

LOSING PROFESSIONALISM: THE INTERWAR YEARS

‘Calgary’s citizens considered the army a collection of social parasites,’ wrote Tony Foster of the home station of the Permanent Force’s Lord Strathcona’s Horse in which his father served in 1924. ‘Soldiers – particularly cavalry soldiers – were too indolent or stupid for useful employment in the “real” world. At every opportunity the men were ridiculed for their blind acceptance of the absurd military discipline that emasculated “real” men. Their childish toy-soldier uniforms, their unproductive playing at foolish war games, all of it was anathema to local citizenry.’¹



The Canadian Corps had become a highly professional operation well before the end of the Great War. It would be unfair to say that it was the best corps in the Allied armies – such distinctions are all but impossible to make – but it was very good and, by everyone’s assessment, one of the best. It had able commanders at corps, division, brigade, and battalion headquarters; its subalterns had learned how to lead; the NCOs and men fought with great skill and courage; and its behind-the-lines organization was a model of administrative efficiency. The Canadian Corps was the embodiment of the nation in the soldiers’ minds – and in the minds of the people back home.

The interwar years, however, saw Canada’s military sink back into the pre-1914 era, as Canada disarmed as much as or more than any other industrial-