

# On guard! At the canal

About midnight on Aug. 30, 1939, a few days before the war officially began, a platoon of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, under the command of L. W. Sharpe, made their way to the Burlington Canal to set up guard stations on both the bascule and the CNR bridges to protect them against sabotage.

It was considered in the national interest to keep these bridges and the access to the harbour safe as any damage to them would cripple navigation to and from the large industrial plants.

While some stood guard with fixed bayonets, others began to set up camp back of the powerhouse on the bay shore. There were also

guards posted at the three lighthouses and the powerhouse.

“It was explained that people will not be stopped from walking on the canal piers, provided they keep within a reasonable distance from the bridges and lighthouses. Fishermen will still be able to catch a few perch from the south bayside pier, but must keep a safe distance from the guards. No one will be permitted to walk under the bridges,” noted a Spectator story.

In addition to the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders there were 20 members of the veterans’ guard of the Ontario Provincial Police who had been assigned to protect the hydro-



• Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders set up their tents at the edge of the Burlington Canal.



*• Soldier in full gear stands guard on the CNR bridge over the Burlington Canal, days before Canada went to war, as authorities take precautions against sabotage which could have crippled Hamilton's industrial plants.*

electric facilities in the area. These volunteer guards had been sworn in earlier that year as special anti-sabotage guards in case of war.

Single men enlisted in the guard were paid \$1.60 a day plus \$1 subsistence allowance and married men received \$2.20 a day plus the same living allowance. The province also insured the lives of these men for \$3,000 and provided accident coverage for injuries received in the course of duty based upon the Workmen's Compensation Board schedule. The men were

required to contribute not more than \$1.50 a month towards their insurance premiums.

Those on duty were entitled to sick leave, limited to one and one-half days per month.

The Argylls only guarded the canal for a short time. On Nov. 2, 1939, they were relieved of their responsibility when the Royal Canadian Mounted Police arrived to take over. The men of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders were freed up to be able to be sent overseas as part of the Canadian contingent.