



# CANADA'S RED SCARE 1945-1957

*David MacKenzie*

The Canadian  
Historical Association

Historical Booklet  
Number 61

*Series Editors*

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Ottawa, 2001

ISBN 0-88798-193-3 *Historical Booklets*

ISSN 0068-886X *Historical Booklets (Print)*

ISSN 1715-8621 *Historical Booklets (Online)*

*Cover photo:*

Monsieur Louis S. St-Laurent

National Liberal Convention

National Archives of Canada, C-27905

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## 1945-1957

The "Red Scare" is the name used to describe the paranoia and ideological insecurity that swept Canada in the years following the Second World War. It was fuelled by a widespread mistrust of the Soviet Union and its global intentions and by a concern that a breakdown in international relations could lead to a third world war. Domestically, this anxiety and insecurity translated into a widespread concern over internal subversion and espionage, and it led to spy chasing, police investigations and security screenings, red baiting, accusations of conspiracies, the squashing of legitimate dissent, and smear campaigns. In many instances, the Red Scare was used as a weapon by the state, as well as by interest groups and individuals, to achieve goals totally unrelated to state security or to the Cold War.

Canada's Red Scare was inexorably linked to the Cold War and to developments in the United States. The emergence of the "National Security State" in the United States, the extension abroad of American military and economic power, and the assumption of leadership in the ideological struggle with the Soviet Union set the international context for the Red Scare in Canada. The close Canadian-American alliance that emerged during the Second World War was strengthened in the Cold War, and Canadians fell in step behind American leadership. Likewise, Canadians at home were not immune to the influence of American McCarthyism — its intent, its progress, or its excesses. The Red Scare was less a series of events or planned course of action than it was a haphazard and somewhat frenzied response by government and individual Canadians to the deterioration of international relations between the Western and Soviet blocs after 1945.

Historians generally attribute the beginning of the Red Scare to the defection of Igor Gouzenko in September 1945, but one could just as easily argue that the phenomenon was triggered by the dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan a month earlier. Canadians welcomed the ending of the Second World War, which the atom bombs seemed to help bring about, but they were much less certain about the new age ushered in with the development of nuclear weapons. Newspapers celebrated the end of war, but also reported on the terrible devastation caused by these weapons; magazine articles explored the potential benefits of atomic energy as well as its potential for great destruction. For the first time, Canadians were forced to live with anxiety about the very survival of the planet. Technology — its development and who controlled it or knew its “secrets” — also became a cause of anxiety. The world was never the same again.

The atomic age changed the way Canadians looked at themselves and forced them to evaluate their place in the world. Overnight, Canada went from being a small country “far from inflammable materials,” as one Canadian politician put it in the 1920s, to the territorial buffer between the superpowers, and the likely battlefield of the next world war. And for most Canadians, geography made neutrality or isolationism an impossibility, while ideology made Canada a partner, albeit a junior partner, with the United States. The close wartime alliance with the Americans was maintained after the war, and by 1946 Canadians found themselves locked in an ideological struggle for what was believed to be the ultimate stakes. Widespread insecurity resulted.

The Cold War created a new enemy — the Soviet Union. Many Canadians believed the Soviets had expansionist intentions that should be met with the same determination exercised against the Nazis and fascists. And when the Soviet Union used agents, friends, and sympathizers in

other countries to spy on its former allies, the need for vigilance at home became even more important. During the Second World War the government of Canada employed censorship and state controls, and had effectively monitored the actions of individuals deemed to be enemy aliens. For many Canadians, both inside and outside the government, the Cold War called for similar actions on the home front. With such an unscrupulous enemy working through subversion and deceit, who could be trusted? The pervasive feeling of insecurity led to the use of extraordinary tactics.

At the same time, the machinery for the Red Scare was already being assembled. The Soviet Union, the Communist International, Canadian communists and, indeed, any Canadians who were believed to owe their allegiance to the Soviet Union, had become the focus of suspicion and the target of considerable hostility in Canada long before the Second World War. Within a few years of the 1917 Russian Revolution, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) carved out a domestic intelligence role, becoming actively engaged in the surveillance of the Canadian Communist Party, immigrant workers' organizations and, generally, any radical group in Canada. The RCMP's anti-communist crusade predated the Red Scare by several decades and continued beyond the Second World War.

Moreover, state security screening of civil servants and individual Canadians began as early as 1931 and grew significantly during the Second World War. During the war, the RCMP fingerprinted some two million Canadians in an effort to detect criminals, communists, and potential saboteurs in Canadian industry. This screening proved effective in monitoring the work force and in curbing dissent and labour unrest (which was seen by some as a form of sabotage), and it continued even after the Soviet Union became an ally in the war against Germany. Although disorganized and largely unsupervised by the government, the



screening process provided the police an opportunity to gain considerable expertise in gathering intelligence. Thus, at the very outset of the Cold War, the federal government had already prepared the groundwork for combatting the Red Scare, real or imagined.

## IGOR GOUZENKO AND THE SPY CHASERS

A cipher clerk in the Russian Embassy in Ottawa during the Second World War, Igor Gouzenko had regular access to the coded messages sent between the Embassy and Moscow. Wanting to remain in Canada rather than return home at the end of the war, he left his office on 6 September 1945 carrying a briefcase of papers that detailed the existence of a Soviet spy ring in Canada with connections into the United States and Great Britain. The Canadian government's initial reaction to Gouzenko's revelations was a mixture of surprise, shock, and uncertainty, while Gouzenko was left to wander the streets of Ottawa for more than twenty-four hours after his departure from the embassy. He and his family were eventually given sanctuary, but only after his apartment had been ransacked by Soviet agents and Gouzenko himself had threatened suicide.

Prime Minister Mackenzie King was kept informed of these developments by Norman Robertson, the Under-secretary in the Department of External Affairs. King recorded in his diary that Robertson had told him "a most terrible thing had happened. It was like a bomb on top of everything and one could not say how serious it might be or to what it might lead." Gouzenko "had enough evidence there to prove that instead of being friends, the Russians were really enemies." His concern deepened the following day when he learned that the papers provided by Gouzenko "disclose an espionage system on a large scale. [Robertson] said it went lengths we could not have believed..."

Gouzenko's documents revealed that the Soviets had been using several dozen Canadian (and some British and American) sympathizers to gather information in many scientific and political areas, but the subject that grabbed attention was atomic energy. Canada had played a small but important role in the development of atomic energy and was the transplanted home for a British atomic research team during the war. It was later claimed that no one in Canada knew the "secret" of the bomb and, therefore, there was nothing for the Soviets to steal; nevertheless, the Soviets sought specific information in Canada, and they were willing to use spies or informants to attain their objectives.

Participants in this spy ring were found in the Department of External Affairs, the National Research Council, the British High Commissioner's Office in Ottawa, as well as in a few other government agencies and the American bureaucracy. The list also included the names of Alan Nunn May, the British atomic scientist who worked in Canada, and two prominent Canadian communists, including Fred Rose, the first communist elected to the House of Commons. What information these informants actually gave to the Soviets or the extent of their involvement in spying for the Soviet Union was quickly overshadowed by the fact of their involvement — that Canadians had shown themselves to be disloyal.

King's first impulse was to confront the Soviets with this information, but upon reflection — and after consultations with US President Truman and British Prime Minister Attlee — it was jointly agreed to sit on the case, monitor the suspects, and investigate Gouzenko's revelations further. It was argued that public disclosure might provoke a confrontation with the Soviets or lead to a breakdown in negotiations over the United Nations and atomic energy. At best it would harm east-west relations at a very unfortunate time. Nevertheless, the government issued a special Order-in-Council to maintain in force parts of the *War Measures Act* to enable



Ottawa to deal with the spy case, giving the police broad powers to arrest and interrogate suspects and to seize documents without going through the regular channels.

Ottawa was prompted into action early in 1946 when American journalist Drew Pearson broke the spy story in the United States. How Pearson learned of the Gouzenko case has never been determined, but King had his own suspicions — that were never confirmed — that Pearson had been tipped by sources in the US government in an effort to embarrass the Soviet Union by preventing a diplomatic solution to the affair and forcing the Canadians into a public disclosure. In any event, in early February the Canadian government established a Royal Commission — chaired by Supreme Court Justices Roy Kellock and Robert Taschereau — to investigate the affair. Thanks to the *War Measures Act*, the Kellock-Taschereau Commission had extremely broad powers to summon, hold, and question individuals without charging them and to punish them if they were uncooperative. In a single action, the Canadian state swept aside the civil liberties of all those who fell under suspicion. Guilt could be assumed, innocence had to be proved. The Red Scare was on.

The commissioners immediately began reviewing evidence in secret and, just before the first public statement was made by the government on 15 February, the RCMP began arresting suspects. These individuals were held without charge and often denied access to family members and legal counsel for lengthy periods of time. More arrests followed and several dozen witnesses — the most prominent being Igor Gouzenko — appeared for questioning over the following weeks. The interrogations often became heated and descended into accusations and innuendo as the witnesses were grilled about their actions and their friends and acquaintances, past and present. Some witnesses protested their treatment, but such actions only seemed to confirm their guilt. Those who

incriminated themselves were released from custody only to be arrested by the RCMP. Of those who were later convicted of a crime, virtually all had incriminated themselves in this manner.

The Kellock-Taschereau Commission submitted its final report on 27 June 1946. The report concluded that a Soviet spy ring existed in Canada and hinted that there were other rings in operation here and abroad. The Soviets had preyed on those Canadians who were sympathetic or attracted to the Soviet Union as a wartime ally, or to communism for intellectual or ideological reasons; none had acted for personal profit. But communism itself was guilty by default, and the commissioners recommended that the government take stronger measures to combat internal espionage and subversion.

Eleven Canadians were convicted of spying or conspiracy and sentenced to prison terms of various lengths. They included Emma Woikin, who worked in the Department of External Affairs, and Fred Rose, who was sentenced to six years. Those not convicted or acquitted for lack of evidence were released. The commissioners also named others who, it was believed, were involved in some aspect of spying, recruiting, or the passing of information. Those people who were released or named in the documents had no recourse to allay suspicion, despite the lack of evidence; their identification by the Commission left them under a cloud of suspicion for many years.

Gouzenko's revelations and the subsequent Royal Commission created a public sensation and focused world attention on Ottawa. The case also damaged Canadian-Soviet relations for decades and led to a hardening of Canadian attitudes towards the Soviet Union. The Gouzenko case cannot be blamed for starting the Cold War. However, it contributed to general unease and was used as an excuse by the government to attack not only

Soviet espionage, but communism generally. And, although there were growing protests over the tactics of the Commission, the Canadian public generally supported their findings and backed the introduction of stricter measures to combat espionage. The federal government's action in response to the Commission's report, the deterioration of the international situation and media sensationalism, all gave momentum to anti-communist sentiment in Canada.

## THE SECURITY PANEL

On the surface, the formal response of the federal government to the Royal Commission and to the growing concern over potential security leaks appeared fairly muted. Only a few thousand communist supporters lived in Canada, and as a group they diminished in numbers and became increasingly disorganized after the Gouzenko trials. In responding to the Kellock-Taschereau report, the federal government gradually tightened the noose. Armed with new sedition laws, the Intelligence Branch of the RCMP became the Special Branch, with an expanded role in investigating ordinary Canadians. But for the most part the government worked quietly to counter communism. Vigilance and secrecy would be sufficient. Louis St Laurent explained that it would not be "in the interests of security to describe too particularly the safeguards we are attempting to set up, just as trappers do not try to make their traps too obvious when they are placing them in the paths that game sometimes follow."

In the Spring of 1946, the Prime Minister, MacKenzie King, created the Security Panel, an interdepartmental body to oversee and coordinate internal security issues and to determine the loyalty of government workers. It included representatives from the Privy Council Office, the RCMP, and the departments of External Affairs and National Defence, with the occasional participation of representatives from other departments. The

Security Panel reflected not only the government's decision to take a more determined approach to security matters but also its desire to keep things squarely under government control. It also meant that the government and the RCMP would decide who was loyal and who was a risk.

The matter of the civil liberties of those found to be security risks was not ignored. Those forced to make the decisions in security cases wrestled constantly with the question of how to balance the rights of the individual with the right of the state to protect itself from subversion. Most of those involved, at least on the governmental level, considered themselves to be liberal-minded and the defenders of civil rights. However, the new security situation whereby the loyalty of co-workers and fellow citizens could no longer be assumed, led them down a new path where the responsibilities of the state might warrant the sacrifice of civil liberties. Individual rights were not forgotten but were clearly overshadowed by the somewhat ill-defined "government security."

Under the new security arrangements, government departments were to appoint a security officer and to declare which positions were sensitive. Employees had to meet government standards to retain these jobs. In addition, several departments and agencies were declared "vulnerable" (including the Prime Minister's Office, External Affairs, National Defence, the RCMP, and the National Research Council), meaning that all employees were to be checked. Gradually screening extended to include private companies that received government contracts considered to be of a sensitive nature. And, not surprisingly, as similar security measures were undertaken in the United States, Canadian companies were compelled to meet American security standards before receiving American contracts.

Employees in these departments or in sensitive positions elsewhere were required to complete a government questionnaire which the RCMP

checked against its files for criminal records, communist activities, and anything else that might be considered suspect. If the Special Branch had concerns about a particular individual, a more exhaustive 'field examination' was undertaken, involving interviews with colleagues and neighbours. Employees found to be unreliable were moved to less sensitive positions and those applying for government contracts could be refused work. Individuals who were moved or denied positions were not told why and had no right to appeal; nor were they given access to the information held by the RCMP.

The question remained, of course: who was disloyal? Very quickly the distinction between espionage and legitimate dissent became blurred; the RCMP assumed that those who subscribed to communist views were sympathetic to the Soviet Union and, therefore, susceptible to becoming a Soviet agent. The lesson (and the opportunity for some) was clear: getting rid of domestic communists would help eliminate internal security risks. But determining exactly who was a communist was difficult, and inevitably government suspicion spread to many others on the left, from radicals to the mildly progressive.

Equally, organizations or groups with significant communist involvement were immediately suspect. The Royal Commissioners, for example, were very concerned about communist groups and "cells" that reportedly attracted new recruits to the party and, ultimately, to espionage. Furthermore, those who associated with communists, joined one of their organizations, or even appeared in a communist's address book, fell under suspicion as either a fellow traveller or a naive dupe. Past activities could raise suspicions, suspicions raised doubts, and doubt was enough to ruin reputations and careers.

In addition, the definition of a security risk was so broad that it could be applied to almost anyone, not just communists and sympathizers.

The security clearance assessed past conduct but also helped to predict future behaviour: was there something about the person that suggested that he or she would be unreliable or become a potential security risk? Almost inevitably, character and morality became an issue because, it was argued, if you had something in your past or present to hide — a criminal record, alcoholism, or an illegitimate child, for example — then you were the perfect target for Soviet blackmail. Indeed, the RCMP deemed the majority of individuals unsuitable on the basis of “character” rather than legitimate security issues.

Sexual orientation became a particular focus of attention. Prevailing attitudes kept most homosexuals in the closet, and, in the eyes of the RCMP, this made any homosexual a potential victim of Soviet blackmail. Consequently, the RCMP launched a homosexual purge of the civil service that lasted many years and included the development of the infamous “fruit machine,” a supposedly scientific method to uncover homosexual government workers. Ironically, it was public hostility and Canada's own laws against homosexuality — not any action of the Soviet Union — that created the environment in which homosexuals would be perceived as potential security risks. But that irony was lost on the RCMP.

Under the direction of the Security Panel, the RCMP screened thousands of Canadian civil servants each year and reported on their suitability to the government. They caught up hundreds of unsuspecting Canadians who for some past action, membership, or “moral lapse” were judged to be unreliable and, as potential risks, were either denied jobs or quietly given less sensitive jobs within the government. Most of these people never knew what hit them.



## THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD

The shock waves of the Red Scare were especially felt at the National Film Board (NFB). Created in 1939 to handle government film production and distribution, the NFB grew into a world leader in documentary film production during the Second World War. The war provided the NFB with a mission thanks to the unique value of film as a propaganda weapon and the growing demand for film production. In the vanguard stood John Grierson, the NFB's Scottish-born film commissioner who had made his name as an early leader in the documentary film industry and who, during the war emerged as Canada's "Propaganda Maestro."

With the end of the war the mission of the NFB — at least as a propaganda tool — became somewhat less clear. Increasingly, the Board was the target of criticism from opposition politicians and the private film industry in Canada and the United States. Private film interests had never liked the NFB and saw it as a competitor that siphoned off government money from the private sector. Opponents argued that it had become too big and expensive. As a result, when the shadow of the Red Scare descended over the NFB, a supporting cast of enemies were waiting in the wings.

The NFB was engulfed by the Red Scare on what can only be considered the flimsiest of evidence. Grierson's name appeared in the Gouzenko documents — in the notebook of a Russian Colonel — linking him to a former secretary who was implicated in spying for the USSR. This reference ensured Grierson's appearance before the Kellock-Taschereau Royal Commission to answer questions about his past behaviour and present ideological views. No evidence of any kind emerged against Grierson. Nevertheless, suspicions about him and the NFB remained, even though Grierson had already quit the Board at the time of the

Gouzenko revelations. But the Board was, after all, Grierson's creation, and the implication was that he had probably filled it with like-minded compatriots and protégés.

In fact, many individuals at the Film Board held left-wing and radical views, and some participated in progressive activities and associated with political organizations ranging from the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) to the Labour Progressive Party. In addition, Film Board employees did not always conform to the image of the average grey-suited bureaucrat of post-war Ottawa. There were enough NFB employees with unconventional views, dress, and lifestyles to raise the suspicions of even the most timid spy chaser and anti-communist witch hunter.

The Security Panel did not at first declare the NFB “vulnerable,” but when the Board assumed responsibility for securing classified film, those involved in the work had to be screened. Rumours abounded that the NFB — and many of its films — had leftist leanings. Films made about the USSR during the war when the Soviets were our allies now came to be viewed in an entirely different light. Could these film makers be trusted with sensitive material? The Duplessis government in Quebec responded by censoring and even banning some NFB films.

Surveillance of Board employees began quietly but the matter attracted wide public attention in November 1949 when **The Financial Post** published an article revealing that the Department of National Defence had refused to send classified material to the NFB until the screening of Board employees was completed. “What was wrong at the NFB?” **The Financial Post** asked; was it a “leftist propaganda machine?” A supporter of the private film industry, **The Post** had long been antagonistic to the NFB, and it saw the communist issue was a convenient weapon.

The spectacle of the government using private commercial film companies for sensitive records, ostensibly because it could not trust one of its own agencies, quickly developed into a political bombshell. Opposition politicians asked embarrassing and provocative questions, portraying the government as "soft on communism," and the NFB as an agency "infested" with "reds" distributing communist propaganda. The surveillance of employees was already underway, but **The Post** article created wide speculation about the NFB.

The revelations in **The Financial Post** were followed by a shake up at the NFB. Ross McLean, the successor of Grierson, had already lost the confidence of the government partly because of his reluctance to declare any NFB employee as a security risk. The government relieved him of his responsibilities and brought in Arthur Irwin, the former editor of Maclean's Magazine, to deal with the security issue and to reorganize the NFB. Irwin was an established liberal-nationalist and long-time acquaintance of External Affairs Minister Lester Pearson and Brooke Claxton, the Minister of National Defence and former chair of the NFB. Irwin's mandate was broad: deal with the security issue and restore government confidence in the Board.

Irwin's arrival at the Board in February 1950 was met with a mixture of distrust and hostility. As he had no experience in making or distributing films, Board employees concluded that he had been brought in to curtail or even destroy the NFB. Rumours of mass firings and resignations abounded. A few did resign, but most employees remained, some simply because it would look bad if they left. The RCMP presented Irwin with the names of thirty-six employees who were considered possible security risks (McLean earlier had refused to dismiss any of them). Irwin went through the list, as did Norman Robertson, and both identified the same three employees who they believed were, in Irwin's words, "so close

to the communist apparatus” that they constituted a potential security risk. They were not involved in any subversive activities and had committed no crimes, but because of past associations they could not be trusted in the future. This was the logic of the Red Scare.

These three NFB staff members were released from their positions, and within a few weeks steps were taken to allow the Board to resume work on DND classified material. The dismissed employees accepted their fate and got on with their lives — they had no choice in any event, for there was no appeal process and going public would only have made things worse for them. The Film Board itself was reorganized and, in 1956, moved to Montreal. There had never been any plan to destroy the NFB and, ironically, the reorganization and move ultimately strengthened the Board and helped to reduce government interference in its operations. The Red Scare at the NFB, at least for the government, was over.

For the staff, however, the ramifications were far from over. It is impossible to calculate the numbers, but many employees left on their own accord, some in anticipation of the dismissal that might or might not have come. The precise number is impossible to determine since most employees were on short-term contracts. Nevertheless, the government screenings and the firings cast a long shadow over the NFB, creating a difficult atmosphere that affected all the remaining employees. No evidence of espionage or subversion was ever discovered, but the security screening continued for all new employees.

## THE RED SCARE AT HOME

The Red Scare was neither confined to civil servants nor restricted to the city of Ottawa; its cold fingers spread mistrust, fear, and anxiety into the lives of thousands of ordinary Canadians from coast to coast. Virtually all

political parties raised the anti-communist torch, and, ironically, some of those political parties on the left, like the CCF, became the most zealous in the struggle. Provincial governments were not immune and quickly endorsed various levels of witch hunting; sometimes out of a genuine concern over security, other times as a way to settle old scores. In Quebec, the Duplessis government took a back seat to no one in its anti-communist vigilance thanks to the infamous Padlock Law, passed in 1937 long before the official Red Scare began. The Padlock Law empowered the government to close down any group or publication that seemed to propagate communism. The power to decide what was “communist” remained in the hands of government and police officials.

The Red Scare permeated Canadian society by the early 1950s. Canadians could find elements of it in their churches, in their social clubs and trade unions, and at the universities. The CBC was accused of being a communist nest, and the staff and reporters were eventually security checked. RCMP informants, meanwhile, penetrated suspect groups and organizations and began to monitor them by attending rallies, photographing demonstrations, and so on. For the average Canadian, this RCMP surveillance made association with virtually any progressive or left-wing group, or participation in any event that might have been considered non-conformist, a risky undertaking.

Canadians were regularly exposed to anti-communism in the press, in magazines, and on radio and television. They watched the unfolding spectacle of McCarthyism in America and on weekends they crowded into their local theatres to watch the new anti-communist movies produced by Hollywood. Here they could even relax with popcorn and watch the Gouzenko defection unfold on the big screen in **The Iron Curtain**. Hollywood came down hard on communism — both domestic and international — as had most of the North American media.

Reg Whitaker and Gary Marcuse in their book **Cold War Canada** list many examples of individual Canadians who for various reasons — political allegiances, activities, or membership in left wing organizations — became victims of the Red Scare. Many who lost jobs found themselves barred from entry into the United States, or they were publicly attacked for their political views. The list is a long one and includes Canadians of all walks of life, from university professors to symphony orchestra musicians.

The list also includes those who only wanted to become Canadians; the Red Scare added an ideological veneer to Canada's immigration policy as Ottawa worked to block the entry of communists, fellow travellers and potential immigrants of all shades of pink. Discrimination along ideological lines had long been a factor in Canadian immigration policy. Following the Russian Revolution and the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, Ottawa amended Canada's immigration policy to restrict any immigrants who professed such "alien" ideas as communism, anarchism, or any other radical views. At the same time, the RCMP surveillance of Canadian labour radicalism increased, and any immigrants who were involved in radical activities faced the very real threat of deportation. The deportations had decreased by the Second World War, but the ideological screening of potential immigrants continued throughout the period of the Red Scare.

The Red Scare infiltrated the Canadian scientific community, in particular the Canadian Association of Scientific Workers (CAScW), which, because of its leftist views and the communist background of a few of its members, was named by the Kellock-Taschereau Royal Commission as a communist front organization. Several of its members were identified in the Gouzenko documents, including Raymond Boyer and Alan Nunn May, both of whom were convicted (the latter in a British court). The RCMP



was already spying on the CAScW before the Royal Commission and, although no evidence was discovered that the organization was involved in any espionage, the inquiry effectively destroyed it. After Gouzenko's revelations, to be a member of the CAScW immediately raised suspicions about your character and ideological leanings, and that usually brought an end to government research work. Membership in the organization meant the inclusion of your name on what can only be considered a blacklist. Organized labour and the labour movement generally was also purged of communists during the Red Scare. The most famous case involved all the major players of labour, government and the international unions, pitting the Seafarers' International Union against the nationalist Canadian Seamen's Union (CSU). The successful assault on the CSU was directed by the notorious American Hal Banks who was backed by the federal government, which had an exaggerated fear of possible sabotage to Great Lake shipping by communist CSU workers.

The purging of the Canadian labour movement occurred with the support of ownership and management and, occasionally, under the direction of American-based international unions. In most cases, it was carried out by Canadian labour itself. In the United States, the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act effectively banned communists from union leadership, but in Canada no similar legislation existed. The only exception was in Quebec where the Duplessis government passed legislation similar to Taft-Hartley in the early 1950s. The federal government could and did assist the labour movement in its communist purge, but for the most part it relied on the growing anti-communist sentiments of Canadian union leaders, the mounting pressure from the staunchly anti-communist American-based internationals, and the help of the non-communist left in Canada. Given the climate of the early 1950s, most progressive groups in Canada — in particular the CCF — were eager to disassociate themselves from any connection with communism or communists. Thus, by the time of the

merger of the Canadian Congress of Labour and the Trades and Labour Congress into the Canadian Labour Congress in 1956, the role and influence of communists had been eliminated and the Canadian labour movement was a full participant in the war against communism.

The Red Scare even descended on the postwar debate over daycare. During the war the federal and provincial governments had cooperated in the establishment and operation of a national daycare system. At the end of the war most of the nurseries and child care facilities were closed, with the major exception of Toronto where a strong daycare movement emerged. This movement received broad community support and achieved a degree of success in the early years until its opponents in the city council, the media, and the general public embarked on a red-baiting campaign. With the identification of the movement and its supporters with communism, support began to evaporate and cutbacks were made. By the mid-1950s the daycare movement and most of the remaining daycare facilities had disappeared.

All too often the spectre of communism, the fear of being exposed as or labeled a communist, had the effect of narrowing the discussion of important issues in Canada during the early Cold War. The issues became polarized very quickly and the middle ground disappeared; you were either on side or you were on the other side. Newspaper reporters, school teachers, labour organizers, or any other Canadian who asked difficult questions about American foreign policy, who appeared sympathetic to the Soviet Union, or who raised the issue of civil liberties in the era of the Red Scare could themselves become the victims of intolerance. The same was true for members of Canada's small peace movement. If you supported peace, somehow that was interpreted as being soft on the Soviet Union, and that was seen to be helpful to the communists. There was a broad consensus in the country in support of Canada's role in the

Cold War. Nevertheless, a climate of intolerance led to a kind of self-censorship at a time when a healthy debate over Canada's foreign policy, or our relationship with the United States, or even what to do about communism and communists at home, would have been useful.

## THE HERBERT NORMAN CASE

Few individuals experienced the worst aspects of the Red Scare more than Herbert Norman, the academic turned public servant who was hounded by accusations and rumours of disloyalty until 1957 when, unable to face another round of witch hunting, he took his own life by jumping off the roof of a hotel in Cairo. Born to Methodist missionary parents in Japan in 1909, Norman was educated in Japan and Canada before moving on to studies at Cambridge and Harvard. He began a career as an academic, publishing many articles and books, including **The Emergence of Modern Japan** (1940) which established his reputation as a scholar. Norman joined the Department of External Affairs in 1939 and, thanks to his knowledge of Japan and his fluency in Japanese, he served in Tokyo and, after 1942, in Ottawa directing signals intelligence against the Japanese. He returned to Tokyo at the end of the war to work under General Douglas MacArthur and served as head of the Canadian Liaison Mission until 1950.

Things began to fall apart for Norman in 1950 when questions were raised in a US Senate committee about his reliability and his past activities at Cambridge. In his student days at Cambridge, Norman had been a close sympathizer and supporter of the Communist Party, but had not been checked in 1939 and he was out of the country after 1946 when the first round of security screenings began, although the FBI had already opened a file on him a few years earlier. With the outbreak of McCarthyism in the United States, it was almost inevitable that his

name would come up during the meetings of the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee.

Norman was brought back to Ottawa on 16 October 1950 from his posting in Tokyo and interviewed over a six-week period by the RCMP and members of the Department of External Affairs. He was cleared on all counts (even though, of course, he had not been charged with any crime). External Affairs Minister Lester Pearson supported Norman at the time and indeed, stood behind him throughout this ordeal and for the rest of his life.

Following the investigation, Norman was placed in less central positions; from 1951-53 he headed the Department's Information Division, and from 1953-56 he served as Canada's High Commissioner to New Zealand. In 1956 he was moved to Cairo as Ambassador to Egypt where, with the outbreak of the Suez Crisis, he found himself in the international spotlight once again. Norman established a close relationship with Egyptian President Nasser and played a helpful role in defusing the crisis, but his presence in Cairo sparked criticism in Washington that someone of Norman's questionable security background would occupy such a sensitive position. He was named again in the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee in mid-March 1957. In desperation and fear of a second round of questioning, Norman took his own life on 4 April 1957.

Even in death, however, the debate over Herbert Norman continued. On one side were those who believed that Norman was hounded to death by an American witch hunt. These individuals believed he could not face another inquisition into his record and was concerned that it might involve his supporters, including Lester Pearson. On the other side were those who believed that Norman was a security risk and that he chose

suicide because the charges against him were true. These individuals argued that he feared exposure, not only of himself but of others, perhaps including Pearson, if all the facts came out.

The whole affair was re-opened in the mid-1980s following the publication of **No Sense of Evil**, a blatant and unequivocal attack on Norman by the late James Barros, a former political scientist at the University of Toronto. Barros never let the reasonable use of evidence get in the way of his accusations, and he presented the case that Norman, if not a KGB spy, was at least an “agent of influence” for the Soviet Union. In 1989, thanks to the backing of two Conservative Members of Parliament who came to support Barros' theories, Joe Clark, then Secretary of State for External Affairs in the Mulroney government, commissioned Ottawa political scientist and former diplomat Peyton Lyon to investigate Norman's allegiance and the charges of espionage against him. Lyon was given access to the relevant files in the Department of External Affairs, the RCMP, and the Department of National Defence, and he also acquired Norman's FBI file. In his 1990 report, Lyon argued that after all of his investigations (and not to mention the investigative work of various other scholars and the revelations of former spies and agents who have gone public in the intervening forty years) no evidence could be found that Norman was a spy or even an “agent of influence” for the Soviet Union or the Communist Party of any country. The Mulroney government accepted Lyon's conclusions and declared the case closed. But even today echoes of the debate can still be heard as Canadians continue to wrestle with the facts — and the meaning — of the life and death of Herbert Norman.

## CONCLUSION

The death of Herbert Norman sparked an outpouring of anger and anti-Americanism across Canada. Many held the Americans responsible for Norman's death, and the whole affair seemed to expose the excesses and paranoia of the American obsession over internal security. For some Canadians it raised a few doubts about American leadership in the Cold War and led them to re-examine Canada's relationship with the United States. But it did not bring about any substantial change in Canada's Cold War policy or in the close Canadian-American defence alliance.

Norman's death was a turning point in the Red Scare when for most Canadians, witch hunting was exposed for what it was: a rather ugly form of persecution. In this way, Norman's death can be seen as the symbolic end of the Red Scare in Canada. By 1957 the impact of the Gouzenko affair declined, while in the United States McCarthy and his Senate investigations had been outflanked by the Republican Eisenhower administration. The Cold War had become commonplace and a calmer, more rational atmosphere had replaced the initial wave of anxiety and unrest. Canadians were learning to live with the bomb.

Norman's death did not, however, end state security screening and surveillance of government workers, nor did it mark the end of the government's concern for internal security, nor did it put an end to anti-communist rantings or blacklisting — all these things would continue throughout the Cold War. The RCMP maintained its search for “subversives” — usually in all the wrong places — and even found new targets among Quebec separatists and the Canadian New Left. But by the early 1960s the government's security machinery was functioning more smoothly and there were fewer public mishaps to cause alarm or lead to any kind of public scrutiny, as had been the case with the National Film Board.



Aspects of the Red Scare remained; they just went underground.

The Red Scare raised a number of important questions about freedom, democracy, and the nature of Canadian society. Does the state have the right — even an obligation — to use extreme methods to protect itself from a perceived internal threat, and was the government justified in this case in taking the actions that it did? In other words, was the Red Scare a drastic but legitimate response to an internal security threat, as some have argued, or was it simply an infringement on the civil liberties of thousands of Canadians by people who were supposed to be on the side of freedom and democracy? If it is necessary in a liberal society to be vigilant with respect to internal security questions, at what point does vigilance cross the line to become infringement? And how does a society balance — or can it balance — the defence of individual rights with its concern for internal security?

It is difficult not to be critical of the government's handling of many security issues in the years following the Second World War. The Red Scare was unleashed outside the normal channels of public scrutiny and debate, and beyond the regular legal parameters. It struck its victims randomly and left them with little legal recourse, and punishing them without permitting them to face their accusers. Weren't these, after all, the tactics of the Soviet Union? And was the threat to Canada so great as to require the government — in the name of freedom — to adopt some of the very same methods used by those that we stood against?

Similarly, was the experience in Canada better or worse than that in the United States? It was definitely quieter here, with generally less obvious witch hunting and blacklisting of victims; but does this suggest that Canada took a kinder, gentler approach to the Red Scare,

compared to the excesses of McCarthyism? Keeping things quiet helped to protect government sources and prevented the worst kind of smear campaigns against the dozens of innocent people whose names might have appeared in more public trials. In Canada those determined to be security risks were usually moved out of their positions quietly and found other jobs in less sensitive areas, although some individuals were further hounded by the RCMP over the following years.

In the United States, accusations were more open such that someone deemed a security risk was more likely to face their accuser. In Canada a security risk might never learn the real reason why he or she was moved out of a job. And, thanks to Hollywood and television, the American Red Scare is much more a part of American history; many of those who were wrongly accused have been vindicated. The Canadian version has remained more obscured, receiving serious study only in the last decade or two. Its victims, for the most part, live on in silence.

Finally, was there anything unique about this Red Scare and could it ever happen again? State concerns for internal security remain today, although with the end of the Cold War the likelihood of a reoccurrence of the Red Scare has clearly diminished. The Red Scare revealed some of the basic insecurities of Canadian society after the Second World War — an insecurity that was directed at those Canadians who seemed to challenge, criticize, or deviate from what was considered “normal.” State and individual insecurity is not unusual; the extreme level of insecurity during the early Cold War years was. It would be difficult to find another time in Canadian history when so many Canadians were suspected of so much disloyalty and subversion based on so little evidence of any wrong doing.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

The most thorough examination of the Red Scare is *Cold War Canada: The Making of a National Insecurity State, 1945-1957* (Toronto, 1994) by Reg Whitaker and Gary Marcuse. Whitaker has examined other aspects of the Red Scare, including "Origins of the Canadian Government's Internal Security System, 1946-1952," *Canadian Historical Review* 65, 2 (June 1984), 154-83. See also Merrily Weisbord, *The Strangest Dream: Canadian Communists, the Spy Trials and the Cold War* (Toronto, 1983); Len Scher, *The Un-Canadians: True Stories of the Blacklist Era* (Toronto, 1992); the relevant chapters in John Sawatsky, *Men in the Shadows: the RCMP Security Service* (Toronto, 1980); and J.L. Granatstein and David Stafford, *Spy Wars: Espionage and Canada from Gouzenko to Glasnost* (Toronto, 1990). Two good overviews of McCarthy era America are David Cate, *The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge under Truman and Eisenhower* (New York, 1978); and Robert Griffith and Athan Theoharis, eds., *The Spectre: Original Essays on the Cold War and the Origins of McCarthyism* (New York, 1974).

For the early history of security screening, see Larry Hannant's *The Infernal Machine: Investigating the Loyalty of Canada's Citizens* (Toronto, 1995). See also Greg Kealey's articles "State Repression of Labour and the Left in Canada, 1914-20," *Canadian Historical Review* LXXIII, 3 (September 1992), 281-314; and "The Surveillance State: The Origins of Domestic Intelligence and Counter-Subversion in Canada, 1914-21," *Intelligence and National Security* 7, 3 (1992), 179-210. Additional information can be found in the volumes of *RCMP Security Bulletins*, edited by G.S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, and Whitaker's article "Official Repression of Communism during World War II," *Labour /Le Travail* 17 (Spring 1986), 135-66.

On the Gouzenko case, see Robert Bothwell and J.L. Granatstein, eds., *The Gouzenko Transcripts* (Ottawa, n.d.) and J.L. Granatstein, *A Man of Influence: Norman A. Robertson and Canadian Statecraft 1929-68* (Toronto, 1981). Gouzenko gives his version in *This was my Choice: Gouzenko's Story* (Toronto, 1948). See also Paul Dufour, "Eggheads' and Espionage: The Gouzenko Affair in Canada," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 16, 3&4 (1981), 188-98; and June Callwood, *Emma* (Toronto, 1984). For Mackenzie King's reactions see J.W. Pickersgill and D.F. Forster, eds., *The Mackenzie King Record, volume 3, 1945-46* (Toronto, 1970); and the quote from St Laurent can be found in Pickersgill's, *My Years with Louis St Laurent: A Political Memoir* (Toronto, 1975).

For the Red Scare at the National Film Board, see Gary Evans, *John Grierson and the National Film Board: The Politics of Wartime Propaganda, 1939-1945* (Toronto, 1984); David MacKenzie, *Arthur Irwin: A Biography* (Toronto, 1993); and Peter Morris, "After Grierson: The National Film Board 1945-1953," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 16, 1 (Spring 1981), 3-12. Rick Salutin has raised a number of important questions in "The NFB Red Scare," *Weekend Magazine* (23 September 1978).

For the impact of the Red Scare on immigration policy and immigrant workers, see *Double Standard: The Secret History of Canadian Immigration* (Toronto, 1987) by Reg Whitaker; and Alvin Finkel, "Canadian Immigration Policy and the Cold War, 1945-1980," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 21, 3 (Fall 1986), 53-70. On deportations, see Barbara Roberts, "Shovelling out the 'Mutinous:' Political Deportation from Canada Before 1936," *Labour /Le Travail* 18 (Fall 1986), 77-110. See also Donald Avery, *"Dangerous Foreigners:" European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada 1896-1932* (Toronto, 1979).

On the life and tragic death of Herbert Norman, see Roger Bowen, *Innocence Is Not Enough: The Life and Death of Herbert Norman* (Vancouver, 1986); and Bowen, ed., *E.H. Norman: His Life and Scholarship* (Toronto, 1984). The case for the opposition is made by James Barros in *No Sense of Evil: Espionage, The Case of Herbert Norman* (Toronto, 1986). Peyton Lyon's commissioned report can be found in "The Loyalties of E. Herbert Norman," *Labour /Le Travail* 28 (Fall 1991), 219-59. On Pearson's involvement, see John English's two volume *The Life of Lester Pearson* (Toronto, 1989 and 1992).

Other aspects of the Red Scare can be found in Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist Party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour, 1935-1956* (Toronto, 1973); Susan Prentice, "Workers, Mothers, Reds: Toronto's Postwar Daycare Fight," *Studies in Political Economy* 30 (Autumn 1989), 115-41; Gary Kinsman, "'Character Weaknesses' and 'Fruit Machines': Towards an Analysis of the Anti-Homosexual Security Campaign in the Canadian Civil Service," *Labour /Le Travail* 35 (Spring 1995), 133-61; and Daniel J. Robinson and David Kimmel, "The Queer Career of Homosexual Security Vetting in Cold War Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* 75, 3 (September 1994), 319-45.

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