

Trudeau Confronts a 'Watergate'



JOE CLARK
... opposition important

By Dusko Doder
Washington Post Staff Writer

OTTAWA—Bugging, break-ins, mail tampering, an enemies list and other illegal activities of Canada's security forces are coming to light here daily in a flood of revelations confronting Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau with the major political scandal of his car-

The disclosures all too familiar to Americans, also include illicit use of medical and income tax records, arson, and a variety of "dirty tricks", all contributing to the spectacle of a Canadian version of Watergate.

Like the Nixon administration, the Trudeau government seems to have given tacit approval to these actions outside the law in the name of national security.

And like Nixon, Trudeau has decided to stonewall. Each new disclosure of police wrongdoing is followed by a brief and grudging acknowledgment that "irregularities" did in fact take place and that the matter will be investigated by a commission appointed by Trudeau.

Neither Trudeau nor any of his ministers admit any prior knowledge of po-

lice wrongdoings. Nor do they accept responsibility for them. Meanwhile, the Security Service of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police is reliably reported to have been burning their files during the past three weeks.

The parallel with the Nixon White House is all the more striking as, Trudeau's defense oscillates between the "third-rate burglary" theme and a re-

fusal to disclose relevant documents on grounds of "national security."

But the similarity ends there. The manner in which the Canadian "Watergate" is unraveling points to a fundamental difference between the American constitutional system of separation of powers and the Canadian parliamentary system, which is based on the British model.

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of Buggings and

controls both the executive and legislative branches of government. The opposition in the House is impotent, since the tradition of party discipline gives the Trudeau government automatic majority in all matters.

Moreover, Section 41 (2) of the Federal Court Acts gives cabinet members blanket authority to "refuse, without any examination" by courts,

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to make available any documents that they regard as potentially "injurious ... to national security or to federal provincial relations."

Trudeau has appointed a three-member royal commission to investigate the scandal. The members are known to be sympathizers of his Liberal party and have yet to begin their work.

"Let me put it this way," said Joe

Clark, the opposition leader in the House. "If your system had our rules, Sam Ervin would have had to ask Richard Nixon's permission to begin an inquiry."

But there is another equally important factor that, in the judgment of foreign diplomats and leading political pundits alike, would help the 58-year-old Trudeau weather the scandal without severe political damage. Canada is today a deeply divided nation, with the English-speaking majority excessively fearful of the independence movement in predominantly French-speaking Quebec Province.

Trudeau, partly because of his French background and partly because of his tough stand against Quebec separatists, has projected an image of being the only man capable of keeping Canada united.

Also, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, which has undoubtedly committed questionable acts, is part of the lore of the land and is widely admired in Canada.

For these reasons, the average English-speaking Canadian tends to side with Trudeau and the Mounties de-

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Break-Ins



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CANADA, From A19

spite the outraged editorials in many Canadian newspapers and the accusations by Trudeau's political opposition.

An executive of the Canadian Broadcasting Corp., the government-owned radio and television network, which has been one of the leaders in revealing the wrongdoings of the Mounties, said that more than 80 per cent of all telephone calls the network received favored Trudeau and the Mounties. And an aide to Jeb Baldwin, one of the Conservative critics of the government, said his office had not received a single letter from constituents about the affair.

"We had a lot of mail on the gun-control issue and on social security matters," the aide added.

This prevailing attitude has deepened French Canadian suspicions, especially among Parti Quebecois supporters who believe that the revelations represent only a small part of a large police operation directed against advocates of a sovereign Quebec. "It's just the tip of the iceberg," said Jean-

Pierre Charbonneau, a prominent party official.

Jean Rivard, a young journalist for Tele-Media, a French-language network in Quebec, who broke some of the most important stories about the Mounties' activities, believes that the disclosures thus far have severely damaged the federal government's credibility in the province.

The disclosures confirmed by the government included the following:

- Mounted Police agents had illegally broken into the premises of a Montreal office in January 1973 and made off with Parti Quebecois records and membership lists.

- The police agency's chief superintendent had pleaded guilty in court to illegally breaking into the Montreal office of L'Agence de Presse Libre du Quebec, a left-wing news agency, in 1972.

- Mounted Police agents were involved in the theft of dynamite that was to be subsequently planted on a French separatist group in an effort to embarrass it.

- Mounted Police set fire to a barn in Quebec's Eastern Township where

a meeting of suspected Quebec terrorists and U.S. Black Panther representatives was to have taken place.

- Agents of the Mounted Police Security Service gained access to confidential medical files, and leaked information from them in an effort to disrupt radical groups in the early 1970s.

- The Security Service kept files on journalists, labor leaders, and Canadians who held leftist views.

- The Security Service opened mail between 1954 and 1976 without obtaining court orders permitting this action.

These and numerous other disclosures in recent weeks have left the question of responsibility unanswered.

Nine months ago, when opposition leaders called for legislation similar to the U.S. Freedom of Information Act, Trudeau asserted testily that such legislation was not necessary since the Canadians would not be subjected to Watergate-type abuses.

In the United States, he said, "they may have more abuses there and that's why, perhaps, they have to take corrective measures. I do not think the people suspect the RCMP (Royal

Canadian Mounted Police) of conducting themselves as the FBI do."

Trudeau, in a statement on May 5, 1976, indicated that he had been aware of the Mounties' activities.

"When police or the solicitor general (the minister in charge of police and security) informed me that they were going to carry out investigation of some well-known member of the Canadian public, whether Liberal, Tory... or somebody outside, I always told them, 'Look, do your duty, I do not want to interfere in any way,'" Trudeau said at the time.

Another indication that Trudeau and his ministers were aware of Security Service activities comes from a memorandum written by General Michael Dare, chief of the service. According to Canadian journalists familiar with the affair, the leaders of the intelligence groups were so incensed by Trudeau's attempts to shift the blame on them that they leaked the document to the press.

The memo makes direct reference to Dare's discussions with Trudeau and other cabinet members about investigations of Parti Quebecois and its

members. Trudeau has subsequently acknowledged the memo publicly, stating that Dare's reference to their discussions was "an honest error on his part."

No one has been able to question Dare or any of his subordinates about this. Nor could the two ministers in charge of the Mounted Police be questioned in Parliament. Under Canada's system, a minister, once he leaves the post, is immune to that type of interrogation.

Apart from bureaucratic wranglings, the current disclosures are having a major impact in Quebec.

Although much of the Mounties' domestic intelligence-gathering activities date back to the early years of the Cold War, the effort appears to have escalated following the 1970 crisis in Quebec. A wave of terrorist bombings and kidnappings at that time disclosed that the Mounties were badly informed about domestic terrorism and the Trudeau government ordered the force to step up its domestic intelligence role.

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