. Now, in 1883, the picture was different. The buffalo were gone, the liquor trade with the Indians had become a
thing of the past, and the Plains Indians had largely settled on their reserves. The Canadian Pacific Railway spanned the region from Winnipeg to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, bringing in settlers to swell the population of existing communities and to create new ones. The railway, and the telegraph which had been constructed along its route, as well as the Dominion Telegraph completed between Winnipeg and Edmonton in 1876, provided the means of quick communication and transportation with eastern Canada. Not only could instructions be quickly obtained from Ottawa, but the police could be reinforced within a matter of days. In addition to these forms of communication, territorial newspapers now provided on-the-spot, and more immediate coverage of North-West affairs. The Saskatchewan Herald, Battleford, the first newspaper in the Territories, founded in 1878, had been joined by newspapers published at Regina, Edmonton, Calgary, Fort Macleod, and Prince Albert. Territorial government was firmly established by this time, with the elective element partially introduced, and local government had emerged, to be confirmed by ordinances in 1884 providing for the formal establishment of school districts and the incorporation of towns. In 1883 also, the bulk of the force of five hundred men was better housed than at any time in the past and was deployed in relation to the new urban centres. Forts Livingstone (Swan River Barracks) and Walsh had been abandoned, the new headquarters established at Regina, new and more adequate barracks erected at Maple Creek, Medicine Hat, Fort Macleod, and Calgary,¹ and small detachments posted

¹See Appendix "A" for plans of these posts.
to new communities taking shape on the line of the railway. And, while there were rumblings of discontent among the Métis on the Saskatchewan, which would lead to the North-West Rebellion in 1885, the area was generally peaceful. In its own growth over the decade the force had paralleled the development of the West. A maturing North-West Mounted Police accompanied the approach of the settlement period.

The North-West Mounted Police must be credited with the peaceful nature of the transition which had occurred in this decade and through their presence and performance they had imparted a law-abiding character to the society which had emerged. In carrying out its duties, the force had had to contend with a variety of problems stemming from inadequate legislation, stringent financial measures on the part of the government, primitive barrack and health facilities, faulty recruiting methods, and the lack of a training depot, all of which had a negative effect on the maintenance of proper discipline in the force. In recognizing these problems faced by the force, the conclusion that they were not allowed to seriously interfere with the performance of its duties is inescapable. If they had been, it would have been impossible for this small body of men to have coped with the whiskey trade, the presence of thousands of Sioux warriors, the maintenance of good relations with thousands of hungry and restless Indians, and their removal to reserves, the construction of the railway, and the multitude of associated difficulties with which the force was confronted. The accomplishment was
the more remarkable in that the force was generally insuffi-
ciently manned to cope with the complexity of services it was
called on to perform. The Hon. Frank Oliver later said,

Ordinarily speaking, no more wildly impossible
undertaking was ever staged than the establish-
ment of Canadian authority and Canadian law
throughout the western prairies by a handful of
mounted police.1

Although the shortage of men had not led to a crisis, it is
doubtful that the force would have been able to cope with a
mass outbreak of the Sioux, or of Canadian Indians, a conten-
tion which is supported by the necessity of calling in the
Canadian Militia to quell the uprising in 1885. That such an
outbreak had not occurred during the period under considera-
tion in this study, in spite of the government's failure to
meet the reasonable demands of the Métis in the Saskatchewan
region, reflects the mutual respect and understanding of the
force and the native population. Undoubtedly the police
would have been supported in an emergency by the corps of
Volunteer Mounted Rifles and Infantry which had been organ-
ized under the provisions of the Militia Act at Prince Albert,
Duck Lake, and Battleford in 1879, for the stated purpose of
protection from the possibility of marauding parties of hungry
Indians, the prospect of which was feared by the settlers.2

As the Rebellion proved, the police and the volunteer companies
would have been hard-pressed, and probably incapable of dealing

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with such an uprising. The Rebellion also demonstrated the altered circumstances resulting from the construction of the railway and the availability of telegraphic communication which made possible the early despatch and arrival of the Militia from Winnipeg and eastern Canada. If such an uprising had occurred previous to the establishment of such facilities the force could well have been wiped out before help arrived.

The force was undoubtedly fortunate in its personnel. While there were some misfits in the force, and some desertions, the quality of men who served in this period was generally high. The performance in the North-West Mounted Police, and future accomplishments of men such as Commissioners French, Macleod, and Irvine, and officers such as S.B. Steele, J.B. Mitchell, C.E. Denny, James Morrow Walsh and many others attest to this fact, as do the literary accomplishments of Steele, Denny, Fitzpatrick, Burton Deane, and Jean D'Artigue in the writing of highly readable and informative autobiographies which provide both factual history and the flavor of the force during the first decade of its operations. The great majority of the men lived up to the enviable reputation the force enjoyed, and which they had through their own accomplishments created.

The force not only facilitated settlement, it itself contributed many permanent settlers as well as much in the way of cultural activities. The members of the force took an active part in community affairs, and at the police posts staged dramatic evenings, balls, and sports days, all events
in which the civilian population shared. A considerable number of men who served in the force during the period 1873 - 1883 became farmers or ranchers, while others became Indian agents or served in other capacities for the Indian Department. Still others became postmasters, registrars of registration districts, loggers, miners, or engaged in various business enterprises. Those who engaged in farming or ranching took advantage of their knowledge of the country in selecting their land grants, or in obtaining leases of range-land from the government, and it is likely that their reports to friends of the area's potential lured new settlers to the North-West. In the instances of Fort Macleod, Fort Saskatchewan, Calgary, Maple Creek, and Medicine Hat, the posts became the nucleus of new towns, while at Battleford and Regina they played a similar role in combination with the establishment of the seat of government at those places in 1876 and 1883 respectively. As well, the presence of the police at each of the major settlements in the North-West encouraged new settlers to locate in those districts. By their presence as police and as settlers the men imparted a certain character to these prairie communities, which from their inception were essentially law-abiding, and this characteristic was imposed on the new settlements along the railway right-of-way by the posting of small detachments to them soon after their establishment.

The force early adopted the motto, "Maintiens le Droit,"\(^1\)

to which, with few if any exceptions, it adhered. A recent author, in discussing the "philosophy" of the force, has observed that a member of the force must understand that while it is his duty to investigate crime, it is the courts of the country which assess the evidence collected and administer justice. Every member of the Force must realize that his work... is only one link in the legal chain and that he must be scrupulously careful always to act within the law.

However, the police in this period were more than one link in the legal chain, and this had its dangers. Nevertheless, while the judicial function of the police in this period differed from that described above, the police performed that function with a high degree of integrity, and there is little, if any, evidence that the members of the force acted otherwise than in strict conformity with the laws of the land. The force's record in the administration of justice and in law enforcement was in striking contrast to the situation in neighbouring Chouteau County, Montana Territory, particularly in the early and middle seventies. There, it is said, the law was capriciously and informally administered, often made up to suit the occasion. Under the regimes of its first five sheriffs, four of whom had begun their careers as whiskey traders and one as leader of a gang of road agents, horse thieves were often hanged or lynched. It is difficult, indeed, to fault the North-West Mounted Police in terms of the above slogan. Service to the Dominion and its people, if not set

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2 Sharp, op. cit., p. 120.
3 Ibid., pp. 113-14.
down in writing as an objective of the force, was certainly expressed in the performance of its duties. Duties were carried out at all times without distinction being drawn between race or creed. The Indians and Métis were treated as equals of the whites. The force made communities safe to live in and protected the Indians, not only from the criminal elements in the white population but from each other. A lengthy list could be drawn up of instances when members of the native population had charges dismissed, or were acquitted by members of the force acting in a judicial capacity. In describing the efforts of the police to convince the Indians that British law was fairly administered, Macleod stated that courts for the trial of offenders are always held as openly as possible, in order to give the Indians every opportunity of observing that impartial justice is always meted out to all alike, without respect to race or color. It is always an object to have chiefs or headmen present at these courts, to whom the proceedings of the trials are translated as they proceed, and the curious spectacle is often witnessed on such occasions of these chiefs commenting aloud on the case before them, and telling their young men to carry the lessons there given in their hearts, and sententiously expressing their approval of the procedure. A respect for Canadian institutions is thus inculcated, and its beneficial effect is now felt in the remotest parts of that vast territory.¹

Paul Sharp, an American, has written of the force's relationship with the Indians that

destroying the whisky trade was an important victory. But success in handling the Western Indians quickly overshadowed it as a far more significant achievement. Against a background of continual violence, bloodshed, and hatred south of the boundary the

¹ Manitoba Daily Free Press, June 1, 1877, p. 2.
North West Mounted Police conceived and executed an orderly, well-planned and honourable policy. From the moment of their arrival in the West, the police regarded their mission to the Indians as paramount.

Their simplest decision, though it was also their most important was to treat the Indians with honesty and respect. The tragic record of deceit and broken faith provoked by the forked tongues of the Long Knives had cost the American government millions of dollars and thousands of lives; yet the Indian remained untamed.  

It is highly doubtful that the North-West could peacefully have been opened up for settlement without the presence of the North-West Mounted Police. The frequent demands in the Montana press that Indians be exterminated, echoing the earlier statement of General Sherman in 1866, "that the only solution was to destroy the hostile bands by putting troops along the base of the Rocky Mountains," were a reflection of an attitude which led to the employment of thousands of military personnel in order to remove the Indians from the frontier, and to the loss of many lives. In Canada, on the other hand, a few hundred policemen did a similar job, almost without bloodshed, and approached the task assigned to them in a thoroughly humanitarian way. However, in fairness to the Americans it must be acknowledged that the police had the

1 Sharp, op. cit., p. 95.
4 There were 15,000 army regulars on the American plains as early as 1867. Athearn, op.cit., p. 23.
advantage of being forerunners of settlement, while south of
the border settlement had advanced ahead of the military, whose
troubles were compounded following its arrival by the natural
tendency of new settlers to follow in its train. Indeed, to
suggest that conditions in the United States were an exact
parallel to those in the Canadian West would be a gross over­
simplification. The very existence of the North-West Mounted
Police testified to a different approach in Canada to settle­
ment and development which in turn probably reflected a
different ethos in the very society itself. Hence, it would
be misleading to say that the western settlers of Canada in
this period equalled the western settlers of the United States
minus the North-West Mounted Police. In any case, that there
was a difference in the Canadian and American experiences in
this respect, a difference which the North-West Mounted Police
symbolized, is evident both in the assumption and the de­
scription in a passage of W.P. Webb:

In the early period the restraints of law could not
make themselves felt in the rarefied population.
Each man had to make his own law because there was
no other to make it. He had to defend himself and
protect his rights by his force of personality,
courage, and skill at arms. All men went armed
and moved over vast areas among other armed men.
The six-shooter was the final arbiter, a court of
last resort, and an executioner.¹

¹Walter P. Webb, The Great Plains (New York: Ginn and
Co., 1931), pp. 496-497.
designed to bring the lawless element under control."¹ When
count enforcement officers were appointed, they were as indi-
cated above, often "as closely associated with violence as the
outlaw."² They lacked the central direction and uniform policy
of the Canadian force; with the notable exception of the Texas
Rangers, they had only a local (town or county) jurisdiction,
and there was no national police force until the organization
of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the twentieth century.

It is possible that the Canadian Militia could have
carried out the wishes of the Dominion government. However,
it could not have done so with its traditional form of organi-
zation without proving considerably more expensive, and
involving many more men. The Indians' respect for the British
Crown would have stood the Militia in good stead, as had been
demonstrated by the peaceful carrying out of the work of Her
Majesty's section of the International Boundary Commission
under the Militia's protection.³ However, the use of a police
force rather than the Militia for such duties was a British
tradition throughout the Empire in the nineteenth century.⁴

¹ H.D. Graham and T.R. Gurr, Violence in America:
Historical and Comparative Perspectives (2 vols.; Washington:
² Ibid., p. 103.
³ John E. Parsons, West of the 49th Parallel Red River
to the Rockies, 1872-1876 (New York: William Morrow and Company,
1969).
⁴ James Cramer, The World's Police (London: Cassell and
Company Ltd., 1964). That there were similarities between the
police forces established in the various colonies and posses-
sions is indicated also by the fact that Commissioner Irvine
The evaluation in this thesis of the North-West Mounted Police has proceeded on the assumption of white penetration and settlement. Whether that was good or bad in itself is a matter quite beyond the scope of this study. Given that, the question is not whether the North-West Mounted Police should be accepted or rejected on either alternative approach to that incursion, but in what spirit and to what effect the police modified the encounter between races and the transition in the interests of either or both the native and white populations. Approached from this point of view, it is held that the police played a vital, indeed, indispensable role in bringing peace to the Territories, to the benefit of both the natives and the settlers, and to the Dominion as a whole.

visited Ireland to study the organization of the famous Irish Constabulary ("Annual Report of the N.W.M.P.," 1880, Sessional Papers, 1881, No. 3, p. 3), and that in 1878, the Librarian of Parliament, Ottawa, presented a copy of the Regulations for the Guidance of the Constabulary of Victoria (1879), to the Council of the North-West Territories. Taken together, these facts suggest a different temper of settlement within the Empire than within a breakaway fragment which had repudiated it.
BIBLIOGRAPHY
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

The most productive sources of information for this study have been the R.C.M.P. Records, the annual reports of the North-West Mounted Police, and Orders-in-Council. Other major sources were the Alexander Morris Papers, the Sir John A. Macdonald Papers, the House of Commons Debates, and the Sessional Papers of Canada, which, besides annual reports of the force, contain the annual reports of the Department of the Interior, the Department of Indian Affairs, the Department of Militia and Defence, and the Public Accounts. The R.C.M.P. Records and the annual reports of the force contain information on every aspect of the force's history explored in this thesis. The Morris Papers were of particular value in reference to the situation in the North-West which led to the demands for a police force, the mobilization of the force, and its despatch to the West, as well as for information on Prime Minister Mackenzie's attitude to Commissioner French. The Macdonald Papers provide information on recruitment, appointments, initial mobilization, the force's conduct, the enforcement of liquor laws, the handling of the Sioux incursion, the departure of Macleod from the force, and Walsh's relationship with Sitting Bull. However, the Mackenzie Papers
proved of little value. The records of the Governor-General's Office, and the Colonial Office papers reflect the interest of these offices in the force's organization, and the handling of the situation posed by the Sioux in particular. The Orders-in-Council were extremely useful for information on the organization of the force, selection of headquarters, pay scales, appointments, and dismissals, etc.

Unfortunately the R.C.M.P. Records are incomplete for this period, many of them having been destroyed by a fire in the Parliament Buildings in 1897. Consequently, while the files of the Comptroller's and Commissioner's Offices are quite extensive for the years 1873-1875, there are only a few files for the period 1876-1883. However, these few files are supplemented by letter-books which contain information of much value.

The various newspapers consulted, and the House of Commons Debates were particularly helpful in revealing the public attitude to the force, problems related to misconduct and morale, and the administration of the force by authorities at Ottawa.

Numerous secondary sources were consulted for this study. They include several histories of the force, noted in the preface, and many popular books and articles which tend to concentrate on the most dramatic incidents and colorful figures of the time. Paul Sharp's Whoop-Up Country contains excellent chapters on the force and on the Sioux. It contains, in particular, the most scholarly assessment available on the Cypress
Hills Massacre. In addition to Sharp, a number of books and articles were consulted for comparative data on the experience with law enforcement in the neighboring United States. Although not itself a documented study, John Peter Turner's work has been frequently cited, but only when the information found therein proved consistent with that taken from primary sources. A number of autobiographies have been written by ex-members of the force, of which S.B. Steele's proved the most helpful. Another undocumented book which contains interesting material on the force is Wallace Stegner's *Wolf Willow*. His chapters "Law in a Red Coat," and "Capital of an Unremembered Past" relate chiefly to police activities at Fort Walsh. The *R.C.M.P. Quarterly* and *Scarlet and Gold* contain many articles relevant to this study. However, some were found to be not totally reliable when measured against primary sources. Many other books and articles not cited specifically were surveyed, and helped shape the author's conception of the force in its first decade, the condition of the region in which it functioned, and the nature of the problems it encountered.

**ABBREVIATIONS OF SOURCES**

**FREQUENTLY CITED**

AOS Archives of Saskatchewan

PAC Public Archives of Canada
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