

Quill and Quire (March, 1975)

MEN IN SCARLET, Hugh Dempsey, ed., Historical Society of Alberta, M & S West, \$10.00, ISBN 0-7712-1003-6, 230 pp., illus. In May 1974 the University of Lethbridge

organized a conference on the Royal Canadian Mounted Police which brought together a number of historians, teachers, journalists and others. The Director of History at the Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Hugh Dempsey, edited thirteen of the resulting essays for publication.

As might be expected, two essays deal with the "Great March West", perhaps the single most dramatic event in RCMP history and certainly one which has, over the years, continually occupied the thoughts of both members and students of the force. The story, an epic tale of human struggle and hardship, has been told many times, but two of these essays, including one by George Stanley, add interesting sidelights to existing accounts.

Perhaps the most informative essay is by Roderick McLeod. He traces parliamentary scrutiny of the Mounties from their inception to the early years of the Laurier administration. Many of the accusations levelled against the force have a very familiar ring—harsh and unfair internal disciplinary procedures, discrimination against French Canadians, unwarranted imprisonment of suspects, and so on.

Other essays of interest to the general reader deal with the image of the Mounties in fiction, the attitudes of historians toward the force, and of course the well known story of Canada's unceremonious treatment of Sitting Bull.

Unlike many of the seemingly endless stream of books published to mark the centennial of the RCMP, this one does not portray the force as a sacred institution. Nor does it characterize it as an arrogant, secretive, and militaristic organization. On balance most of the essays are highly readable. *Gary Levy*