

RCMP Tense Amid Indians' Uneasy Calm

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The 6,000 Indians who have their homes in the Grand River Country are sitting on a volcano.

And it is one which could explode without warning.

Behind what some outsiders regard as the incredible happenings of the last two days on the Six Nations Reserve, 25 miles from Hamilton, a dangerous situation is smouldering.

This is recognized by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, who are waiting for "a tribal showdown" at any time between the elective and hereditary councils.

It could, said Inspector H. C. Forbes, result in mob violence.

"IT'S OUR JOB to see that this doesn't happen," declared the officer commanding the London subdivision, who has moved on to the reservation to take personal charge of the Ohsweken detachment.

If and when such a fracas did come, armed Mounties would probably have to act as "referees".

So far it has been a bloodless revolution. Some 1,000 supporters of the Confederacy, ignoring RCMP warnings that they were breaking the law, tore down the doors of the council house and reinstalled the hereditary chiefs in power.

BUT the elected councillors, who slipped out of a back door 10 minutes before the building was broken into, have the support of hundreds of Indians who favor the democratic system of internal government introduced in 1924.

This faction has so far voiced no protest. To the Mounties, it is an ominous silence.

It is believed that the elective system's supporters—of which there are at least 700—may soon hold a mass meeting to indicate their rejection of the hereditary council.

If the two groups clashed, it is hard to predict what would happen, observers say.

IN THE MEANTIME, the RCMP will continue to recognize the elected council as the legal governing body on the reservation.

But the Confederacy has proclaimed itself the territory's "only government."

And it emphasizes that its laws are the only ones operating on the reserve.

For the hereditary chiefs are seriously applying every word of their proclamation of independence, which outlawed the RCMP as the law enforcement agency at Ohsweken.

Supported by at least 1,000 men, women and children—and maybe more—the Confederacy is showing disregard for Canada and its laws.

"If one of our people should break the law, we will arrest and try him," said 26-year-old Irvin Logan, who has been named "Chief of the Iroquois Police."

IT WAS YOUNG MEN such as Irvine Logan who were responsible for the overthrow of the elective system.

Several hundred of these "warriors" suddenly gave active support to the 50 old hereditary chiefs, who had been plotting to regain power for 35 years—and the revolution was accomplished.

The 80 men and women in
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the Iroquois Police Force are identified by black-and-white IP armbands, and each has been issued with a "deputy's warrant."

Their first arrest was that of two visiting Indians from Buffalo who had been involved in an auto accident.

FOLLOWING a brief imprisonment in the cellar of the council house and trial by the chiefs, the Indians were freed on condition that they paid all damages.

So far as the Iroquois Police are concerned, the two Indians have been punished for their "crime". They are considered outside the white man's justice.

Nevertheless, the RCMP have investigated the accident.

Word reached the RCMP that the Confederacy was planning to open a safe, containing documents and several hundred dollars, in the council house.

MOUNTIES MOVED in on the building to warn the chiefs that such a move was illegal, but their way was barred by Iroquois Police.

"**THE MOUNTIES** wouldn't dare touch any of our people," declared Irvin Logan. "Just let them try . . ."

Before 1924, the Indians had their own police force. Now, they maintain, they have it again.

"Police Chief" Logan said that the law would be carried out in the traditional manner of his people. All offenders would be tried by the council of chiefs, who would impose fines or imprisonment.

BUT, in accordance with a time-honored agreement, any Indians committing the crimes of murder, rape, theft or forgery would be handed over to the RCMP for trial by a white man's court.

"The sooner the Mounties leave this reservation the better," declared Irvine Logan. "They are trespassers here, and they are not wanted."

The RCMP officers are disregarding this talk.

The alarming thing is, the Indians mean it.