

MEMORANDUM

NOTE DE SERVICE

To
A O.C. Prince George Sub/Division

From
De NCO i/c Quesnel Detachment

Subject
Objet

Reg. No. 42848, Cst. Dhillon, B.S.
Newspaper Article of Interest

Please find attached articles written recently and published in the Prince George Citizen.

I am pleased to say that the decision to treat Cst. Dhillon like any other recruit has been instrumental in his acceptance by the majority of public and members alike. His own performance and positive attitude have contributed considerably.

I am still of the view that we should down play media notoriety in order to have his acceptance continue.

R.R. Bouck, S/Sgt.
NCO i/c Detachment

RRB:pc

ATTACH.

Security Classification - Classification de sécurité
Our File - Notre référence 42848
Your File - Votre référence
Date 91-11-01

Commentary

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM PUTS YOUNG MOUNTIE ON THE LINE

A town confronts racial intolerance



Law enforcement in our country is changing, as everything else seems to be in these exciting but challenging times. Marilyn Storie, at left, The Citizen's police/court reporter, looks at some of the ways the RCMP is responding, and offers some of her own personal observations on the issue.

by MARILYN STORIE
Citizen Staff

He wants to be a good cop. Like any other member of the class graduated from the RCMP Regina training academy in May, the 24-year-old constable has been buckling down to the practical work of policing. And like any other rookie posted to Quesnel, 120 kilometres south of Prince George, he is spending his first six months cruising the rural outskirts to learn the ropes.

But unlike other Mounties, Const. Baltej Dhillon is unique among the 30 members of his detachment and all others across Canada. He is the first Sikh RCMP officer in the country to exercise his right to wear a turban while on active duty.

"It's getting a bit much," admitted Dhillon recently at the Quesnel station house when asked about the media attention. "My superior and I have agreed on no more publicity until the six months is up."



Home-grown prejudice.

Dhillon said the police work itself was, "going OK." He repeated firmly, "I just want to be a good cop."

Sikhs who followed their religion to the letter were formerly barred from joining the force because their religion requires all male baptized Sikhs to wear turbans. There have been fewer than 10 Sikhs in the 17,400-member force, but their representation in the force is expected to increase dramatically in the wake of Dhillon's decision.

RCMP Commissioner Norman Inkster moved in 1989 to allow turbans in the force. He followed the lead of the Canadian Armed Forces, which decided not allowing military personnel to wear turbans would contravene human rights legislation.

Many see it as an attack on the last immutable Canadian tradition. The Mountie in red serge, riding boots and Stetson is an image accepted worldwide and one many Canadians are loathe to see change.

Discrimination in this country is a hidden issue compared to the open version experienced by those living in the ghettos of the United States and the kraals of South Africa. But it still exists.

Mud flaps spotted on a livestock transporter parked in front of a Prince George coffee shop are a home-grown example of prejudice, Canadian-style.

The flaps display a logo of a Sikh RCMP officer with a ceremonial sword, turban and Persian slippers. The sword bears little resemblance to the fist-sized kirpan worn by all Sikhs. The slippers are from another culture entirely and the turban has been exaggerated to the size of absurdity.

A rumor of more blatant prejudice initiated a trip to Quesnel, where no one was lukewarm on the topic of turbans in the RCMP. But none of the 20 people questioned were anxious to give their names either.

A jar full of money was said to be on the counter at one local nightclub. According to the rumor,

the money jar was a prize to be awarded to the first person to knock off the new constable's turban. Everyone had heard of it, but no one could say exactly where it was.

One woman who said she was a government employee — "I won't even tell you which government," spoke on the condition she not be named.

"I'm not prejudiced. It's not because of who he is — I've got nothing against Sikhs. But when they choose to represent our law, they should conform to the dress code."

She said she had no problem with female officers in the RCMP wearing skirts, another switch from the traditional uniform. "Canada is a free country. They have the choice of wearing skirts or slacks like they do in the army."

A coffee shop employee, who also asked not to be identified, said she admired Dhillon for his courage. "But I still don't think turbans should be allowed," she said.

A discussion about turbans at Champs Pub grew so heated that a performing stripper got miffed at the lack of attention and stalked offstage. Local resident Doug Martens, the only person who could be persuaded to give his name, claimed he knew people who would run the new constable down on the street if they spotted him.

He was asked if he's met Dhillon and whether he's a nice guy.

"Yeah. Well, they're not going to stop to ask questions," said Martens.

"Look," said one of Martens' friends, "I can't wear a beard to work, why should he be able to?"

Is it part of your religion to wear a beard? he was asked.

"No, but why should that make any difference?" the friend replied.

"There's a lot of negativity here about the turban thing," said Martens. He admitted there was prejudice against the sizable Sikh population in Quesnel.

"Most of the Sikh population lives in West Quesnel," he said. "That's probably part of the problem. They're all sticking together."

None of the people who spoke against turbans in the RCMP had any problem with female officers being allowed in the force. The first all-women troop graduated in 1975 to a storm of controversy. About 900 or five per cent of RCMP members are now female.

None seemed aware that aboriginal RCMP officers are allowed to wear their hair in ceremonial

braids if it is a part of their spiritual tradition.

"I don't have any problem with that," said one. "It's just turbans I don't agree with."

One Sikh man in his early 20s, wearing blue jeans and a T-shirt, was pointed out as "a good guy."

"He's just like us," said one.

The Sikh man would not give his name, either. He shyly admitted he, too, had heard the money jar rumor. "But I've never seen it," he said.

He added that the local Sikh temple had held a welcoming dinner for Dhillon, where he had met him. "He is a nice guy," he agreed.

"Oh, yeah, the rag pull-off," said one man, when asked about the jar. He said he believed it was at TJ's Cabaret.

At TJ's Cabaret, there was no jar. TJ regulars, however, had heard the rumor, too. They thought the jar was at the Champs Pub.

After scouting three other drinking establishments and coming up empty, it became apparent the rumor was just a rumor.

The only real problem was in people's minds.

by MARILYN STORIE
Citizen Staff

Policing in Canada is on a 180-degree turn, journeying back to the beginning of its 118-year history when the local Mountie was an integral part of the community.

Like all other policing organizations in the world, the RCMP has been heavily influenced by 50 years of reactive policing. Patrol cars remove them from dangerous contact with the public, but the same gesture alienates them from friendly contact with the public.

But the RCMP, perhaps more than any other police organization, has managed to retain some of its positive image. This is due, in part, to the regional nature of the force. Officers at small detachments have never lost their touch for dealing with people.

Even police in the second-largest metropolis in the world are looking with interest at the comparatively untarnished image of the Mountie. A Harvard Business Review interview with New York City police commissioner Lee Brown this past spring revealed that community policing is scheduled for a comeback.

According to Brown, American



Const. Baltej Dhillon is settling into his first RCMP posting in Quesnel.

Policing rediscovers its roots

police are doing a bangup job of arresting people, but crime itself is higher than ever. Brown, who holds a master's degree in sociology and a doctorate in criminology, is adamant that reactive policing is not working.

"We must look at the underlying factors that produce crime," he said. "In the United States we deal with social failures by using the criminal justice system to sweep the debris under the rug."

Even the success of the 911 emergency system is proving a mixed one in large cities. In New York City it is estimated police in patrol cars spend 90 per cent of their time responding to 911 calls. The public, say police, has begun to exaggerate problems in the hopes of getting a cop there faster.

In Canada the cost crunch of policing is providing added impetus for a full revival of community-oriented policing.

Statistics Canada figures show that the RCMP provides 70 per cent of policing in B.C. Across the country, the force provides provincial and municipal police services to 21.5 per cent of the population.

In 1988 there was one police officer for every 530 people in B.C. The average salary of a first-class RCMP constable with three to five years of experience or more tops \$47,000. With the cost-of-living index taken into consideration, the effective increase over the past two decades for policing in Canada is 55 per cent.

But changing a paramilitary approach to management, command and control is a tall order. Police will have to get over the idea that working with neighborhood community groups isn't "real police work."

And current training — with officers allowed little discretion in carrying out their duties — will have to change. Instead of being trained to respond repeatedly to similar incidents, police will have to be trained and empowered to solve problems creatively.

Reactive policing relies on street patrols, with a rapid response to calls for service, and follow-up investigations to identify and arrest criminal suspects. But it neither reduces crime nor reassures citizens that they won't become victims.

Community policing is based

on the realization that most crimes are solved with information that comes from people. The better your relationship with the people, the more information you get.

In *Police Challenge 2000*, a discussion paper released by the solicitor general last October, it is predicted that police organizations will "become 'minimized' following the labor shortage, the decline of public violence and decreasing demand for services requiring physical strength."

The expectation is that the aging trend in this country will mean older Canadians, who increasingly will be single or widowed women living alone. The shift in focus away from traditional street crime is expected to free resources to focus on new and emerging forms of crime, such as environmental crime, white collar crime and corporate crime.

Another predicted trend, already in evidence in the RCMP, is representing ethnic minorities within the force as a means of providing better service to culturally diverse Canadians.

A TOLERANT APPROACH TO INTOLERANCE

Only in Canada you say

An analysis
by MARILYN STORIE
Citizen Staff

A discouraging number of Canadians are quick to deride prejudice in other countries, the farther away from their own country the better.

But when they run out of shocked remarks about South Africa — remarks made in a predominantly white workplace before they go home to a predominantly white neighborhood and switch on the TV — they become outraged at the mere suggestion of racism in Canada. And point to the United States.

You have to live in Canada yourself to understand how they get away with it.

Whereas the American bigot will say, "Sure, I'm prejudiced — So what?" his Canadian counterpart will qualify a prejudiced statement with, "I'm not prejudiced, but..." to absolve himself of any blame.

Somehow, Canadians always find an excuse.

The Canadian Link, a national newspaper promoting multiculturalism, recently reported that an official of the Alberta Liberal party was asked in August to remove his turban before entering the Red Deer Legion.

Removing hats before entering the doors of a Royal Canadian Legion is considered a sign of respect to the war dead. But requiring Sikhs — who are also among the war dead of the First World War and Second World War — to violate a tenet of their faith is hardly fair treatment.

The article went on to note the same Red Deer Legion relaxed the no-hat rule in favor of a band whose singers wanted to perform wearing cowboy hats.

An August letter published in the Prince George Citizen said a Sikh had also run aground on the no-hat rule at a branch of the White Rock Legion. The writer defended the rule, saying that, "tolerance is a two-way street."

If tolerance is a two-way street, then someone should fix the lights at the intersection. Turbans are not accepted in

the Canadian Armed Forces and the RCMP for reasons of courtesy; they are accepted because their wear is a religious requirement.

Support for a true representation of minority groups in the RCMP and for increased community involvement in policing are inseparable goals. In large part, both will rely on a change in community attitudes.

Police attitudes could also use some roadwork. Police keep telling the public to be more responsive to police needs, but some are not pleased when they discover the public expects the same treatment from them.

A Bellos Street family was recently upset by police attitude when a neighbor phoned police to tell them the Johnson family car was in danger of being stolen.

"My neighbor knew I was up in the hospital and she thought my husband wasn't home either," said Shawn Johnson. "She saw some kids fooling around by the car and ran out to scare them off. Then she phoned the police."

"The police told her they couldn't respond unless someone in our family phoned and complained."

The 1980 Oldsmobile stationwagon was stolen later the same night and damaged during an apparent joyride around the fairgrounds. Johnson said the police told her and her husband — who are facing a minimum \$2,000 to \$2,500 repair bill — that they were partly to blame because they had left the keys in the car.

"The reason the keys were in the car is that my husband had been up all night with me at the hospital," said Johnson. "He went home after I had the baby and phoned back to the hospital to let me know he was thinking about coming back. He had left the keys in the ignition and fell asleep on the couch because he was exhausted."

After her neighbor made a formal complaint, said Johnson, police did apologize for not responding. "They admitted the dispatcher was way out of line. But what about all this Block Watch stuff? They keep telling us to phone if you see anything strange, so what gives?"

On the reverse side, police are too readily abused by the public and the media for doing what is, in most instances, merely their job.

A court case here this summer revolved around a city RCMP officer charged with assault.

The officer stopped to investigate a jogger he suspected of escaping from the Prince George Regional Correctional Centre. The jogger was wearing clothes similar to those worn by inmates on the hill. He was running down the hill into town.

The jogger objected in strong, verbal terms to being stopped and questioned. He would not give his name. He resisted co-operating in any way with the officer. The officer arrested him.

During testimony it became obvious the jogger, a Canadian of east European origin, had a burning hatred of all uniformed authority because of a tragic experience in another country.

The officer was fined for pushing the man away from him (the officer said the jogger was so close he was spitting on the officer during his verbal tirade).

The officer also received a black mark on his record from his superiors: He had responded in kind to one of the jogger's many remarks made in adult language. The law was on the jogger's side.

But I wasn't.

I'm a big fan of walking down back alleys to see what's going on — call it checking the social barometer. I have yet to run across vagrants being beaten by police in Prince George. I have, however, seen just that in San Francisco, Guatemala and Colombia.

What I have observed in the back alleys of Prince George are constables rescuing drunks in the dead of winter so they don't freeze to death.

I don't know about you, but I'll take Dudley Do-Right over Dirty Harry any day.