

Thousands were targets of RCMP 'gay witch-hunt'

By Dean Beeby
The Canadian Press

The RCMP launched a massive hunt for male homosexuals in 1959 that led to hundreds of dismissals from the public service, newly released documents show.

The investigation identified 8,200 individuals by the late 1960s and extended far beyond the ranks of government. It included files on every alleged or known homosexual in the Ottawa area, the material indicates.

An earlier account of the so-called homosexual "witch-hunt" relied on unidentified sources, but the federal government for the first time has released documentation.

The material, obtained by The Canadian Press under the Access to Information Act, also shows that the RCMP net was cast far more widely than previously believed.

The hunt began as a special project in 1959 when it became clear the KGB, the Soviet espionage agency, had turned to blackmail of gay public servants as a favored method for prying state secrets out of western countries.

The RCMP Security Service knew of at least one clerk at the Canadian embassy in Moscow who was photographed by the KGB in a homosexual encounter in the 1960s and was pressured to co-operate. The clerk confessed and was fired but the Mounties feared repetition of the episode.

The Mounties then learned in 1963 that John Watkins, Canada's ambassador in Moscow, had also been photographed by the KGB in a homosexual encounter in the 1950s. Watkins died of a heart attack in 1964 at the end of an RCMP interrogation.

By March 1960, a special squad had opened 393 files, of which 159 were public servants known to be homosexual and the rest suspected or alleged.

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themselves were the best source for identifying other homosexuals "whether their information was obtained from personal contact, hearsay, or the 'homing instinct'."

Investigations were carried out almost exclusively on males in the Ottawa area, where most public servants then resided.

Within a year, the harvest had swollen to almost 1,000 files, of which more than a thousand were non-public servants.

Of 480 alleged or confirmed homosexual public servants identified by 1961, about one-third resigned or were dismissed once their secret became known, a memorandum advised Prime Minister John Diefenbaker.

By March 1967, the filing cabinets of the Character Weakness Section, as the squad became known, groaned with 8,200 files. The Mounties urged dismissal or demotion of at least 395 of these men for security reasons.

The documents do not make clear who called off the RCMP's homosexual purge or, why, although it lasted at least until the end of Prime Minister Lester Pearson's administration in 1968.

En 1959, une chasse aux homosexuels a conduit au renvoi de centaines de fonctionnaires fédéraux

Presse Canadienne

OTTAWA

De nouveaux documents, obtenus par la Presse Canadienne en vertu de la Loi d'accès à l'information, révèlent qu'une chasse aux homosexuels lancée par la GRC, en 1959, conduisit à l'identification de 8200 personnes et au congédiement de centaines de fonctionnaires.

De plus, l'enquête déborda les cadres de la fonction publique et se répandit sur tous les homosexuels connus ou présumés de la région d'Ottawa.

Cette histoire de «chasse aux sorcières» a déjà fait l'objet de reportages dans le passé, mais elle était basée sur des sources non identifiées. C'est la première fois, aujourd'hui, que le gouvernement fédéral rend la documentation publique.

Si la GRC a commencé à s'intéresser, particulièrement aux homosexuels, c'est qu'elle a découvert que le KGB, le service d'espionnage soviétique, faisait chanter des fonctionnaires gais du Canada pour leur soustraire des secrets d'Etat.

Le service de sécurité de la GRC avait appris qu'au moins un attaché de l'ambassade canadienne à Moscou avait été photographié par le KGB dans les années 1950, au moment d'une rencontre homosexuelle.

Interrogé, le diplomate avoua que le KGB s'était servi de cette photo pour l'obliger à «collaborer» et il fut congédié. Mais la GRC craignit, à compter de ce moment, une répétition de cet épisode.

En 1962, la GRC apprit que l'ambassadeur du Canada à Moscou lui-même, M. John Watkins, s'était lui aussi fait surprendre par le KGB dans une situation homosexuelle, au cours des années 50. M. Watkins succomba à une crise cardiaque, en 1964, à l'issue d'un interrogatoire de la GRC.

En mars 1960, la brigade spéciale constituée pour faire enquête sur les homosexuels avait déjà ouvert 393 dossiers, dont 159 de fonctionnaires connus comme étant des homosexuels et les autres seulement soupçonnés de l'être.

Dans un rapport, la GRC signale que les homosexuels eux-mêmes constituent la meilleure source d'identification des autres homosexuels, «à que leurs renseignements soient obtenus par contact personnel, qu'il s'agisse d'insinuations».

Les enquêtes portèrent presque exclusivement sur les homosexuels de la région d'Ottawa, où demeuraient la plupart des fonctionnaires à cette époque.

En moins d'un an, quelque 1600 dossiers étaient ouverts. De ce nombre, plus de 1000 personnes n'étaient pas des fonctionnaires.

Des 460 fonctionnaires homosexuels connus ou soupçonnés, en 1961, environ le tiers remirent leur démission ou furent congédiés, une fois que leur secret devint connu.

En mars 1967, la brigade spéciale de la GRC avait compilé 8200 noms. Elle recommanda le congédiement ou la rétrogradation d'au moins 395 de ces hommes, pour des raisons de sécurité.

On ignore qui ordonna la cessation de cette chasse aux homosexuels, mais on sait qu'elle se poursuivit au moins jusqu'à la fin de l'administration du premier ministre Lester Pearson, en 1968.

Environ les deux tiers des personnes fichées par la GRC n'étaient pas à l'emploi du gouvernement fédéral.

Le comité de sécurité du cabinet fédéral fut tenu au courant des activités secrètes de la GRC et il les laissa se poursuivre, en dépit des doutes soulevés par le pre-

mier ministre John Diefenbaker sur la violation des droits civils.

En 1939, le comité du cabinet confirma une politique adoptée quatre ans plus tôt, qui refusait aux homosexuels l'accès aux documents secrets et autorisait leur congédiement, même s'ils n'avaient pas accès à ces documents.

En janvier 1961, le commissaire Cliff Harvison, de la GRC, avait prévenu le premier ministre Diefenbaker que la chasse aux homosexuels s'étendait au-delà de la fonction publique.

Le commissaire Harvison justifiait cette façon d'agir de la GRC par le fait que ces homosexuels pouvaient un jour être embauchés par le KGB pour identifier les fonctionnaires vulnérables. Ils représentaient, de plus, une bonne source de renseignements pour la GRC dans l'identification des autres homosexuels.

No last-minute reprieve: Lebanese family is deported

BRIGITTE CHRISTOPHER
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

A young Lebanese family spent its last day in Canada behind bars. Refugee claimant Ali El-Husseini was imprisoned Tuesday afternoon by federal immigration officers after refusing to return to Beirut and tearing up his passport in front of officer François Chagnon.

His wife, Sandy, and their three children — Shirine, 5, Crystal, 2, and Suzanne, 8 months, — were al-

so detained.

The Husseinis, who had been here two years, boarded an evening flight to Lebanon yesterday.

Suzanne, their youngest daughter, was born here and is a Canadian citizen.

But the family wasn't about to leave her just because she has the right to live here. "Nobody leaves their child behind," Husseini said. A Polish family faces a similar situation.

Under deportation orders to return to Poland tonight, the father of one-year-old Canadian citizen Krysia Weich was in court yesterday, trying to get the deportation cancelled so the father can remain with his son in Canada.

"My whole family will be in danger if we return," Husseini said yesterday before leaving. "My house in Beirut was blown up, my brother blinded... I want to live anywhere

but in Lebanon."

The Husseinis lived in the Bourgeni-Brigani area of Beirut — a crosspoint between armed Iranian, Lebanese and Syrian factions during the Lebanese civil war.

"Many enemies were made during those years," Husseini said.

He wanted the deportation delayed so he could obtain a passport to another country. That can take up to three months.

"But immigration will not wait," he said. "They want to evacuate immediately."

Hussein is one of the 28 Lebanese refugees who participated in a hunger strike at the Foyer du Liban for 15 days in March to protest against the federal government's decision to send them back.

"Everything is stacked against them," said Giuliano D'Andrea, president of the Equality Party's youth wing.

"What's happened is the federal government has changed its criteria concerning Lebanon.

"They consider the civil war to be over so they assume it's safe to return, but I think they just want to rid themselves of refugees."

Mounties staged massive hunt for gay males in civil service

Police kept files on 8,200 during Diefenbaker-Pearson era

By DEAN BEEBY

The Canadian Press

The RCMP launched a massive hunt for male homosexuals in 1959 that identified 8,200 individuals by the late 1960s and led to hundreds of dismissals from the civil service, newly released documents show.

The investigation extended far beyond the ranks of government to include files on every known or alleged homosexual in the Ottawa area, the material indicates.

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relied on unidentified sources, but now the federal government for the first time has released documentation. The material, obtained by The Canadian Press under the Access to Information Act, shows that the RCMP net was cast far more widely than previously believed.

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About two-thirds of all individuals in the RCMP master lists were not employed by the federal government.

The federal cabinet's security panel was kept informed of the secret RCMP project and let it continue, despite concerns raised by Mr. Diefenbaker about violating civil rights.

A 1959 study for the panel wanted that homosexuals "often appear to believe that the accepted ethical code which governs normal human relationships does not apply to them."

The panel then affirmed a 1953 cabinet policy that denied homosexuals access to classified material and allowed them to be fired even if they had no such access.

In January of 1961, RCMP Commissioner Cliff Harvison advised Mr. Diefenbaker that the search for gays stretched beyond the public service.

Mr. Harvison defended the move, saying such individuals might some day be hired, might be used by the KGB to identify vulnerable civil servants, and were a reliable RCMP source for identifying other homosexuals.

Previous accounts have suggested the Mounties carried out the gay purge without the full knowledge of either the prime minister or the cabinet. But the documents indicate the Mounties not only kept both informed but repeatedly asked for direction.

Mr. Harvison and his predecessor, Charles Rivett-Carnac, both now dead, urged the cabinet to take a hard line against homosexuals.

Mr. Rivett-Carnac argued in 1959 that "the employment of homosexuals in any capacity in the public service was dangerous from a security point of view."

Mr. Harvison called for more effective screening when hiring, noting that gays were "usually practicing criminals" under Sections 147 and 149 of the Criminal Code. Homosexuality was decriminalized in 1969.

Mr. Harvison joined other security-panel members in urging Mr. Diefenbaker to create a special team to design clinical tests that would identify homosexuals among prospective employees and among civil

servants with access to secrets.

After a 1961 panel meeting with Mr. Diefenbaker and Justice Minister Davie Fulton, the clinical tests got the green light.

A Carleton University psychologist, Robert Wake, was given \$5,000 in 1962 to begin work on a device that would quickly identify homosexuals.

The "fruit machine," as it came to be known, was based on a University of Chicago experiment in which a subject peered into a box displaying a series of sexually provocative pictures. In the proposed Canadian version, sensors would record pupil size, palm sweat and blood flow to determine whether the individual was sexually stimulated.

By 1964, 51 individuals had been tested with inconclusive results. The project was abandoned several years later as unworkable.

Hundreds of civil servants fired in '60s gay witchhunt

DEAN BEEBY

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