

Showing the Flag: The Mounted Police and Canadian Sovereignty in the North, 1894-1925. WILLIAM R. MORRISON. Vancouver: The University of British Columbia Press, 1985. xix, 220 p. illus. ISBN 0-7748-0245-6.

Showing the Flag, examines how the Mounted Police acted as agents of federal government policy in ensuring that the Canadian North remained Canadian. Morrison believes that the RCMP was formed primarily to assert the sovereignty of the Canadian government on the prairies, then to protect the white settlers, and lastly to ensure that the Indians "caused no trouble." The Macdonald government used the police to assist in carrying out the National Policy of settling and developing the West and thus ensured that it would continue to play a political role in future government plans. For this interpretation, Morrison draws much from R.C. Macleod's work, *The N.W.M.P. and Law Enforcement, 1873-1905*, published in 1976.

By contrast, the federal government had no real policy towards the North during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As a result, the North suffered from benign neglect. Ottawa acted only when Canadian sovereignty seemed threatened; even then, specific details were usually left to the Mounted Police to work out for themselves. The force became the chief means by which the federal government eventually established its laws, its economic and cultural policies, and its welfare system over the North. The police carried out actions of symbolic sovereignty by occupying the territory, by doing civil service tasks such as delivering mail or collecting customs duties, by patrolling the region to demonstrate the presence of authority to the miners and native people, and by planting flags. It was also involved in what Morrison refers to as developmental sovereignty by "explaining and enforcing laws, mining codes..., customs regulations, gambling and liquor laws." Consequently, the Mounted Police became "agents of metropolitanism par excellence" in carrying out its work first in the Yukon and eventually throughout the Canadian North.

In tracing the theme of sovereignty and the part played by the Mounted Police as agents of federal government policy, Morrison has presented a balanced view of the RCMP. In illuminating the strengths of the police, he has not ignored its weaknesses. The need to send large numbers of men to Yukon during the height of the gold rush meant that a number of them were barely trained and consequently were not equal to the task at hand. Many sought solace in the brothels, got drunk, frequented gaming houses, or absented themselves from the barracks overnight. These character weaknesses were the result of lax screening of applicants, the isolated conditions of Yukon, and the poor pay earned by most policemen. In fact, the working and social conditions faced by the police deserve more probing and analysis than Morrison has provided.

The chapter on police relations with the native people is among the most interesting. The police displayed good but paternalistic intentions that worked to the detriment of the native people and ensured that future relations would be strained. Morrison characterizes police attitudes as reflecting the prevailing Social Darwinistic views of the time. The police despised the Indians because they were thought to be lazy; all Indians were judged by those who lived around the posts and who came to be dependent on the police for food and other supplies. At first, the Inuit were admired and respected for their friendliness, industriousness, and self-reliance — qualities which the Force valued highly in a people. Consequently, they were treated differently from the Indians and it was hoped that by explaining and providing concrete examples the Inuit would come to respect and

follow the white man's law. However, the police had no appreciation of the cultural differences and values between the Inuit and the white man. Their treatment of the native people, while perceived by the police to be fair, often had the opposite effect to that desired. In their defence, Morrison states that the police were not trained in the field of social work. One wonders what would have been the consequences if a more enlightened approach had been adopted. It is little wonder that relations with the Inuit became "peaceful but not cordial."

Contemporary explorers such as Stefansson also criticized the Mounted Police for not sufficiently adapting themselves to their environment. For example, Stefansson believed that the police should have lived off the land when patrolling. Instead, the men often carried heavy loads of supplies, as well as oil stoves, and lived in tents instead of the warmer igloos. Morrison maintains that some of this criticism was warranted, but much did not apply because the nature of the land the police were travelling through made it impossible to live off it totally. Nevertheless, the police did adopt some of the Inuit methods to suit its purposes, especially when patrolling.

To counter Diamond Jenness' view that the police administration of the Arctic was "static and unprogressive," Morrison writes that the federal government did not know what to do with the North and was not much interested in it unless Canadian sovereignty was threatened. Therefore, the police had no real policies to guide it other than to demonstrate that the land belonged to the Canadian government. Nevertheless, police reports to headquarters frequently noted the prevalence of disease among the native people and appealed for the establishment of medical services and schools, and recommended financial assistance to the North. The usual response from Ottawa was that the police should do the best they could with their present resources.

This neglect of the North by the federal government began to give way to reluctant acceptance of responsibility for its development in 1924 when caring for the Inuit became part of the function of the Indian Affairs Department. But it was not until the onset of the Cold War in the late 1940s that the federal government took a more active role. The RCMP's role in the North diminished as it became more involved in the policing of the southern parts of the country. Nevertheless, the image of the force was intimately tied to its work in the North.

This work is based extensively on the archival records of the RCMP in Record Group 18 held at the National Archives of Canada, as well as the published annual reports. Private papers have been widely used as well. The author is able to describe life in Yukon as humorous, melodramatic, but controlled. Details about the patrols are largely taken from the excerpts published in the *Annual Report of the Commissioner of the RCMP*. These patrol reports are now in the National Archives. The availability of the originals now does not really affect Morrison's interpretation.

The problem of turning a thesis into a book some years after its completion lies in the risk that new primary sources will come to light that might affect the interpretation or that the records that formed the basis for the work will have been reorganized so that the citations are now outdated. The latter is the case with this book but Morrison cannot be faulted entirely for this situation. During the mid-1970s, this record group was reorganized and a continuous numbering system adopted. Citations to the original series therefore are wrong. However, by using a conversion list it is possible to determine the correct volume. It is sometimes impossible to determine in which file the document

referred to resides since Morrison's citations are incomplete. To future authors and researchers may I make a plea for the use of full citations in order to facilitate identification. It is a pity that Morrison's book inadvertently got caught in this time warp.

This minor criticism aside, *Showing the Flag* makes a significant contribution to the small body of scholarship on the role of the RCMP. The Mounted Police have long occupied a place in Canadian mythology. Popular studies of the "Mounties" abound; many stress the heroic aspect of their work in the North; many are simply picture books aimed at souvenir hunters and collectors of memorabilia. Others go to the opposite extreme of concentrating on the Force's shortcomings, especially in the area of national security and relations with native people. This book, written in a clear, straightforward style, deftly outlines and analyses the Force's role as overseer of northern development. Along with the handful of academic studies available, this work should form the basis for a critical, scholarly study of the overall development of the Force itself, a book which is long overdue.

Judith Roberts-Moore
Government Archives Division
National Archives of Canada

The Road Back: By a Liberal in Opposition. J.W. PICKERSGILL. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986. 255 p. ISBN 0-8020-2598-6. \$27.50.

With *The Road Back*, J.W. Pickersgill joins the swelling ranks of former politicians wishing to place their personal stamp on the interpretation of the Diefenbaker governments which held office from 1957 to 1963. He does, however, offer a markedly different view of the period. While John Diefenbaker and Donald Fleming, to name only two, have documented the achievements of these governments in often painstaking detail, Pickersgill recounts government floundering through the eyes of the cause of the problems: Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. Aptly titled, *The Road Back* is the story of how Lester Pearson and a small group of Liberals successfully brought down the largest parliamentary majority in Canadian history.

Pickersgill's stated purpose was to produce "a book about the practice of politics ... with enough background to make the narrative intelligible." In this, he is partially successful, as one discovers the overt Liberal strategy in challenging the government during the high-profile debates of the period. Relying heavily on *Hansard*, Pickersgill looks at the Coyne Affair, the Hal Banks Affair, and the Nuclear Crisis in terms of political point-scoring and voter reaction. Yet, one is left wanting what has been left unstated. Instead of filling pages with *what* was said, no matter how entertaining or incisive it may have been, Pickersgill might have paid more attention to *why* and *how* he and his colleagues decided to state what they did. One suspects that the inside story may be more satisfying than that which is readily available in *Hansard*.

When Pickersgill departs from his stated intent and ventures into detailed descriptions, he captures a unique flavour in his prose. This stems at least in part from his experience as the Member of Parliament for Bonavista-Twillingate. Newfoundlanders take their politics very seriously, and tales of the trials and tribulations of campaigning in Newfoundland add colour to the narrative and highlight Pickersgill's considerable skills as a raconteur.