



Star photo/Nick Brancaccio
JAIKARAN PREET SINGH, along with his dad, Amarjit Singh, centre, meets Baltej Singh Dhillon

Turban-clad Mountie hailed as inspiration

By Jacqueline Smrke/Staff Reporter

Baltej Singh Dhillon, the man who sparked a nationwide controversy in 1991 over the right to wear a turban as part of his RCMP uniform, received a hero's welcome during a weekend visit to Windsor.

Dhillon — garbed in the familiar red Mountie uniform, an off-white turban replacing the regular-issue cap — was among the guest speakers at a human rights banquet held by the Sikh Education and Research Centre of Windsor.

"Racism is a disease that eats away at the very fabric that holds this country together," Dhillon said. "In the end, it turns a human being into an unforgiving enemy."

SATURDAY'S BANQUET at Place Concorde topped off a series of workshops focusing on the quest for human rights. And while Dhillon shared the guest speaker podium with Ed Broadbent, the former federal NDP leader, it was the tenacious RCMP officer who stole the spotlight.

Nothing could equal the awe in the eyes of young Sikhs who shyly approached Dhillon, who has become a visible role model in their lives. Others too, would express their admiration for Dhillon and what he stood for.

"YOU'RE NOT ONLY an inspiration to the young Sikhs, but to all," said Teresa Fracas while shaking hands with Dhillon.

Fracas, an early childhood teacher, said it's impor-

tant for young children to hear about Dhillon's hard-won fight and to take the message home to their families.

And that's exactly what organizers were hoping to achieve.

The workshops, presented in co-operation with Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada, were aimed at promoting a better understanding, friendship and mutu-

'Racism is a disease that eats away at the very fabric that holds this country together. In the end, it turns a human being into an unforgiving enemy.'

— Baltej Singh Dhillon,
RCMP officer

al respect of the Sikh community, while fostering goodwill among the public.

There are 400 members of the Sikh community in Windsor and an estimated 500,000 in Canada. About 100 people attended the conferences throughout the day
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and attendance at the banquet represented many groups within the city.

Asked what Dhillon remembered most vividly about his experience, he told the story of his initial posting to Quesnel, B.C., where a toy image of himself in uniform — complete with turban — arrived at his post before he did. A couple in Regina had sent a plush, custom-made toy with a note wishing him good luck.

DHILLON SAID his memories — many painful — are the moments that count and that his troopmates and town have accepted him as a police officer, not a turbaned law enforcer. He encouraged all people to rely on inner strength and self-evaluation to challenge the status quo.

"We need to give children dreams; that everything is attainable," he said.

Broadbent, appointed president of the International Centre for Human Rights by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney in 1990, spoke of the need for Canadians to recognize what is good for the community as a prerequisite for human rights. He cited the recent nationwide referendum on the Charlottetown agreement as an example of too many people wanting their share of the pie — not caring if others get theirs.

"Democratic people should ask not what we can get, but what we can give," Broadbent said.

The International Centre for Human Rights operates 150 projects in more than 50 countries around the world. Broadbent said his role in the organization is to "be there for people working on the front lines with human rights, like Dhillon."

WINDSOR'S FRANK Chauvin was given special recognition for his work in the area of humanitarian aid at home and abroad. Chauvin, who said he lost "so-called friends" when he adopted a black son and took Vietnamese boat people into his home, said he is familiar with the taste of racism and that it is not palatable.

"The scales of justice do not balance," Chauvin said. "But I think that with every effort I do, I tilt them a little."

Also addressing the banquet was Laurie Wiseberg, executive director of the International Human Rights Documentation Network. Wiseberg spoke of political killings and the need for continued monitoring and pressure on governments committing atrocities.

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Wed. Nov. 11, 1992 page A9
LETTER TO EDITOR

Turbans not for Mounties

What is our country coming to? I refer to the front page of *The Windsor Star* of Nov. 9. A picture of a Mountie wearing a turban. He feels he has conquered the culture of our country.

This dress mode takes away from the customary way our mounted police dress.

Would John-Q-Public obey the de-

mands of such a Mountie dressed with a turban and not clean shaven?

I think not, I know I would not obey one dressed like he is. Not because of his nationality, but because he does not respect what the Mountie stands for here in Canada.

D. MILNE
Windsor

Canadian laws and culture worthy of respect

I am writing in response to the front-page article in *The Windsor Star's* Nov. 9 issue. It concerns the RCMP officer who is allowed to wear his turban as part of his uniform because asking him not to wear it is an infringement of his rights.

What about the rights of the other RCMP officers not to mention the rest of Canada?

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police are a symbol of our country. They are a part of our identity. I feel proud to be Canadian when I see an RCMP officer in full uniform. Asking us to accept the Sikh turban as part of the formal uniform is an infringement on our rights.

The officer has every right to practise his own religion and every right to be part of the RCMP. The question is,

where do his loyalties lie? I see his situation as a conflict of interest. Can he honestly consider himself Canadian and uphold his oath as an RCMP officer if he can't even comply with the dress code?

If he is willing to be Canadian and represent Canada, then he should be expected to take the honor of being an

RCMP officer seriously and conform to the rules like everyone else. The issue is not one of racism but of someone wanting special treatment.

When we visit other countries, we are expected to respect their laws and culture. Why don't the Canadian laws and culture receive equal respect?

C. STEVEN
Windsor

Illogical and offensive views

This letter concerns the letter headlined: Turbans Not For Mounties in *The Star* of Nov. 11.

The argument presented by D. Milne are both illogical and offensive. He accuses Mr. Dhillon of feeling as though he has "conquered the culture of our country."

As a Canadian citizen, Mr. Dhillon is a reflection of his country. Mr. Milne states that his views are not based on Mr. Dhillon's "nationality." This is subtle racism, as Mr. Dhillon's "nationality" is Canadian. Mr.

Milne also argues that he would not obey a Mountie in a turban.

Mr. Dhillon has sworn an oath to the Queen and to the people of Canada to uphold the laws of this country. It is D. Milne who proposes breaking the laws.

Who is it who really has no respect for what the Mounties stand for in Canada?

NEIL PUDDICOMBE
Faculty of Law
University of Windsor

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LETTER TO EDITOR

THE WINDSOR STAR
WED NOV. 18/92 PAGE A9
LETTER TO EDITOR

Sikh showed pride in Canada, respect for Mountie uniform

I am writing in response to letter writer D. Milne's comments about Baltej Singh Dhillon, the Mountie who was wearing a turban on *The Windsor Star's* front page of Nov. 9.

I must say that D. Milne is not a true Canadian citizen. He said that Baltej Singh Dhillon thinks that he has conquered Canada's culture. Mr. Milne should open his eyes and look around. Canada doesn't have a national costume, therefore all other faces and cultures are, or should be, welcomed with open arms. He also said that it wasn't about his nationality. Is he sure about that? He wrote that he wouldn't obey a Mountie dressed like him. Why not? He is

law, no matter how he's dressed. I'm sure that you'd obey an unshaved white officer without hesitation.

I don't think that it is disrespectful for him to be wearing a turban. I think that it shows great pride and respect for his culture and ours.

He is proud to represent Canada and Mr. Milne should be proud to have him representing him and his country. I really think that Mr. Milne is crushing Canada's image by making racist remarks.

MELISSA PINAZZA
Grade 8 student
Windsor

Change that's not appreciated

I am writing to say how sickened I was to see a RCMP member wearing a turban in the Nov. 9 *Star*.

Oh, Canada what have you done now? How did this happen?

I'm not against people from different nations joining our police (RCMP), just against allowing others to change our country.

HOPE FRISEN
Windsor

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LETTER TO EDITOR

Destroying Canada's culture?

I was not impressed with the front-page picture of the Mountie wearing a turban in *The Windsor Star* of Nov. 9. I find it disgusting to think that a Sikh has won the right to destroy part of Canada's culture.

Our government is spending billions of dollars to keep the French culture and traditions alive in Canada, yet at the same time a wonderful Canadian custom is being thrown by the wayside. It makes no sense and furthermore it is not fair.

I am not disputing Mr. Baltej Singh Dhillon's (the man who sparked a nationwide controversy in 1991 over

the right to wear a turban as part as his RCMP uniform) abilities as a law enforcer.

I am sure he must be very capable and competent. However, tampering with the famous and historical Mountie uniform is wrong.

Let me make this perfectly clear — I am not being racially prejudiced on this issue. I am defending part of Canada's heritage and culture — a part that helps to unite Canadians near and far.

LISA CHEVALIER
Windsor

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FRIDAY NOV. 20/92 PAGE A13
LETTER TO EDITOR

New citizens should obey rules

With regard to the article about the turban-clad Mountie, I feel that if anyone, no matter what their nationality, wants to enter a profession where a uniform is required, the full uniform should be worn. Why should exceptions be made?

Mr. Dhillon knew a full uniform was proudly worn by our great Mounties and if that was a problem

for him, he should not have become a Mountie.

The thing that annoys me is that so many people come from other countries to our great country and do not abide by our laws. If all Canadians live by the rules of our country, so should all new citizens.

JUDY DOREY
Windsor

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Monday Nov. 23/92
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LETTER TO EDITOR

Equal opportunity for all

There was an article in *The Windsor Star* on Nov. 9 concerning the banquet held on Nov. 7. The article focused on Baltej Singh Dhillon, who made history by becoming the first RCMP officer to ever wear a turban. As a member of the Sikh Youth, I attended the banquet referred to in order to hear Mr. Dhillon.

He taught us to be proud of who we are as human beings and to never let anyone take this away.

He later told us of his struggle — of all the racism and people he faced, who would have denied him his dream. He persevered in his

struggle, and he won.

Whoever said Mounties must be turban-less and clean-shaven?

Our police force is supposed to represent our country, meaning it should be multicultural just as Canada is multicultural, ideally allowing equal opportunity to all races.

If you refuse to listen to a Mountie simply because he does not conform to your image of a Mountie, you are obviously basing your judgment on nationality.

NANCY JAMMU
Windsor

Symbolizing steadfastness

Since the picture of the turban-wearing Mountie was shown in the paper of Nov. 9, there has been much opposition towards it.

I guess it was expected but one would hope for more understanding since Canada is known as a multicultural society. Many have said that it is taking apart Canada's heritage but these people don't realize that the Mountie's uniform was changed five times before this. So why all the opposition this time?

Well, I'll tell you why. Because

many of the people of this country are prejudiced and racist against others, although they claim otherwise. Many claim that wearing a turban is disrespectful.

These are ignorant people who do not know who the Sikhs are and what the turban stands for. It symbolizes steadfastness for one's rights. One of the rights given to the people of Canada is the freedom of religion as well as equality rights.

NARINDER RANDHAWA
LaSalle

Proud to live in Canada

For the last few weeks I have had to put up with letters from readers of this paper concerning the article about the Sikh Mountie.

I must say that the comments made by these readers shame us as Canadians. They are nothing less than racial and religious bigotry.

With respect to the officer involved in this incident, I must say that I am very proud to live in a country where we allow a person to serve in the RCMP based on his or her merit rather than on their ethnicity or religious beliefs.

EUGENE D. BOCCHINI
LaSalle

Helping build our culture

I would like to respond to the recent letters to the editor from by D. Milne headlined: Turbans Not For Mounties and Lisa Chevalier, Destroying Canada's Culture.

Canada is a multicultural country.

There is no "Canadian culture" as such except for the cultures of the native nations who, by the way, often take offence when called Canadian.

In this country, the culture is a mixture of all the cultures of the world and so the turban of a Sikh RCMP officer is adding to our cultural mix rather than taking away or destroying it. This is in fact a step forward on the road to what we may one day proudly call a Canadian culture.

MAREK CERAJEWSKI
Windsor

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Windsor, Ont. [REDACTED]
November 30, 1992.

Letter Box,
The Windsor Star,
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Windsor, Ont. N9A 4M5.

It is most unfortunate that the visit to Windsor of R.C.M.P. officer Baltej Singh Dhillon should give rise to such an outpouring of subtle and not so subtle racism and misinformation as expressed in letters to The Windsor Star.

In reading some of the attacks directed against officer Dhillon, one would think that he had single-handedly set out to bring about the demise of our nonexistent "Canadian culture" and the so-called traditions of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

In 1873, the Canadian Parliament authorized the establishment of the North West Mounted Police for the purpose of preserving order and safeguarding security in the west. The original uniform included an impractical round pillbox hat held in place by a chinstrap. At the same time, white pith helmets were also worn. It is interesting to note that beards were allowed in the force and one of the first bearded officers was the son of the famous English writer Charles Dickens.

Over the years, a variety of headgear was worn by the force including fur caps and felt slouch hats. The official winter uniform of the prairies even included moccasins which

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represented a borrowing from another non-white culture.

It wasn't until 1901 that the wide-brimmed Stetsons were approved as an official part of the R.C.M.P. uniform. Due to their unsuitability for everyday modern policing, they are only worn now for ceremonial or state functions. It is quite obvious, therefore, that officer Dhillon's turban is not replacing the Stetson in the performance of his day to day duties on the force. So much for the arguments about tradition and culture.

One writer to The Windsor Star of November 18, stated, "I am writing to say how sickened I was to see an R.C.M.P. member wearing a turban."

Adolf Hitler, the world's leading Master-racist, expressed a similar emotion in his autobiography, Mein Kampf. Referring to the caftans worn by Jews in Vienna, he wrote, "I often grew sick to the stomach from the smell of these caftan wearers!"

We all know the terrible price that was eventually paid for these pathological outbursts directed against racial and religious minorities. The rise of the extreme right and the increase in racial and religious intolerance throughout the world would indicate that we haven't learned our lessons from the not too distant past.

Les Dickirson
Les Dickirson, Chairperson,
Human Rights Committee,
Local 195 C.A.W.

