

# INTRODUCTION

This volume contains a series of documents intended to augment the few remaining Security Bulletins from the period 1919 to 1929. Thus, this volume, unlike its predecessors, contains additional archival material from the collections of the National Archives of Canada (NAC) and from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS).<sup>1</sup> The material in the NAC has had an intriguing history while the material still held by CSIS has not been previously available to researchers. All this material has been acquired through Access to Information requests.

The bulk of the material from the NAC is contained in Record Group (RG) 18, the papers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. This material was originally deposited in the then Public Archives of Canada (PAC) in the early 1960s. Since then, it has had a most interesting history.<sup>2</sup> In 1971 the RCMP Security Service decided that a grave error had been made in the early 1960s and removed from the Archives a considerable amount of the material that had been there for almost a decade and in which numerous historians had conducted research. To their great discredit officials of the PAC not only allowed this seizure of material to occur but they did not even keep a record of what materials were withdrawn. In a series of interviews conducted in 1988 concerning this affair, we were told by Assistant National Archivist Michael Swift that this removal was unprecedented and we were assured that it could never happen again.<sup>3</sup>

In 1982 much, but not all, of the material was returned to the NAC. Precisely what was not returned remains unclear because of the carelessness of not listing what was originally withdrawn. The major RCMP and CSIS sensitivity appears to surround the identification of secret agents in the employ of the security service. According to CSIS, these informants, a combination of hired civilians and undercover Mounties, merit perpetual

1 Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The War Series, 1939-1941*, St. John's, 1989; *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The War Series, Part II, 1942-1945*, St. John's, 1993; *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Depression Years, Part I, 1935*, St. John's, 1993.

2 For a discussion of this affair see Gregory S. Kealey, "The Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the Public Archives of Canada, and Access to Information: A Curious Tale," *Labour/Le Travail*, 21 (1988), 199-226.

3 For a lengthier discussion of the issues implicit in this history, see Gregory S. Kealey, "National Security vs. the Public's Right to Know," *CBC Ideas*, 18 February 1989.

protection from public scrutiny in order to protect them and their families and to insure the ongoing source programme of CSIS. In other words, if 1919 agents' identities were revealed, it might discourage contemporary informants. We shall not pursue the logic of this argument, the desirability of the recruitment of such sources, nor the necessity for historical and public scrutiny of security forces in a democratic society in these pages. It should be obvious from the revelations in the following pages that we feel that CSIS is wrong in its contentions.

A series of Access to Information requests and subsequent complaints to the Information Commissioner of Canada, which commenced in 1985 and are still ongoing, has failed to turn up Bulletins prior to 1934. The Bulletins from 1919-1920 and from 1926 that are presented here are drawn from the collections of the NAC. In effect, three politicians, who received these Bulletins as part of the RCMP's attempt to keep their political masters aware of their concerns about national security, failed to return them to the force as was requested. Thus, in the papers of Prime Minister Robert Borden, his Minister responsible for the RCMP, A.L. Sifton, and Prime Minister Arthur Meighen, there are three sets of extant Bulletins. While there is some small chance that the ongoing investigation by the Information Commissioner's office may discover additional materials, we are no longer optimistic. It is also possible that some additional Bulletins are lodged in other politicians' papers of this period. If any reader knows of such material, please contact us.

The Bulletins themselves constitute Part I of what follows. It is extremely unfortunate that the Security Service in either its RCMP or CSIS guise have lost or destroyed the rest of these documents. As the reader can see, we are fortunate to have these early examples from 1919 to 1920 because, in combination with the various registers that constitute the rest of this volume, they allow for a relatively complete reconstruction of the activities of the RCMP Security Service at its birth, or, perhaps more accurately at its conception, because the earliest of these documents predate the RCMP and were compiled by the Criminal Investigation Branch (CIB) of the Royal North-West Mounted Police in 1919 while it still shared the security and intelligence mandate with the Dominion Police. Indeed Part II is a 1919 "List of chief agitators in Canada" compiled by the Dominion Police during the short, four-month reign of C.H. Cahan as Director of the Public Safety Branch of the Department of Justice.<sup>4</sup>

The Bulletins, or "Notes of the Work of the C.I.B. Division" as they were then termed, provide a useful weekly summary of the extensive surveillance work of the new secret service in its formative stages. The

<sup>4</sup> For the list see NAC, RG 13, Vol. 231, File 132/1919, Cahan to Doherty, 17/1/19. For a detailed study of this early history, see my "The Surveillance State: The Origins of Domestic Intelligence and Counter-Subversion in Canada, 1914-1920," *Intelligence and National Security*, 7, 3 (1992), 179-210.

renamed "Weekly Summary" from 1926 is unfortunately not the entire document from the CIB. Instead it consists of the general notes, the table of contents, and the general information. While the contents list is present for the District Reports, they unfortunately were apparently not kept by Prime Minister Meighen, whose papers provided this material.

It should be noted as well that these Bulletins have not been subjected to deletions by CSIS. The material already present in the NAC collections before the passage of the Access and Privacy legislation is generally treated as open and not subject to access restrictions. (There are exceptions, however, but this material fortunately was not treated as such.)

Part II is the "List of chief agitators" compiled by the Public Safety Branch of the Department of Justice. This list appears to be a hasty compilation of names generated from the Dominion Police investigation of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in February 1918. This investigation was prompted by warnings to Newton Rowell from Senator, and soon to be Labour Minister, Gideon Robertson and to Prime Minister Robert Borden from Imperial Munitions Board Chief Sir Joseph Flavelle.<sup>5</sup> The investigation conducted by the Acting Chief Commissioner of the Dominion Police, Albert Cawdron, initially reported in March 1918 that "the sum total of the reports is that we have nothing to fear from them at the present time."<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, in June a final report was issued by Chief Commissioner Sherwood that again tried to alleviate fears of the IWW, of which "no trace can be found in this country ... after a thorough and exhaustive investigation."<sup>7</sup>

These reports, however, did nothing to quiet the growing fears of industrial sabotage, trade union militancy, and Bolshevik subversion. Thus, Borden commissioned C.H. Cahan, a Montreal lawyer with British Secret Service ties, to survey the state of national security with special emphasis on "propaganda" and with the possible intention of establishing "some effective organization to investigate the whole subject."<sup>8</sup> Cahan used this mandate to commence a Canadian version of the American "Red Scare," one result of which was the passage of repressive legislation that allowed the use of the War Measures Act to prosecute socialist and labour leaders. Those charged or successfully prosecuted under the WMA for political "crimes" constituted the second major element of Cahan's list of chief agitators contained in Part II.

5 NAC, Borden Papers, Vol. 104, File Oc519, Robertson to Rowell, *et al.*, 20/2/18, and Flavelle to Borden, 22/2/18. See Kealey, "Surveillance State," for more details.

6 *Ibid.*, Cawdron to Minister of Justice, 5/3/18.

7 *Ibid.*, Sherwood to Minister of Justice, 16/6/18.

8 *Ibid.*, Cahan to Borden, 11/5/18 and Borden to Cahan, 19/5/18.

The list allows a sketchy geographic analysis as well as some sense of how individuals merited inclusion. First, of the 337 individuals designated, 178 or 54.3 per cent had been charged under the WMA provisions. The second major grouping was the 138 (42.1 per cent) listed as members of the IWW. Twelve individuals or 3.7 per cent were included because of membership in the United Mine Workers of America or the Social Democratic Party.

Geographically, the list contained 156 (49.5 per cent) individuals from Ontario, 138 (43.8 per cent) British Columbia, 13 (4.1) Alberta, and four each from Saskatchewan and Manitoba. By city Vancouver led with 36, followed by Toronto with 30, Ford City 25, Timmins 16, Cobalt and London 12, Sault Ste Marie and Windsor 11, and Sudbury 10. These figures reflect the sources of their compilation. The BC individuals were almost all involved with the IWW and many of the names stemmed from lists compiled as early as 1912. The Ontario figures were prominent ethnic and socialist radicals active in various organizations banned in fall 1918.<sup>9</sup> The list also reflects the rather different repressive strategies followed by the Dominion Police, especially in Cahan's short period of influence, and those developed by the RNWMP and continued by the RCMP under Commissioner A.B. Perry.

Cahan, with the active support of various Ontario Police Chiefs, pursued an active strategy of prosecution in fall 1918 after the passage of the anti-socialist Orders in Council PC2381 and 2384.<sup>10</sup> Arguably his high profile legal assault on the left cost him his job because it put him in direct conflict with a number of the former Liberal members of the Union Government, especially Newton Rowell and Thomas Crerar. The RNWMP, perhaps learning some lessons from the Cahan's short-lived experience, pursued a different strategy. While Cahan sought to prosecute and convict, Perry played a more calculated waiting game. As RNWMP Comptroller McLean explained to Rowell, "The policy carried out by the Commissioner is not to prosecute isolated cases wherefrom little benefit is derived, but to gather all possible data which will prove of the utmost value in the event of a general outbreak in any particular district."<sup>11</sup> A few months later Perry himself explained his rationale at greater length: "No isolated prosecutions" "eliminated the danger of uncovering our agents ...

9 For details on the prosecutions see Kealey, "Surveillance State." On the IWW in BC, see Mark Leier, *Where the Fraser River Flows: The Industrial Workers of the World in British Columbia*, Vancouver, 1990. Numbers in the text reflect incomplete data in all categories. A detailed comparison with the distribution of prosecutions under the anti-socialist Orders-in-Council makes clear the overlapping lists. For the list of those prosecuted under the WMA, see RG 18, Vol. 2380, Routledge to OCs, CIB#104, 16/8/19.

10 A convenient location of the text of these Orders-in-Council is Frances Swyripa and John Thompson, eds., *Loyalties in Conflict: Ukrainians in Canada During the Great War*, Edmonton, 1983, 190-6.

11 NAC, RG 18, Vol. 847, Comptroller to Rowell, 25/2/19.

and our channels of information were kept open at a very critical time." Moreover, he argued, "The movement must be viewed from a national standpoint, and that when action is taken it should be carried out simultaneously throughout the country." !12

Part III contains the Personal Files Registers of the RCMP from their inception in winter 1919 until the end of 1929. The genesis of the files lies in the expanded mandate given to the RNWMP as of January 1919. Basically the country was split in two at the Lakehead and the RNWMP became the only federal police force with full responsibility for all federal law enforcement from the twin cities of Port Arthur and Fort William west. The Dominion Police maintained their mandate east of the imaginary line. To execute this mandate, the largest in the history of the RNWMP, the authorized size of the force was increased to 1200 (Perry had sought 2000) and a commitment was given to speed the return of former RNWMP officers and men who were overseas with the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

Included in the RNWMP mandate was enforcement of the Orders-in-Council under the WMA and, more ominously, aiding and assisting the civil powers to preserve law and order. Thus, the question of the secret service dimensions of the task rose immediately. The first action taken was the incorporation of the Dominion Police apparatus into the RNWMP, although this gained the Force few secret agents. Therefore serious recruitment of agents began in January 1919.

Perry circularized all his Officers Commanding with two key memos. The first discussed the Bolshevik threat in general and the second issued more specific guidelines to detectives and secret agents. Proceeding from the premise that "the pernicious doctrines of Bolshevism" were spreading rapidly throughout the world and in Canada, he drew his officers attention particularly to Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Vancouver, and to the foreign settlements scattered through the Prairies, which he noted were especially "susceptible to Bolshevik teaching and propaganda." Officers Commanding were "to take steps to see that careful and constant supervision is maintained over these foreign settlements with a view to detecting the least indication of Bolshevik tendencies and doctrines." Socialists all over the west, he continued, regarded the Bolsheviks "as champions of workers everywhere" and that "serious unrest" was an obvious possibility. Therefore, "our duty is to prevent the efforts of misguided persons to subvert and undermine the settled Government of Canada." OCs were to keep informed and "energetically deal with all unlawful and pernicious propaganda." To do so they should "take steps to select some good, trustworthy men ... as secret agents and submit their names, records, and qualifications for my approval." He also urged them to survey all radical pamphlets and publications and, if appropriate, to

12 Borden Papers, Vol. 96, Pt. 1, File Oc485, Perry to McLean, 30/6/19.

prosecute under Section 174 of the Criminal Code. Similarly, they were to record all questionable public speeches if they expected any seditious or treasonable content and particularly to watch street meetings. All this, of course, was to be done in such a way as "not to arouse suspicion or cause antagonism." In conclusion, he reiterated, "The Government relies upon the RNWMP to keep it early advised of any development toward social unrest. It is extremely important that such unrest should not be permitted to develop into a menace to good order and public safety." !13

A second memo of the same date outlines the job expected of the undercover detectives and secret agents. They were to become "fully acquainted with all labour and other organizations in their respective districts." Each organization "should be carefully investigated with a view to determining" its purpose and object, its proclivity to Bolshevik influence, any current Bolshevik tendencies, or its Bolshevik nature. Not surprisingly, organizations in the last three categories "must receive careful and constant attention." Particular attention was to be addressed to "the officials and leaders of these organizations" who "must be carefully investigated and studied regarding their ways, habits, and antecedents." All such information was to be scrupulously recorded and the subsequent files would provide "a complete history of these men and their doings to date." Lest anyone had missed his point, Perry reiterated that "particular attention must be paid to the different labour unions in their district" because "this class of organization is particularly susceptible to Bolshevik teaching." He concluded by cautioning that great care needed to be taken to insure the reliability of such sources. !14

Thus from its origins the RNWMP targeted labour as its primary focus. As the Perry memo cited above suggests, the Commissioner attached considerable importance to the development of Personal History Files (PHF). Part III contains the register of these files which consists of a file number, an individual's name, place of residence, and an occasional additional comment. The files themselves are filled with all information gathered by the Force by any means concerning the individual. Many of these files recently have been transferred to the NAC by CSIS and are present in RG 146. The first Register, covering the years 1919-1924, can be found in the Archives and subsequent partial lists have been acquired by Access requests to CSIS.

Assistant Commissioner W.H. Routledge, the first head of the new

13 RG 18, Vol. 599, file 1328, Perry to OCs, 6/1/19, Circular Memo. #807. See also RG 13, Vol. 231, file 113/1919, Perry to DMJ, 14/1/19, with the enclosure of Memos 807 and 807A. Given the general lack of co-ordination of security matters and the fact that the RNWMP reported to Rowell not Doherty, the forwarding of these memos is of some interest, especially because it only went to Rowell at the same time. For evidence of this see RG 18, Vol. 2441, Register Entry 58/1919, date 14/1/19.

14 *Ibid.*, Perry to OCs, 6/1/19, Circular Memo. #807A.

Criminal Investigation Branch, followed up on Perry's initial memo to set up the PHF system in late February 1919. Routledge wrote the Officers Commanding instructing them personally to supervise the preparation of these files. Such files were to include the following information: "Names and usual descriptive particulars. A photograph if it is at all possible to obtain one without arousing suspicion. Date of arrival in Canada; if naturalized or not; married or single; family; home address; present occupation; particular associations affiliated with and standing in same; present locality of activities; points where he is known to have been in any way active; details of any police records which he may have had; degree of intelligence and education and all other possible information which would assist in compiling a complete record of the man."<sup>15</sup> Initially, these files were to be commenced only upon request of the CIB office, but two weeks later the instructions were modified to demand that the local OC should compile a PHF on "any prominent agitator coming under your notice ... but great care must be taken not to arouse the suspicions of the party being thus reported on."<sup>16</sup>

The Register available in the Archives covers the period from its conception in 1919 to the end of 1924. In those six years 2590 files were opened. These files concerned 2525 individuals once duplicates were removed. A subsequent access request to CSIS for the later registers to the end of 1929 succeeded in gaining a massively exempted list which indicated that in the following five years another 2216 individual files were opened. In other words, on average 437 Canadians had files opened on them annually from 1919 to 1929.<sup>17</sup>

The lists lend themselves to relatively limited analysis, but Table 1 shows the geographic breakdown for the first 2590 files. (The CSIS list had no geographical information for the 54 individuals whose names had not been deleted or could be identified by cross-referencing with subject files.) As can be seen, British Columbia and Alberta are significantly over-represented, Saskatchewan and Manitoba somewhat, and the rest of the country is badly under-represented. To some degree at least, this is partially a statistical artifact of the initial western-only jurisdiction of the RNWMP. For example, the first Toronto file is 1225 and the first Montreal file is 1254, which suggests that almost half of the total files were generated before 1 February 1920 when the new RCMP took over national jurisdiction. Other scattered information which can be gleaned from the list is the presence of 68

15 *Ibid.*, Vol. 2380, Memorandum CIB #10, Routledge to Officers Commanding, 28/2/19.

16 *Ibid.*, Circular Memorandum CIB #10A, Routledge to OCs, 14/3/19.

17 RG 18, Vol. 2448, Register of Bolsheviks, 1919-1924. My access request to CSIS was 87-A-41. The rate in the two periods was almost identical 432 versus 443, although given that the opening of files should be heavier initially this suggests some intensification over the period.

women, one of whom, Alli Koivisto is quaintly described as “an agitress.” In addition, the list includes 23 clergy (Ivens, Irvine, Smith, Woodsworth, and Bland are the most prominent), 14 doctors, six military, and five elected officials (John Queen of Winnipeg and Mayor Joseph Clarke of Edmonton, for example). The unfortunately rather random marginalia also identifies nine IWW and six OBU members, as well as an array of less predictable entries such as English harvester, Jewish lecturer, Esperanto teacher, Hindu wrestler, and perhaps most intriguing, “ex-RCMP.”

TABLE 1

“Agitators” by Location, 1919-1924			
	Number on List	2590	
	Number Names (after adjustments)	2525	
	Number Places Listed	2287	
A. Geographic Breakdown of Provinces			
	# agitators	% agitators	% Canadian Population
1921			
British Columbia	775	33.9	6.0
Alberta	477	20.9	6.7
Saskatchewan	286	12.5	8.6
Ontario	276	12.1	33.4
Manitoba	253	11.1	6.9
Quebec	158	6.9	26.9
Nova Scotia	15	1.0	6.0
Prince Edward Island	1	---	1.0
Yukon	1	—	
New Brunswick	0		4.4
USA	24	1.0	
Other Foreign	5	.2	
Unknown	<u>16</u>	<u>.7</u>	
	2287	100.3	



### B. Geographic Breakdown by City 50+ Agitators

	# agitators	% agitators
Vancouver	427	34.4
Winnipeg	194	15.7
Montreal	156	12.6
Edmonton	118	10.0
Toronto	80	6.5
Calgary	74	6.0
Regina	73	5.9
Ft. William	65	5.2
Saskatoon	53	4.3
	<u>1240</u>	<u>100.6</u>

Source: RG 18, vol. 2448, Register of Bolsheviks.

Part IV are the registers of a second data series compiled by the new security section of the Force, namely subject files on radicalism. The register of these files was obtained from CSIS by means of three access requests.<sup>18</sup> The rate at which these files were compiled seems quite uneven. As Table 2 illustrates the Force opened the first 3459 subject files in 1919 or slightly over half of the total for the 11-year period. In the first four years fully 80 per cent of the total for the entire period were opened. This is primarily dictated simply by the cumulative nature of the development of a filing system, although it may also indicate a slowing of radical activities late in the decade and a consequent decline in RCMP activity. A comprehensive analysis of this data and a careful cross-tabulation of the data in each set is yet to be completed. Nevertheless, it should be readily apparent that the surveillance entered into by the RNWMP commencing in January 1919 was of a different order than what had gone before.

18 CSIS, 86-A-10 (1920); 87-A-125 (1921-1929); 88-A-91 (1919).

TABLE 2

Number Subject Files Opened by Year, 1919-1929		
	Number	% of Total
1919	3429	51.1
1920	299	4.4
1921	689	10.2
1922	789	11.7
1923	435	6.4
1924	344	5.1
1925	268	4.0
1926	178	2.6
1927	89	1.3
1928	126	1.9
1929	81	1.2
TOTAL	6767	99.9

Source: CSIS, Register of Bolsheviks Subject Files, Access Request.

Part V contains yet another set of Registers which contain files opened by the Force on "Prohibited or Objectionable Literature." This list also originated in 1919 when press censorship was still in force under the WMA but the list continued throughout the decade. The list for the first three years was obtained from the holdings of the NAC and thus is not exempted but the subsequent list for the rest of the decade was obtained from CSIS and has been subjected to many exemptions under the Access legislation. Table 3 shows the annual rate of file opening which suggests a slowing in the mid and late 1920s with a significant increase in activity in 1929.

An analysis of the first three years of activity, where the data remains unexempted, shows that of the 281 files opened 46.3 per cent concerned individuals in possession of such literature or geographic locations where such literature had been discovered. The next largest category of files was the 31 per cent concerning individual newspapers or magazines. Another 14.2 per cent concerned individual pamphlets or books and 2.1 per cent related to bookshops, publishers, or libraries. A surprising 8.2 per cent of the files covered the publications and activities of the International Bible Students Association, an early version of the Jehovah's Witnesses.<sup>19</sup>

The final section of this volume, Part VI, is another RCMP register from 1919-20. In this register a more detailed account of various incidents such as speeches and meetings were tracked. The precise relationship of

<sup>19</sup> For the subsequent story, see William Kaplan, *State and Salvation: The Jehovah's Witnesses and Their Fight for Civil Rights*, Toronto, 1989.

this volume to the other registers is not known, but it was felt that it conveyed in slightly more detail the actions and attitudes of the secret service.

TABLE 3

RCMP Prohibited/Objectionable Literature Files, 1919-1929			
Year	Number of Files	File Numbers	Per Cent of Total
1919-20	194	1-194	31.8
1921	87	194-281	14.3
1922	56	282-337	9.2
1923	31	338-368	5.1
1924	33	369-401	5.4
1925	35	402-436	5.7
1926	48	437-484	7.9
1927	25	485-509	4.1
1928	35	510-544	5.7
1929	66	545-610	10.9
Total	610		100.1

Source: NAC, RG18, vol. 2433 and CSIS, Access Request.

The materials contained in this volume provide our best and most detailed look at the early operations of the RCMP secret service. While they cover only the first decade of the Force's operations in this realm, the work we have done on subsequent periods makes clear that these initial years were the crucial ones in shaping the ideology and operations of the secret service. While technological innovation might change certain surveillance techniques, the targets of RCMP attention which were first identified in 1919 were to remain the same for the next seventy years.



*A.B. Perry, Commissioner of the RNWMP and RCMP, 1900-22. (Courtesy of RCMP Photo Archives)*