

APS/W.

**Chief Commissioner of Police, Canada**

IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE  
FOLLOWING NUMBER:  
16-4-9-3426.

Ottawa, June 14th, 1918.

X

Frank Hanrahan Esq.,  
Chief Constable,  
Halifax, N.S.

Dear Sir,-

Re- Riot in Halifax, May 25th.

I beg to acknowledge yours of the 12th instant, covering report regarding the action of the Police in the recent Halifax riot, and in connection therewith venture to express the opinion that your Department acted with very capable judgment or the consequences might have been more serious.

Yours faithfully,



Chief Commissioner of Police.

F. HANRAHAN,  
CHIEF OF POLICE.



X

Office of Chief of Police,

Halifax, N. S., June 17th, 1918

His Worship the Mayor & Members/  
of the Board of Control,  
Halifax, N. S.

Gentlemen:-

Enclosed you will please find letter  
from the Chief Commissioner of Police, Canada, ac-  
knowledging my report to him of an earlier date  
in connection with the recent Halifax riot.

I am,

Respectfully yours,

*Frank Hanrahan*

Chief of Police.

Encl.

*Report in view  
Chief of Police*

RECEIVED  
SUBMITTED  
JUN 18 1918  
BOARD OF CONTROL



Chief Commissioner of Police, Canada

Ottawa, June 4th, 1918.



The Chief Constable,  
Halifax, N.S.

Dear Sir,-

Re- Riots in Halifax, 25th May,

I am enclosing copy of letter received from the Deputy Minister of Militia, which speaks for itself. May I ask for a statement of what actually occurred, so that I may enlighten the Deputy Minister of Justice for the information of the Deputy Minister of Militia.



Yours truly,

*W. Sherwood*

Chief Commissioner of Police.



DEPARTMENT OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE.

Ottawa, May 27, 1918.

Sir,

In the newspaper reports published today regarding the riots which took place in the City of Halifax on the night of the 25th instant, there appears the statement that a sailor and a number of soldiers who were arrested by the Civil Authorities for breaches of the peace, were set at liberty and handed over to the Mob. Such action in the opinion of this Department, if correct, will, inevitably, lead to the encouragement of mob law and the breaking down of authority, with the result that the enforcement of law and order will increasingly devolve upon the Military Authorities.

If the report published in the newspaper is correct, a sufficient force of troops had been placed at the disposal of the Civil Authorities to restore and preserve order, and it is felt that the Civil Authorities should not have handed over these prisoners until their cases had been disposed of according to law. It is further pointed out that the Mayor has made a statement that he considered the release of these men to have been a wise procedure.

My Minister would be much obliged if you would take the necessary steps to investigate whether these statements are correct, and if found so, to instruct those concerned that their actions are not approved of and that the Civil Authorities must take firm and decisive measures to punish wrong-doers and maintain law and order.

I have the honour to be,  
Sir,  
Your obedient servant,

Surgeon-General.  
Deputy Minister.

The Deputy Minister  
Department of Justice,  
Ottawa, Ont.



F. HANRAHAN,  
CHIEF OF POLICE.



Office of Chief of Police,

Halifax, N. S., June 12th, 1918

His Worship the Mayor & Members/  
of the Board of Control,  
Halifax, N. S.

Gentlemen:-

On June 4th, I received a letter from the Chief Commissioner of Police, Canada, asking for a statement from me in respect to the disturbance in Halifax on the evening of the 25th May last and, in compliance with this request, I have made a report, a correct copy of which is enclosed for your perusal and, I trust, your approbation.

I am,

Respectfully yours,

Chief of Police.

Encl.



X

Halifax, N. S., June 12th, 1918.

The Chief Commissioner of Police,  
Ottawa,  
CANADA.

Dear Sir:-

RE RIOT IN HALIFAX, MAY 25th.

I beg to acknowledge receipt of yours of the 4th instant, enclosing copy of letter of the 27th ult. from the Deputy Minister of Militia to the Deputy Minister of Justice in re the above subject. I note from a careful perusal of that letter that the Deputy Minister of Militia is under a misapprehension as to the facts, which is the usual result when information is obtained from the newspapers instead of from sources capable of furnishing the facts at first hand. The facts connected with this incident are, shortly, these: On the evening of the 25th May, a sailor by the name of Smith, a member of the crew of H.M.C.S. "Niobe", entered the premises of a shop known as the "5 & 10 Cent Store", Barrington Street, this City, and picked up an article and declined to pay for same. He was drunk and used obscene language. This occurred on Saturday evening, when the store in question was crowded. The proprietor telephoned to the station for a Police Officer. Officer McDonald left the station for the store in question and, on the way over, was joined by Police Officer Eisenhaur. The officers entered the store and were satisfied in merely removing the sailor from the premises, as there has been, especially since the war, the disposition on the part of the police to deal leniently with the



members of the Military and Naval forces, who may be committing minor offences as the result of too much drink. In this case, however, the sailor, after being removed from the premises, continued along Barrington Street, the most prominent thoroughfare in this City and used the filthiest kind of language. These officers then took him into custody. On removing him to the station, some soldiers interfered with the police and attempted to rescue this prisoner. Later, a crowd of people gathered around the City Hall, including many soldiers and sailors, some of the former being returned men and made a threatening demonstration. They demanded the release of the sailor and the soldiers, who were also taken into custody for interfering with the police. Upon this being refused, they broke the glass in the City Hall, discharged revolver shots through the window of my private office, upset a private automobile on Argyle Street, obtained gasoline therefrom and attempted to set fire to the City Hall building at its Argyle Street entrance; also destroyed one thousand feet of hose, the property of the Halifax Fire Department, which was summoned <sup>in answer</sup> ~~with a view of~~ ~~to an alarm~~ ~~dispersing the crowd~~; also injured a couple of firemen and policemen. Finally, they broke into the patrol house, wrecked an automobile stored there and removed the patrol waggon, taking it down to the Market Wharf and threw it overboard. At this time, (about 9 P.M.), I personally telephoned to Military Headquarters asking for assistance. I could not get in touch with any superior officer. I was referred to the Assistant Provost Marshall. I called his office and could not get in touch with him. I then was referred to the Citadel. I called up the Citadel and



and it was there suggested that I had better communicate with Colonel Thompson. On the meantime, my deputy was endeavoring to get the Naval Department on the phone by calling H.M.C.S. "Niobe." I then left the station to go outside to observe conditions on the street. ~~In my short absence, Controller Murphy communicated with Colonel Thompson.~~ About ten o'clock, a small detachment of infantry arrived. They were of little service, as in some instances, the rioters took the bayonets out of the rifles of the soldiery. About eleven o'clock, a Naval picket arrived, and rendered good service. The Master-at-Arms of the "Niobe" came in and asked me to hand over the naval prisoner to him, and, later, a military officer asked me to hand the soldier prisoners over to his custody, which officers undertook to have their prisoners in Court on the following Monday morning, May 27th. I handed these prisoners over to these officers and not to the mob. In doing this, I had followed out the practice which had prevailed since the beginning of the war, namely, to hand all military and naval men over to their superior officers in cases where they were charged with what would ordinarily be trifling offences. I would also like to call to your attention that these officers are by provision of the Criminal Code of Canada defined and given the status of "public officers." I, therefore, considered that these persons were in the custody for the time being of peace officers or, at any rate, individuals who are under legal obligation to preserve the King's peace. On the subsequent Monday morning, the naval prisoner Smith came into Court, pleaded guilty and his case was disposed of. The military prisoners were proceeded against, committed for trial on the charge of taking



part in an unlawful assembly, and malicious damage to property and are now awaiting the action of a superior Court.

I wish also to point out that by Statute, our police force of all ranks numbers fifty-four, which included forty-three privates, six sergeants, two detectives, a City marshall, a Deputy Chief and a Chief of Police. I have been for some time eight men short of my complement of privates. On the night in question, I had only available for patrol duty for the City of Halifax fourteen patrol men. My both detectives were out of town on official business. In the station, on this occasion, I had only for the purpose of resisting this attack and dealing with this assembly of thousands of people eight police officers, including myself and Deputy. For the first hour of the attack, I only had five, including the Deputy and myself. It must be remembered that, since the war, conditions in this City have been abnormal. We have a considerable transient population, made up of soldiers going to the front, returning from the front and also have of necessity the presence in this City of British, American and French sailors. The numerical strength of the Police department has not kept pace with the development of these conditions, and, since the enforcement of "The Military Service Act", a number of young men have been obliged to leave this department and join the force.

Exercising my best judgment, I deemed it extremely imprudent to have used fire arms on the occasion, considering the handful of men I had at my disposal and fully mindful of the fact that firing by the police would probably



have provoked retaliation on the part of the crowd, resulting in bloodshed and the killing, possibly, of a number of innocent citizens, who were merely curious on-lookers. I think I have given you a candid and accurate statement of the facts surrounding this incident and I shall be only too happy to furnish you with any further information desired.

I am,

Respectfully yours,

*Frank Larrabee*

CHIEF OF POLICE,

Halifax, N.S.

RECEIVED  
JUN 13 1918  
CLERK OF COURTS



RIOT MAY 25th.1918.

City Hall, June 18th, 1918

The City Council.

Gentlemen:-

The Board of Control beg to submit herewith for the information of the City Council correspondence between the Chief of Police and the Chief Commissioner of Police, Canada relating to the Riot which occurred in Halifax, on Saturday evening, May 25th, 1918.

Respectfully submitted,

*L. Fred Monaghan*

Secretary Board of Control.