

Quill and Quire (August, 1976)

THE NORTH-WEST MOUNTED POLICE  
AND LAW ENFORCEMENT 1873-1905, R.  
C. Macleod, University of Toronto Press,  
\$15.00 cloth ISBN 0 8020 5333 5, 218 pp.,  
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The Mounties' centennial has come and gone and so have both the ponderous official histories and the instant books, some denouncing, some glorifying, but all cashing in on the anniversary. Now at last the University of Toronto Press has published a book which tackles the really interesting questions posed by the foundation and development of the NWMP.

Professor MacLeod teaches history at the University of Alberta and this book is based on his doctoral dissertation. He claims it is not a definitive history even for the limited period 1873-1905 but one has only to look at the notes and references to realize this is a serious and scholarly study.

The first five chapters outline the origins of the Force and its methods and

organization. Then, however, the author correctly perceives that the story of the NWMP is irrevocably intertwined with the rest of society. In the remaining chapters he argues they succeeded first in policing the frontier and then in maintaining order in a settled and developed community, not because they always got their man but because much of their time was spent on activities not directly related to criminal law enforcement. They supervised elections, performed ceremonial duties, did counselling and in general served the community.

If the book has a weakness it is the conclusion, a bare seven pages, which does not even try to answer original questions about what the NWMP experience tells us concerning the differences between Canadian and American society or the importance of the frontier in the development of a people. But this is of relatively minor importance since almost every chapter is brimming with ideas and observations on these subjects. Such insights are the honest products of original research and hopefully the author will now turn his attention to the period after 1905 to see if the RCMP have been as successful as their illustrious predecessors in adapting to change. *Gary Levy*