

#7

RCMP perspective on the Regina riot

Excerpt from a RCMP report regarding the causes of the Regina riot, written for the Regina Riot Inquiry Commission.



Comments in brackets are not part of the original document. They have been added to assist the reader with difficult words.

RCMP Report: The Regina Riot Inquiry Commission

Colonel Wood himself was of the opinion that, if the leaders were to be arrested, action should be taken immediately because he believed that the strikers were preparing to make some desperate move; this was also the belief of the Inspector Chesser and Major Murison of the Canadian Pacific Railway Police. The foundation for their belief was confidential information which the police officers had from a source which they considered thoroughly reliable, to the effect that the strikers were making clubs and preparing for battle with the police ... he feared that they were planning demonstrations in the city which might result in riots and he believed that quick action in arresting the leaders might prevent the disturbances and make it easier to negotiate with the men for their return to the camps or to their homes.

Saskatchewan Archives Board. F 415 Records of the Regina Riot Inquiry Commission fonds. R-255 B. Record of Proceedings. Volume XXV.



#8

On-to-Ottawa trekker reflects

First-hand account from an On-to-Ottawa trekker who was in Regina during the riot. The account was published as part of *Ten lost years, 1929–1939: Memories of Canadians who survived the Depression*, a collection of interviews compiled by historian Barry Broadfoot.



Comments in brackets are not part of the original document. They have been added to assist the reader with difficult words.

On-to-Ottawa trekker reflects

I always thought the Regina riot was what you would today call a snow job. A police riot, against us, the trekkers, and believe me when I say an awful lot of those smashed windows and stolen goods were the work of good Regina citizens. I know. I saw them. Men in good clothes who weren't with our bunch who came out from Vancouver and so I can say, those guys that did the looting were a lot of Regina people. Well, mostly.

Look, look at it this way. We were disciplined. Art Evans told us it had to be this way, that being polite and organized and neat even in our old duds was the way to gain public support, and we'd got it all along the line. Suppose a trekker was found with a pen and pencil set or a wrist watch or something in his pocket. Well, they would have thrown the key away. Five, eight, ten years. Looting was the worst crime against property and you know what property was in those days

I'm sorry the policeman was killed and some of our boys got arrested and it made a lot of noise across the country but as I said, it was a snow job (an attempt to deceive). Old R. B. Bennett wanted a showdown and he got it, piling all those cops into vans and banging them into the square. Guns were firing. Guess who had the guns? He wanted to discredit the trek and he did. Oh, yes, he succeeded. We were, in the eyes of a lot of people, just a bunch of Reds (communists). Carrying the (Communist Party membership) card. It wasn't like that at all. We were just a bunch of ordinary guys, but Bennett stuck the label on us and it stuck. He did a lot of harm that day, that guy.

Barry Broadfoot, *Ten lost years, 1929–1939: Memories of Canadians who survived the Depression* (Toronto, ON: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 1997), pp. 410.

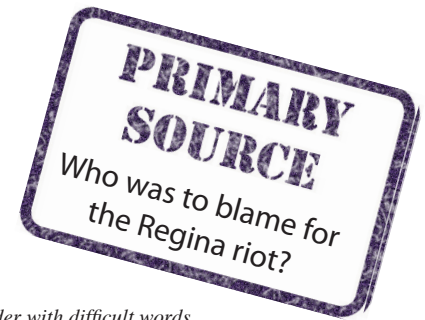


#9

On-to-Ottawa trekker remembers

First-hand account from an On-to-Ottawa trekker who was in Regina during the riot. The account was published as part of *Ten lost years, 1929–1939: Memories of Canadians who survived the Depression*, a collection of interviews compiled by historian Barry Broadfoot.

Comments in brackets are not part of the original document. They have been added to assist the reader with difficult words.



I wouldn't say it was a riot, not at first. We were behaving peaceably enough there in Regina, and then the police on one side and the Mounties on the other started to pull the guys, our speakers, off the platform. There was whistles blowing and horses charging and you could say it was the police doing the rioting, clubbing and charging. We took it for a few minutes and then we let go, against them.

There might have been about 1500 of us, all pretty pissed off, and those newspaper reports that there was about 4000 of us was crazy. There was never more than 2000 trek boys at any time. What the others were, they were Regina people down to Market Square to hear the speakers. Then when trouble started they were gone, just like that. Citizens of Regina, and not wanting any trouble

The Communists were behind the whole thing, you know, from the beginning and I guess to the end, although a lot of them would fade out at the final curtain. They didn't believe in going to jail.

There was Arthur Evans, and he was a real hard nut...Evans insisted that we behave ourselves. No violence, none at all. No stealing, and that was going to crimp an awful lot of guys' style. Be polite. Thank people when they gave us food or allowed us to sleep beneath their apple orchards

As I recall we were going to have a mass meeting in the Market Square in Regina. We'd been sleeping on the ground and getting handouts and hanging around town for more than 10 days, two weeks and some of the boys had gotten into a little trouble, some stealing, theft by night, that sort of thing, and the locals weren't all that kindly disposed towards us.

Bennett ordered that Evans and his boys were to be arrested at the meeting. That was on Dominion Day. It was a stupid thing, but just about everything you care to name which the government did in those days was stupid. Well, as soon as the meeting got going they jumped us. I don't think our boys had any guns but the police sure as hell did, and they were using them"

Barry Broadfoot, *Ten lost years, 1929–1939: Memories of Canadians who survived the Depression* (Toronto, ON: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 1997), pp. 407–410.

