

# Orange-Canadian Unionists and the Irish Home Rule Crisis, 1912-1914

Robert McLaughlin

Volume 98, Number 1, Spring 2006

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1065841ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1065841ar>

[See table of contents](#)

## Publisher(s)

The Ontario Historical Society

## ISSN

0030-2953 (print)

2371-4654 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

## Cite this article

McLaughlin, R. (2006). Orange-Canadian Unionists and the Irish Home Rule Crisis, 1912-1914. *Ontario History*, 98(1), 68–101.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1065841ar>

## Article abstract

In April 1912, the third Irish Home Rule Bill was introduced in the British House of Commons. The north of Ireland erupted with protests opposing Home Rule for Ireland, claiming it would mean “Rome Rule.” Ulster Protestants were particularly opposed to Irish Home Rule and made certain that its implementation would fail. Orange Canadians were interested in events in Ireland to such an extent many became active participants in those events, through moral, material, and even physical support of the Ulster unionist opposition to the implementation of Irish Home Rule. This Orange Canadian response and demonstration of fidelity with their Irish co-religionists is often overlooked by historians of the Canadian Order. Canadian Orangemen maintained strong connections with their brethren in Ireland, and viewed themselves as a North-American counterweight to the strong support Irish nationalists found in the United States. These determined expressions of support for the stance taken by their Orange brethren in Ireland continued over such a long period of time, and were demonstrated with such intensity, that these expressions of fidelity and support to Irish Protestants generally should not be viewed as a fleeting chant, or as anachronistic, but should be viewed in the larger context of transnational Orange solidarity and brotherhood.



## Orange-Canadian Unionists and the Irish Home Rule Crisis, 1912-1914

by Robert McLaughlin

In 1911, over one million Canadians identified themselves as being of Irish heritage.<sup>1</sup> Across eastern Canada, the place-names of Irish towns and counties testify to the influence of Irish settlement during the nineteenth century. Throughout Ontario and New Brunswick in particular, townships with names like Cork, Carlow, Dublin, Dundalk, Dunboyne, Duntroon, Dunganon, Donegal, Erin, Fingal, Killarney, New Dundee, Newry, Maynooth, Enniskillen, Tyrone, Tyrconnell, and Shannon dot the provincial countryside. Those nineteenth-century Irish emigrants brought with them not only the names of the places they left, but also the culture, traditions, and institutions

of those places. One such institution which made its way across the Atlantic was the Protestant fraternal society known as the Orange Order. Although Orange lodges were established in every Canadian province, and the Order was successfully inculcated into the country's social fabric, it was nevertheless a fraternal institution replete with paradox and contradiction. For some, the Orange Order's adaptation to a North American setting and successful growth mirrored and reflected Canadian national development.<sup>2</sup> For others, the Order represented an organized sectarianism, fostering division, discrimination, and bigotry on an unparalleled level.<sup>3</sup>

While numerous historical works

---

<sup>1</sup>*Census of Canada, 1921*, Table 22, p. 353. The 1,050,384 Canadians of Irish heritage represented 14.58% of the population in 1911. At that time, the Irish were the third largest ethnic group in Canada, behind the French (28.52%), and English (25.30%). In table 22 of the 1921 Canadian Census, the term Race was used to identify the ethnic background of the respondent. Included in these figures were both respondents; those who had been born in the old country and had emigrated to Canada, and those who were born in Canada descended from those who had previously immigrated.

<sup>2</sup>Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, *The Sash Canada Wore: A Historical Geography of the Orange Order in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 6-7.

<sup>3</sup>Scott W. See, "Fortunes of the Orange Order in 19<sup>th</sup> Century New Brunswick," in P.M. Toner, ed., *New Ireland Remembered, Historical Essays on the Irish in New Brunswick* (Fre-

## *Abstract*

*In April 1912, the third Irish Home Rule Bill was introduced in the British House of Commons. The north of Ireland erupted with protests opposing Home Rule for Ireland, claiming it would mean "Rome Rule." Ulster Protestants were particularly opposed to Irish Home Rule and made certain that its implementation would fail. Orange Canadians were interested in events in Ireland to such an extent many became active participants in those events, through moral, material, and even physical support of the Ulster unionist opposition to the implementation of Irish Home Rule. This Orange Canadian response and demonstration of fidelity with their Irish co-religionists is often overlooked by historians of the Canadian Order. Canadian Orangemen maintained strong connections with their brethren in Ireland, and viewed themselves as a North-American counterweight to the strong support Irish nationalists found in the United States. These determined expressions of support for the stance taken by their Orange brethren in Ireland continued over such a long period of time, and were demonstrated with such intensity, that these expressions of fidelity and support to Irish Protestants generally should not be viewed as a fleeting chant, or as anachronistic, but should be viewed in the larger context of transnational Orange solidarity and brotherhood.*

**Résumé:** *Au mois d'avril 1912, la troisième Loi d'Autonomie irlandaise fut introduite à la Chambre des Communes britannique. Cela provoqua de violentes protestations en Irlande du Nord, beaucoup craignant que cette Loi d'Autonomie se réduise en fait à « la loi de Rome ». Les protestants en Ulster étaient particulièrement opposés à cette loi, et ils s'employèrent à faire échouer son application. Les Orangistes canadiens s'intéressaient non seulement aux événements qui se déroulaient alors en Irlande, mais ils y prirent aussi une part active, apportant leur soutien moral, matériel et même physique à l'opposition unioniste en Ulster. Cette action des Orangistes canadiens en faveur de leurs coreligionnaires irlandais est souvent négligée par les historiens de l'Ordre au Canada. Les Orangistes canadiens maintenaient des relations étroites avec leurs frères en Irlande, et se considéraient comme le contrepoids en Amérique du Nord de l'aide importante que les nationalistes irlandais recevaient des États-Unis. Le soutien des Orangistes canadiens à leurs frères irlandais a été résolu, continu et sans faille. On ne doit pas le considérer comme une réaction ponctuelle, éphémère ou anachronique, mais au contraire lui redonner sa place dans le contexte de la fidélité, de la solidarité et de la fraternité orangiste internationale.*

concentrate on the nineteenth-century origins and activities of the Canadian Orange Order, and chronicle the transformation and adaptation of the Orange Order to a North American setting, virtually no scholarly works have examined Canadian Orangemen's response to the crisis which erupted in Ireland in 1912-

1914 over the issue of Home Rule. Moreover, many questions about one of Canada's most powerful fraternal institutions remain unexamined. How did Canadian Orangemen view themselves, their role in national affairs, and their role in the British Empire? Was the Orange Order in Canada strictly a nativist

institution concerned with only local issues, as many historians have portrayed it, or did it concern itself with matters relating to the Empire? To what extent were Orange Canadians, or more specifically Orange Ontarians, concerned with political events in Ireland? To what extent did Orange Protestant Canadians support the political aims and tactics of their co-religionist brethren in the north of Ireland, particularly with regard to their determined opposition to the implementation of Irish Home Rule? Greater insight into these and other questions is possible through an examination of the responses of Canadian Orangemen, and Protestant Ontarians generally, to the crisis which developed over the 1912 proposal for Irish Home Rule.<sup>4</sup>

This paper argues that events in Ireland, particularly the effort to establish a Home Rule parliament in Dublin, were of primary concern to Orange Canadians. Members of the Canadian Orange Order were unquestionably committed to opposing those issues which they felt adversely affected Canadian society: the separate schools issue, marriage laws, the Jesuit Estates Act, the Northwest Rebellions, the Fenian threats, and any form of clerical control over Canadian

society. They were also deeply committed to defending those institutions and connections they felt most aptly benefitted Canadian society: loyalty to the Crown, the preservation of British institutions, the maintenance of the British connection, preservation of the Protestant faith, and preservation of the Empire. Yet, Orange Canadians also were interested in events in Ireland to such an extent many became active participants in those events, through moral, material, and even physical support of the Ulster unionist opposition to the implementation of Irish Home Rule. This Orange Canadian response and demonstration of fidelity with their Irish co-religionists is often overlooked by historians of the Canadian Order. Canadian Orangemen maintained strong connections with their brethren in Ireland, and viewed themselves as a North-American counterweight to the strong support Irish nationalists found in the United States. These determined expressions of support for the stance taken by their Orange brethren in Ireland continued over such a long period of time, and were demonstrated with such intensity, that these expressions of fidelity and support to Irish Protestants generally should not be viewed as

---

derickton, NB: New Ireland Press, 1988), 93-94.

<sup>4</sup>The third Irish Home Rule Bill, proposing limited self-government for Ireland, was introduced in the British Parliament on 11 April 1912, and was immediately opposed by Irish Unionists and British Conservatives. The bill was introduced by Hebert Asquith's Liberal government, which achieved a parliamentary majority through the support of John Redmond's Irish Parliamentary Party. Redmond's party represented seventy-five percent of the constituencies in Ireland, and was a moderate nationalist party which had been advocating Irish home rule for nearly four decades. Two previous home rule bills, in 1886 and 1893, had both been defeated in Parliament.

a fleeting chant, or as anachronistic, but should be viewed in the larger context of transnational Orange solidarity and brotherhood. Of course, some historiographical and contextual background is needed in order to understand fully such a vibrant organization, their supporters, and the causes to which they subscribed.

The Irish first arrived in what is now Canada in the late sixteenth century, establishing seasonal camps on the Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland to facilitate fishing on the Grand Banks. More permanent Irish settlements developed in eastern Nova Scotia in the 1760s, but consistent Irish immigration only began in earnest with the cessation of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, when Irish emigrants found favorable rates on empty timber ships returning to Canada. Historical geographers Cecil Houston and William Smyth note that

Irish settlement occurred first in parts of the Maritime colonies in the 1760s, but after 1815, when the mass movements began, it took place on several fronts – eastern Nova Scotia, the Gulf of St Lawrence region and Saint John Valley of New Brunswick, the St Lawrence and Ottawa valleys of Lower Canada, and the southern peninsular Upper Canada [Ontario].<sup>5</sup>

Houston and Smyth clearly found

that in the heaviest wave of Irish migration after 1815, Irish Protestants predominated, stating; “Protestants were more prominent and Ulster ports combined with Cork as the main source of emigrants.”<sup>6</sup> Tragically in 1845, and most especially in 1847, much of Ireland suffered devastating starvation as a result of the potato blight causing the Great Famine. The famine set off a near tidal wave of emigration, with well over one million Irish emigrating. This wave of emigration consisted mainly of Catholics from the south and west of Ireland, with many arriving in Canadian ports like Quebec City and Saint John, or their respective quarantine stations at Grosse Isle and Partridge Island. Irish-Protestant fears of Catholic encroachment were only heightened after this massive influx of Irish-Catholic immigrants during these potato famine years of 1845 to 1852. The subsequent clashes and riots between Irish Catholics and members of the Orange Order, which occurred during the nineteenth century, astounded most colonial Canadian settlers, if not for their ferocity then certainly for the consistency with which they arose.<sup>7</sup> In Toronto alone, no less than twenty-two riots occurred between Orangemen and Irish Catholics from 1867 to

<sup>5</sup> Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, *Irish Emigration and Canadian Settlement: Patterns, Links, and Letters* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 191.

<sup>6</sup> Houston and Smyth, *Irish Emigration and Canadian Settlement*, 201.

<sup>7</sup> Gregory S. Kealey, “The Orange Order in Toronto: Religious Riot and the Working Class,” in Gregory S. Kealey and P. Warran, eds., *Essays in Canadian Working Class History* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), 13-34; Scott W. See, “‘Mickeys and Demons’ vs. ‘Bigots and Boobies’: The Woodstock Riot of 1847,” *Acadiensis* 21 (Autumn 1991),

1892.<sup>8</sup>

By 1871, the year of the first Canadian census, roughly 850,000 people of Irish heritage lived in Canada, with over sixty percent of them being Irish Protestants.<sup>9</sup> Over eighty percent of those of Irish heritage lived in either Ontario or New Brunswick. Ontario was “home to two-thirds of the Irish in Canada, and three-quarters of Canadian Irish Protestants.”<sup>10</sup> By the dawn of the twentieth century, the Irish, and those of Irish descent, had moved across Canada. They settled in every province and in every major city, but those in Ontario and New Brunswick predominated, as did the Protestant majority. Murray Nicolson’s examination of the 1901 Canadian census found that of the 988,721 who declared themselves to be of Irish heritage, those of Irish-Catholic descent only made up “37.9 per cent of the Irish national group.”<sup>11</sup> Even well into the twentieth century, those of Irish-Protestant descent outnumbered

those of Irish-Catholic descent by a ratio of almost two to one.

As Irish Protestants emigrated to Canada in large numbers after 1815, they acquired and filled in the vacant upland spaces not already occupied by the established Yankee loyalist families in eastern and central Upper Canada (present-day Ontario). Historian Donald Akenson asserts that during the 1834 provincial parliamentary election the Irish Protestants of Leeds County developed a collective ethnic consciousness coalescing around the effort to elect one of their own to the vacant provincial seat. Ogle R. Gowan, the father of the Canadian Orange Order, won the election with the support of his Irish-Protestant shillelagh-wielding poll workers in what Akenson described as a “violent exercise in representative government.”<sup>12</sup> Akenson insists this election episode helped these Irish-Protestant immigrants develop an ethnic consciousness:

---

110-131; See, “The Orange Order and Social Violence in Mid Nineteenth Century Saint John,” in P.M. Toner, *New Ireland Remembered*, 72-89.

<sup>8</sup> Kealey, “The Orange Order in Toronto,” 26.

<sup>9</sup> Houston and Smyth, *Irish Emigration and Canadian Settlement*, 188, 226.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

<sup>11</sup> Murray W. Nicolson, “Peasants in an Urban Society: the Irish Catholics in Victorian Toronto,” in Robert F. Harney, ed., *Gathering Place: People and Neighbourhoods of Toronto, 1834-1945* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1985), 53. Murray Nicolson is the Canadian scholar most readily identified as defending the argument that Irish Catholics were an urban peasant people. He asserted: “With the rise of Irish Catholic institutions after 1850, Toronto became the cultural focus for the Irish in Ontario. It was from the areas of Irish Catholic concentration, with their interacting parish networks, that a distinctive culture arose and spread to the hinterland. Urban-rural ratios made little difference, for Irish Catholic culture was urban-born.” *Ibid.*, 49; *Canadian Census, 1921*, Table 22, p. 353.

<sup>12</sup> Donald Akenson, *The Irish in Ontario: A Study in Rural History* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1984), 186.



Thus eventually political contracts (and later economic and social ones) come to be negotiated collectively. The banding together of the Leeds county Irish is a beautiful, almost laboratory case of how the corporate activity of individuals who perceived themselves as a group evolved and how, through collective action, they came to dominate the local scene.

The change was part of a true intellectual revolution, which occurred at the everyday level. People came to conceive of their society and to understand their position in it abstractedly. They saw themselves as members of collectivities which existed irrespective of the membership of any specific individual.<sup>13</sup>

This electoral expression of Irish-Protestant ethnic solidarity contrasts dramatically with historian Donald Mackay's assertion that; "Since the majority who settled in Canada took up farming, there were, for example, few Irish ghettos and the raw Irish politics of cities like Boston and New York were foreign to the Canadian experience."<sup>14</sup> Through their collective assertiveness, the Irish Protestants of Leeds County were able to wrest local control away from the Yankee family elites in a traditional demonstration of Irish power politics. Nonetheless, by the late nineteenth century, an exclusively Irish Protestant identity was no longer definable,

as it likely coalesced into a larger British Protestant identity concerning itself with not only parochial matters, but also with imperial matters as well. The institution most obviously associated with, and emblematic of, this transformation was the Protestant fraternal society known as the Loyal Orange Order.

Originally founded in 1795 in Loughgall, Co. Armagh, Ireland, the Orange Order came of age in the late eighteenth century when intense agrarian violence cut across much of Ireland. Various secret oath-bound societies such as the Whiteboys, the Ribbonmen, Thrashers, the Defenders, and the Peep o' Day Boys exacted revenge against landlords and tax collectors, or anyone careless enough to harass one of their members.<sup>15</sup> Although most of these secret societies "were motivated by agrarian grievances, some, especially from the north of Ireland, had a distinct sectarian tinge."<sup>16</sup> The Orange Order sprang-up from the Peep o' Day Boys, and became a more formal fraternal organization by adopting many Masonic rituals and traditions, notably the hierarchical series of degrees through which a member passed to remain in good standing. As Orange Order lodges were established across Ulster, and Ireland, they served as a defensive garrison network to protect

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>14</sup> Donald MacKay, *Flight From Famine: the Coming of the Irish to Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990), 15.

<sup>15</sup> Tony Gray, *The Orange Order* (London: The Bodley Head, 1972), 55-68; Chris Ryder and Vincent Kearney, *Drumcree: The Orange Order's Last Stand* (London: Methuen Publishing, 2002), 5.

<sup>16</sup> Ryder and Kearney, *Drumcree*, 5.

Protestant ascendancy and interests. In this fashion, the Orange Order served a similar role as it moved to Canada.

Only four years after its founding in Ireland, Orange Order members serving as British soldiers met in Halifax in 1799, in what is considered to be the first known meeting in British North America.<sup>17</sup> The following year, in 1800, additional Orange member British regulars came together in Montreal. Within a few years, and particularly after 1815 with the steady influx of hundreds of thousands of Irish Protestants, the Orange Order gained a tenacious hold in Canada. The ritual regalia and Masonic traditions transferred to North America, and replicated themselves easily in the devoutly Protestant areas “along the north shore of Lake Ontario and the Fundy coast of New Brunswick.”<sup>18</sup> The most obvious and demonstrative Orange tradition which made its way to North America was unquestionably the reverence for and celebration of King William of Orange’s victory over Catholic King James II at the Battle of the Boyne in Ireland on 12 July 1690. Orangemen proclaimed repeatedly that this victory preserved the Protestant faith for Britain. The annual July 12th

marches throughout the Empire have been continuous reminders of Catholic defeat, and served as annual source of contention in areas where Orange Protestants lived in proximity to Irish Catholics. During the 1910s and 1920s, thousands of people habitually lined the streets of Toronto to view the Orange parades.<sup>19</sup> In fact, Toronto was considered to be so intensely Orange, in its makeup and sentiment, that it was commonly referred to as the “Belfast of Canada.”<sup>20</sup>

Most scholars point to the Orange Order’s transformation and adaptation to the British North American setting as an indication of its evolution into a uniquely Canadian institution. These scholars of the Canadian Orange Order all point to the increased and ethnically varied membership of the Canadian Orange Order as an indication of its adaptation and transformation to the North American setting. Beginning in the 1830s, and certainly in the 1840s with the massive influx of the Famine Irish, the original Irish-Protestant institution began accepting members of different ethnicities; Scots, English, Welsh, German, and descendants of the American Congregationalist Loyal-

<sup>17</sup> Scott W. See, “The Fortunes of the Orange Order in 19<sup>th</sup> Century New Brunswick,” in P.M. Toner, *New Ireland Remembered*, 91.

<sup>18</sup> See, “The Fortunes of the Orange Order,” 91-92.

<sup>19</sup> *Orange Sentinel*, 20 July 1920, 2. During the 1920 parade, 9,000 Orange Order members marched from Queen’s Park to the Exhibition Grounds, while 25,000 people lined the streets of Toronto to watch and cheer.

<sup>20</sup> “The ‘Belfast of Canada’ Running True to Form,” *New Freeman* (Saint John, New Brunswick), 31 July 1920, 1; Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, *The Sash Canada Wore: A Historical Geography of the Orange Order in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 157.



ists, the only criterion being they were dedicated Protestants.<sup>21</sup> Even with this varied ethnic makeup, the Loyal Orange Order of Canada remained a firmly-rooted British institution. As recent scholarship denotes, the term British can be taken in a broader context than simply inferring a narrow English identity. Citing the numerous regional and ethnic distinctions in the United Kingdom, James Loughlin notes the term British can “imply diversity no less than uniformity.”<sup>22</sup> Within this context of diverse British identity, one should also include the Empire’s Dominions. Canadian Orangemen, for example, saw themselves as being thoroughly British, whether they were of Irish Protestant, American Loyalist, or English heritage.

As an institution demanding unquestioning devotion to the British Crown, interestingly, the Orange Order did not proclaim to be the sole proprietors of loyalty. As their own official rule book stated: “The Orange Society, lays no claim to exclusive loyalty or exclusive Protestantism, but it admits no man within its pale whose principles are not loyal, and whose creed is not

Protestant.”<sup>23</sup> This does not suggest that the Irish influence in the Canadian Orange Order was completely jettisoned after the mid-nineteenth century ethnic expansion. Historian Scott See insists that while “Canadian Orangeism created a style of its own, it kept the two most important Irish values intact,” those of loyalty to the Crown, and a near fanatical anti-Catholicism.<sup>24</sup> Houston and Smyth also argue that those of Irish descent were not too far removed from Orange membership stating that the “ethnic backgrounds of the Orangemen were more representative of the wider protestant community than an Irish immigrant minority. But the wide dispersal of the Irish meant that they would be found in most lodges to one degree or another.”<sup>25</sup> The greatest demonstration of the Orange Order’s shift toward an indigenously Canadian identity came in the form of its political and social orientation.

Scott See argues that the Canadian Orange Order made itself uniquely Canadian by actively engaging in local Canadian political issues and altering its inherent social orientation. See notes

---

<sup>21</sup> Hereward Senior, *Orangeism: The Canadian Phase* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1972), 12; See, “The Fortunes of the Orange Order,” 92; Houston and Smyth, *The Sash Canada Wore*, 84. Houston and Smyth note that some German Protestants and Dutch also joined the Order, but the overwhelming majority of members were of British and Irish Protestant heritage.

<sup>22</sup> James Loughlin, *Ulster Unionism and British National Identity Since 1885* (London: Pinter, 1995), viii.

<sup>23</sup> *Laws and Ordinances of the Orange Association of British North America* (Toronto: Rogers & Thompson, 1840), 9, in Scott W. See, *Riots in New Brunswick: Orange Nativism and Social Violence in the 1840s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 77.

<sup>24</sup> See, *Riots in New Brunswick*, 77.

<sup>25</sup> Houston and Smyth, *The Sash Canada Wore*, 95.

that “Canadian Orangemen charted a course that addressed local issues and attempted to correct indigenous problems.” Specifically noting a number of those issues, See further states:

Orangemen supported the government in the abortive Rebellions of 1837, and they zealously opposed the Rebellions Losses Act which they believed favoured Catholics. They campaigned against the separate schools issue and the Jesuit Estates Act, and played an active role in crushing the Northwest [Reil] Rebellions and the Fenian threats. Although they were motivated by the ubiquitous Orange tenets of loyalty and anti-Catholicism, British North American Orangemen steered a political course that was uniquely Canadian.<sup>26</sup>

Historian Hereward Senior, who primarily examined Canadian Orangeism from the perspective of its political adroitness and proclivities, observed that Canadian Orange lodges acted as more than a mere political conduit, and would often provide “a religious service with the reading of scripture, and acted as a guardian of morality as well as a means of organizing social life in frontier communities.”<sup>27</sup> Scott See also notes that without the imminent threat of harassment at the hands of militant Catholic agrarian groups, so pervasive in Ireland, Canadian Orangemen developed a social justification

for their organizational existence. As the siege mentality so pervasive among Irish Protestants slowly waned, many lodges declared themselves temperance and benefit lodges, offering rudimentary insurance and death benefits for widows.<sup>28</sup>

The social stratification of the Orange Order reflected a cross section of Protestant Canadian society. Men from all walks of life and every profession joined the organization. In rural areas farmers, clergy, and local merchants all engaged in the social and ritual activities afforded them as members of the local lodge. In urban areas laborers, businessmen, physicians, lawyers, and politicians mingled as members of a social institution which placed roots in every province.<sup>29</sup> By the early twentieth century, the Loyal Orange Association in Canada claimed a membership of well over 250,000, with Ontario West boasting 150,000 members itself.<sup>30</sup>

As have others, Lynne Marks conducted research on the Orange Order at the local grassroots level by studying the role of fraternal societies in the late nineteenth-century rural Ontario communities of Ingersoll, Thorold, and Campbellford. Marks examined church membership, the propensity to drink,

<sup>26</sup> See, “The Fortunes of the Orange Order,” 93.

<sup>27</sup> Senior, *Orangeism*, 8.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>29</sup> Houston and Smyth, *The Sash Canada Wore*, 179.

<sup>30</sup> *Reports of the Provincial Grand Orange Lodge of Ontario West, vol. 6, 1910-1919, 1914*, 32. Ontario, with its heavy concentration of lodges, was divided into two administrative units, Ontario East and Ontario West. Toronto was included in the latter.

and the class make-up of the officers of numerous fraternal societies such as the Ancient Order of United Workmen, the Masons, the Oddfellows, the Foresters, the Sons of England, the Sons of Scotland, and of course the Orange Order. Marks found that of all these fraternal organizations in rural Ontario the Orange Order had the lowest church membership, greatest propensity to drink, and officers who were overwhelmingly working class.<sup>31</sup> Marks comments that the rural Ontario Orangemen “may not have been willing to support their religion by attending church, but over the years they had often proved more than willing to defend it against ‘papists’ on the street. Although incidents of Orange-Catholic violence had declined in the late nineteenth century, the order remained in the forefront of anti-Catholic agitation.”<sup>32</sup>

Cecil Houston and William Smyth also examine the Canadian Orange Order from the local and grass roots level. In so doing, they maintain that the Orange Order’s brand of “ultra-loyalism and ultra-protestantism” was a “philosophy differing in degree, not in kind, from that of the mass of Canadian protestants.”<sup>33</sup> Houston and Smyth expressly state; “it is our intent

to broaden the interpretation of Canadian Orangeism through a study of its geography and its role as a bond for protestant communities in a developing nation.”<sup>34</sup> Moreover they suggest, “the primary function of the order in Canada was expressed at the local level through the social activities and ritual glamour of individual lodges. Anything from convivial forum for local affairs to service as a surrogate church could be provided within a lodge.”<sup>35</sup> Houston and Smyth staunchly emphasize that the Orange Order was not merely a source of social division and instigator of violent clashes in Canadian society, but was a well accepted fraternal society whose membership was in fact mainstream: “It was not, as is often portrayed today, an anachronism, an unwanted extreme, solely a source of anti-catholicism and social divisiveness. It was rather a bulwark of colonial protestantism.”<sup>36</sup> There must have been some degree of acceptance of its principles, Houston and Smyth argue, because by the end of the nineteenth century perhaps one in every three adult Protestant males was a member.<sup>37</sup> In this regard, the Orange Order, through its contacts with wives, brothers, friends, and relatives, had tremendous influence on Canadian politi-

<sup>31</sup> Lynne Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure, and Identity in Late-Nineteenth-Century Small-Town Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 108-115.

<sup>32</sup> Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks*, 116.

<sup>33</sup> Houston and Smyth, *The Sash Canada Wore*, 6.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

cal culture.

Houston and Smyth make compelling arguments in that the Orange Order was no more discriminatory than much of mainstream English-Protestant Canadian society, and it did have a broad appeal. But, simply acknowledging that the Orange Order may not have been an anachronism and was far more accepted than many may wish to admit today does not erase the fact that the Orange Order was an incredibly divisive. The speeches of past Orange Grand Masters clearly reveal the bigoted nature of this popular institution.

The Canadian Orange Order was a vehicle that enabled members of the various Protestant denominations to band together to work as an effective impediment to Catholic advancements in areas of settlement or employment. This tradition which harkened back to Ireland was easily replicated in North America, where French and Irish Catholics were continually viewed as disloyal to the Crown by virtue of their Catholic faith. James Loughlin notes, “the belief that Roman Catholicism was incom-

patible with British nationality was one that would find expression well into the twentieth century.”<sup>38</sup> One of the main goals of the Orange Association in Canada “was to maintain Protestant domination in North America, and keep the colonies [Canadian provinces] firmly rooted in the British Empire.”<sup>39</sup> To achieve these goals, a garrison network of lodges was established across Canada, most heavily in New Brunswick and Ontario, in order to halt the spread of French Catholicism and Irish-Catholic immigration. In this fashion, the Order put in place a “Protestant barrier against the dissemination of a Catholic culture.”<sup>40</sup> One of the Order’s rally cries in Canada was “One School, One Flag, and One Language.”<sup>41</sup> The Order looked to British institutions, and only British institutions, as the appropriate method of Canadian development, be they cultural, commercial, or political. In this context, the Canadian Orange Order undermined any sense of French-Canadian or Catholic contribution to society. The Order was even to a large extent xenophobic.<sup>42</sup> For the

---

<sup>38</sup>Loughlin, *Ulster Unionism*, 12.

<sup>39</sup>See, “Fortunes of the Orange Order,” 92.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 92-93.

<sup>41</sup>*Reports of Provincial Grand Orange Lodge of Ontario West, 1907-1919, 1912*, 13 March 1912, 19.

<sup>42</sup>With the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885, and the subsequent opening of the Canadian prairies for settlement, millions of Eastern European settlers flooded into Canada to farm the rich fertile lands. From 1901 to 1921, the Canadian population increased by sixty-four percent from 5,371,315 to 8,788,949. Canadian Orangemen viewed this influx of non-British immigrants with trepidation and suspicion. The 1914 annual meeting of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ontario West passed a resolution aimed at restricting the voting eligibilities of recent immigrants to Canada. Copies of the resolution were sent to the Borden Government, but never acted upon:

Orange Order, issues such as separate schools, immigration policy, and the marriage laws became matters of the utmost importance. In this respect the Orange Order in Canada was a nativist institution, primarily concerned with issues germane to Canada. Nonetheless, Canadian Orangemen were also ardent imperialists, keenly aware of issues relating to the Empire.

The term imperialism, in the context of Canadian history, does not convey an image of advanced industrialized countries plundering and subjugating lesser developed nations, all under the guise of missionary benevolence. Rather, Canadian imperialists favored a "closer union of the British Empire through economic and military co-operation and through political changes which would give the dominions influence over imperial policy."<sup>43</sup> Noted historian Carl

Berger additionally states that imperialism was a prominent form of English-Canadian nationalism.<sup>44</sup> Most English, or more accurately British, Canadians expressed their nationalism through an almost devout reverence for British institutions and the British tradition in Canadian society. Along with members of the British Empire League and the Imperial Federation League, Canadian Orangemen were among the most enthusiastic promoters of stronger ties with the Empire. Berger asserts that "the Orange Order... provided some of the most vociferous advocates of imperial unity," and in true Orange fashion, "it often appeared that to the motto of one race, one flag, one throne, they wanted to add, one religion."<sup>45</sup> Not surprisingly, Canadian Orangemen were intensely opposed to any proposed alteration to the British imperial structure which

---

"Resolved- That we, the Members of the Provincial Grand Orange Lodge of Ontario West, assembled at our annual meeting in Guelph, March 11th 1914, desire to impress upon the Prime Minister and Government of Canada the national importance of: 1st. Withholding the franchise from all foreigners until they have been five years resident in Canada. The large number of foreigners now resident in this country... are a real danger to our free institutions, and therefore, every possible means should be adopted to mitigate this danger.

2nd. That no man henceforth, native or foreigner, born outside of the Province of Quebec, should be given the franchise until he can read and write the English language. This will help to destroy the happy hunting ground of unscrupulous politicians who have money to spend in corrupting their fellow citizens, and thereby misrepresent the voice of honest men. Good government does not depend on the number, but the quality of the voters. These necessary safeguards we owe to ourselves and our country. They will also raise the standard of citizenship and teach them the value of the franchise."

Canadian Orangemen fully believed in the inferiority of Catholics and non-British peoples, and questioned whether they were even deserving of Canadian citizenship; Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1869-1921, A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Inc., 1974), 49-82; *Reports of Provincial Grand Orange Lodge of Ontario West, 1914*, 53.

<sup>43</sup> Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power, Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 3.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

tended to loosen rather than strengthen those ties. The third Irish Home Rule Bill proposed just that, to loosen the imperial structure by conferring upon Ireland a limited form of self-government.

One of the few works that examines Orange Canadian reaction to the proposed Irish Home Rule legislation of 1912 is Philip Currie's article on Toronto Orangemen. Unfortunately, Currie's approach and analysis are limited to placing the Order's opposition to home rule into the proper historical context. Currie states that the nature of Orange Canadian opposition to Home Rule "can only be understood in the context of Canadian politics, and the emergence of a new consciousness in English Canada in the years between the South African Boer War and the First World War."<sup>46</sup> Currie correctly argues that Irish nationalists were not the only North Americans who "expressed an interest in the political affairs of Ireland." Currie notes:

Toronto Orangemen disapproved of Irish Home Rule. It would have been an odd thing if they had not. What is notable is the extent and nature of that opposition after 1911, and what this suggests about the Order, Toronto, and many English Canadian generally in the years immediately preceding the Great War. In these years there was an intensity to the anti-Home Rule campaign that was not evident a generation before.<sup>47</sup>

Currie asserts Canadian Orangemen were opposed to the two previous Irish Home Rule bills of 1886 and 1893, but why was there more intense opposition to the 1912 legislation? Currie's work never answers this question, nor does it examine the "extent and nature of that opposition."

Although Currie does concede that the "nature of the Order's concern was *influenced* by the ethnic origins of Canadian Orangeism," he gives no real explanation for Orange Canadian opposition to Irish Home Rule.<sup>48</sup> In striving to put Orange Canadian opposition to Home Rule in the proper historical context, Currie leaves the reader to believe that opposition to Home Rule arose simply as a result of a general Canadian resentment of the way their national interests were continuously overlooked by British statesmen in various negotiations with the United States. Yet, was this the reason for Orange Canadian resistance to Irish Home Rule? Resentment of British statesmen was merely an additional factor of Orange Canadian opposition to home rule, not a prime motivation. Canadian Orangemen opposed Irish Home Rule for more personal, even visceral, reasons. Canadian Orangemen, by and large, felt an ethnic familial connection to, and empathy with, Irish Protestants in their struggle to resist the perceived Irish-Catholic onslaught

---

<sup>46</sup> Philip Currie, "Toronto Orangeism and the Irish Question, 1911-1916," *Ontario History* 87 (December, 1995), 398.

<sup>47</sup> Currie, "Toronto Orangeism," 398.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 403.



*Sir Edward Carson in a typically aggressive pose. (Courtesy of the Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, A 35/1/1, Anne J. Barrie fonds)*

which threatened their place in British society. Orange Canadian opposition to Home Rule mirrored the same ethno-religious arguments offered by their Irish Protestant brethren in the old country.

Ulster unionist opposition to Irish Home Rule was organized and led by the most wealthy, elite, and politically astute members of Protestant Ulster society. The two most prominent figures were Sir Edward Carson and Captain James Craig. Edward Carson, an Orangeman and an Anglican Dubliner, was educated at Trinity College-Dublin, was a successful barrister, a former Solicitor General for Ireland, and a Member of Parliament at Westminster. Carson was possibly best known for the devastating prosecution of playwright Oscar Wilde.<sup>49</sup> Carson led the Irish unionist opposition to Home Rule, which quickly receded



to the traditional unionist stronghold of Ulster. Carson moved along with it, and was readily accepted as the Ulster Unionist leader. Carson was joined by Captain James Craig who was a millionaire whiskey distiller, an MP, an Orange Grand Master for County Down, and had served with distinction as a British officer in the Boer War.<sup>50</sup> In 1911, Carson and Craig resurrected the Ulster Unionist Council, which was

<sup>49</sup> George Dangerfield, *The Damnable Question: A History of Anglo-Irish Relations* (Little, Brown & Co., 1976), 69.

<sup>50</sup> R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (London: Penguin Books, 1988), 465; Michael Laffan, *The Partition of Ireland 1911-1925* (Dundalk: Dundalgan Press, 1983), 19; J.J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985, Politics and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

essentially an executive coordinating committee comprised of two hundred members: one hundred nominated from the Unionists' political clubs, fifty from the Grand Orange Lodges, and fifty were Members of Parliament and peers. The Council was charged with drafting a constitution in order to establish a provisional government to defend Protestant interests in the event a Dublin parliament was put into operation.<sup>51</sup>

In their endeavor to thwart Home Rule, the Ulster Unionists were wholeheartedly supported by the British Conservative Party.<sup>52</sup> The Conservative and Unionist Party was led by Andrew Bonar Law, a Canadian of Ulster descent, whose Presbyterian minister father moved the family back to Ulster when Andrew was a young boy. The family eventually moved to Scotland, where years later Bonar Law made his mark as a Glasgow ironmaster and metal broker. Although he lived in Scotland, Bonar Law always maintained a deep felt sense of fealty to his Ulster roots, and has been described by historian Patrick Buckland as a "Scots-Canadian Presbyterian of Ulster descent who claimed to care about only two things

in politics – tariff reform and Ulster."<sup>53</sup> Law was easily identified as an ultra-Unionist, and through his caustic and inflammatory rhetoric, particularly in the House of Commons, the Conservatives brought to that body a "new style" of invective exchange seldom seen before.<sup>54</sup> Continuously proclaiming that the Empire would crumble if Ireland were set free, although it was not to be endowed with complete independence, Conservatives and Unionist alike railed against the supposed conspiracy arranged between the Liberals and the Irish Parliamentary Party. The Conservative-Unionist alliance stood as a formidable obstacle to the implementation of Home Rule.

On a more fundamental, even visceral level, Irish Protestants opposed Home Rule as a matter of racial (ethnic) distinction. The vast majority of Ulster Protestants were descendants of the seventeenth-century English and Scottish planter settlers who confiscated the best lands and secured better employment opportunities by virtue of their connection to the English Crown. In the eighteenth century, partially by virtue of the penal codes inflicted on Catholics, Protestants consolidated their ascend-

---

1989), 6; Dangerfield, *The Dammable Question*, 69-70.

<sup>51</sup>Laffan, *The Partition of Ireland*, 22; Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, 6.

<sup>52</sup>For more on the Conservative-Unionist alliance see, Thomas C. Kennedy, "The Gravest Situation of Our Lives': Conservatives, Ulster, and the Home Rule Crisis, 1911-1914," *Éire-Ireland* 36 (Fall/Winter 2001), 67-82.

<sup>53</sup>Patrick Buckland, *James Craig: Lord Craigavon* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd., 1980), 22.

<sup>54</sup>Ronan Fanning, "Rats' versus 'ditchers': the die-hard revolt and the Parliament Bill of 1911," in A. Cosgrove and J.I. McGuire, eds., *Parliament and community* (Belfast: Historical Studies, 1983), 191.

ancy position of privilege, which remained intact until threatened by home rule. Although there were occasionally differences between the Protestant denominations – Anglican, Presbyterians, Methodist, and Baptist – when confronted with the prospect of organized Catholic encroachment they banded together, usually under the banner of the Orange Order. Early twentieth-century Ulster Protestants especially believed themselves to be both racially distinct and superior to Irish Catholics. As in Canada, religion was an integral part of everyday life and served as a constant reminder of distinctiveness. Historian Joseph Lee captures these sentiments:

Their own peculiar institution, the Orange Order, which included two thirds of adult Protestant males [in Ulster], fostered a sense of community among Protestants and institutionalized the instinct of racial superiority over the conquered Catholics.... Race and religion were inextricably intertwined in Ulster unionist consciousness. Unionists could not rely on the criterion of colour, for Catholics lacked the imagination to go off-white, nor on the criterion of language, for Catholics had unsportingly abandoned their own. It was therefore imperative to

sustain Protestantism as the symbol of racial superiority.<sup>55</sup>

Ulster Protestants believed they were correct in feeling superior to Catholics, it being only “natural that they should dominate Catholics, but to be dominated by them [in a home rule parliament] would be a perversion of nature.”<sup>56</sup> The belief in the superiority of certain races and the inferior characteristics of others held considerable sway not only in Ireland, but in Britain, Canada, the United States, and Europe as well.<sup>57</sup> Historian Thomas Kennedy asserts that “ideas about the importance of race and its effect on character as well as history retained considerable power at the beginning of the twentieth century.”<sup>58</sup>

Although Sir Edward Carson seldom used arguments of race and inferiority in his public protestations of home rule, he seems to have fully believed “that the Celtic race in Ireland was an inferior element in the population.”<sup>59</sup> Writing to Sir John Marriott, Carson asserted: “The Celts have done nothing in Ireland but create trouble and disorder. Irishmen who have turned out successful are not in any case that I know of

<sup>55</sup> Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, 2-3.

<sup>56</sup> Laffan, *The Partition of Ireland*, 21.

<sup>57</sup> In 1919, Toronto’s *Catholic Register* proclaimed that Ireland’s troubles stemmed from Irish Protestant as well as English notions of superiority; “The root trouble in Ireland is that the minority and their friends in England have for centuries looked upon Catholics as their inferiors and servants, and they cannot yet bring themselves to treat Catholics or others refusing their leadership as equals. It is a defect in their idea of democracy.” “Ireland’s Cause,” *Catholic Register*, 30 January 1919, 4.

<sup>58</sup> Thomas C. Kennedy, “‘The Gravest Situation of Our Lives’: Conservatives, Ulster, and the Home Rule Crisis, 1911-1914,” *Éire-Ireland* 36 (Fall/Winter 2001), 73-74.

<sup>59</sup> Loughlin, *Ulster Unionism*, 67.



Orange parade on Queen Street West, Toronto, circa 1900. Such parades could be massive affairs in early twentieth-century Ontario. (Archives of Ontario, F 4436-0-0-116)

true Celtic origin.”<sup>60</sup> This staunch belief in Catholic inferiority was maintained and perpetuated by Canadian Orangemen, as were images of Irish Catholics as dirty and lazy.

Coupled with the self-image of superiority held by Irish Protestants was the image of native Catholics as an inferior, feckless lot. Irish Catholics were seen as dirty, lazy, drunken, untrust-

worthy “bog trotters,” incapable of self improvement, and without question incapable of self governance.<sup>61</sup> In Irish-Protestant eyes, any Irish-Catholic parliament was believed to be doomed to failure. In 1912, attitudes had changed little, if at all, since 1886 when the *Belfast Newsletter* proclaimed that an Irish parliament “would be the laughing stock of the civilized

<sup>60</sup> Sir Edward Carson to Sir John Marriott, 6 November 1933, in Loughlin, *Ulster Unionism*, 67.

<sup>61</sup> L. Perry Curtis, *Apes and Angels, the Irishman in Victorian Caricature*, revised edition (Washington & London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997). Chapter 4. “Simianizing the Irish Celts” explores the many ways in which the Irish were depicted as apes.



world.”<sup>62</sup> Significantly, Ulster unionist and Orange Canadian opposition to Home Rule for Ireland was not merely confined to matters of religious differences and ethnic distinction.

Ulster Unionists also opposed Irish Home Rule for fear it would jeopardize their material prosperity. Ulster Unionist concerns over the future economic viability of their region under a Home Rule parliament were equally as critical as issues of racial distinction. The nineteenth-century growth and development of large-scale shipyards, linen mills, rope factories, tobacco manufacturers, and distilleries, made Ulster, and specifically Belfast, one of the most important industrial centers in Britain.<sup>63</sup> Wealthy unionists feared losing everything they had built if they had to live under a Home Rule Irish parliament which would inevitably be controlled by men whom they believed lacked the sufficient business acumen to manage a country. Political historian Paul Bew states that the “religious-ideological gulf between the two communities had its counterpart in a material-economic one.... There is no question, for example, that economic factors played a key role in the generation of unionist oppo-

sition to home rule.”<sup>64</sup> Ulster Unionists continually proclaimed that economic ruin would befall Ulster if Westminster established a Home Rule parliament in Dublin, and they found sympathetic ears not only among British Conservatives, but also in Canada.

The 1912 *Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs* succinctly described the manner in which the proposed Irish Home Rule legislation was initially received in Canada, stating; “the Home Rule controversy of this year evoked many Parliamentary and political references in Great Britain to Canada’s constitution and condition while it aroused some discussion also in Canada.”<sup>65</sup> In 1912, the Home Rule issue clearly “aroused some discussion” in Canada. Many probably felt the issue would somehow find a political solution. Eventually, as events escalated through 1913 and 1914, Canadian Orangemen became active participants in the unfolding crisis. They adopted and promulgated many of the same arguments against Home Rule put forth by their Irish co-religionists: Irish independence threatened to weaken the Empire; Protestants would be deprived of their civil and religious liberties as a minor-

---

<sup>62</sup> *Belfast Newsletter*, 20 February 1886.

<sup>63</sup> At that time, 1912-14, the Harland and Wolff shipyard was the largest in Great Britain, and its drydock was the largest in the world. The York Street Flax Spinning Mill in Belfast was the largest linen mill in the world, and produced millions of £’s worth of exports. John McGarry and Brendan O’Leary, *Explaining Northern Ireland, Broken Images* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 72.

<sup>64</sup> Paul Bew, *Ideology and the Irish Question, Ulster Unionism and Irish Nationalism 1912-1916* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 34-35.

<sup>65</sup> *Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs, 1912*, 141.

ity in a Catholic country dominated by Rome; business in Belfast would suffer if controlled by inept Catholic parliamentarians; and a political conspiracy between the Liberals and the Irish Parliamentary Party brought about this corrupt Home Rule bargain. In this respect, Canadian Orangemen served as a North American sounding board for the vitriolic utterances of the Ulster Unionist leadership, and as a counterweight to Irish nationalism in the United States.

Those issues of greatest importance to Canadian Orangemen were clearly expressed in the Grand Master's address of the 1912 annual meeting of the Provincial Grand Orange Lodge of Ontario West, held in London, Ontario. This meeting occurred a month before the Irish Home Rule legislation was introduced in the British House of Commons, and the issue had already assumed a prominent place in Orange Canadian consciousness. Grand Master Harry Lovelock stated:

The past year has been one of much unrest throughout our Province [Ontario], and indeed the whole Dominion, and our Order has been actively engaged combating such questions as the marriage question, the

bi-lingual school situation, and the Home Rule problem in the Old Land, in which so many of our brethren in Canada are so deeply interested.

Lovelock included the Home Rule problem "in the Old Land" as a prominent issue for Canadian Orangemen. Specifically addressing the Home Rule question, he continued:

As your Grand Master I feel that I voice the sentiments of this Grand Lodge when I say that our brethren in the Old Land have our undying sympathy in their efforts to prevent the passage of a Home Rule bill for Ireland, and that our hopes and prayers are being exercised on their behalf, and if need be, our personal and financial assistance. The very soil of Ireland is sacred to us because of the traditions of the past. Not only is it consistent for Irish Orangemen and Protestants to oppose Home Rule, but it is consistent for Orangemen and Protestants of every nationality, because the passage of that bill means ultimately being ruled from the Tiber instead of the Thames.<sup>66</sup>

Through these expressions of sympathy with Irish unionists, made by their elected leaders, Canadian Orangemen demonstrated the importance they placed on the Home Rule issue. They also emphasized that Canadian Orangemen believed the Home Rule issue to

---

<sup>66</sup> *Reports of Provincial Grand Orange Lodge of Ontario West, vol. 6, 1910-1919*, 13 March, 1912, 19. At the 1912 annual meeting of the Grand Orange Lodge of New Brunswick, Grand Master Rev. Byron H. Thomas expressed similar sentiments when referring to the subject of Irish Home Rule.—“Your Grand Master puts himself on record as being in every sense of the word opposed to the proposal to give home rule to Ireland. Home Rule means Rome rule. Too much of that thing is in evidence in the British Empire already.... Home Rule is the battle cry of the Jesuits, who are determined in every conceivable way to strengthen the hands of the hierarchical system, and make the church of Rome supreme.” *Report of Grand Orange Lodge of New Brunswick 1912*, 19 March 1912, 23.



be most significantly, for them, a religious issue. These statements also exemplify how intimately knowledgeable Orangemen were of events back in Ireland. Orangemen in Canada were kept well informed of events in Ireland by not only the commercial daily newspapers, but most proficiently by their own official organ the *Sentinel and Orange and Protestant Advocate*, published weekly in Toronto.

On 11 April 1912, the *Orange Sentinel* reported that two days previously the Ulster Unionists held a rally at Balmoral estate outside Belfast to denounce home rule. As the Conservative leader Andrew Bonar Law arrived, 80,000 Ulster Orangemen greeted him with raucous cheers and waving Union Jacks. Ascending the podium, Law railed that he had, “come here to give you the assurance that we Unionists regard your cause as the cause of the Empire. We will do all that men can do to defeat a conspiracy as treacherous as any that has ever been formed against the life of a great nation... If we defeat Home Rule now it will be defeated forever.”<sup>67</sup> On 27 July another monster rally gathered outside Belfast at Blenheim Place where Bonar Law declared he knew of “no length to which the Ulster Unionists would go,” in which he would re-

linquish his support.<sup>68</sup> In essence Bonar Law, the leader of his Majesty’s loyal opposition in the House of Commons, gave the Ulster Orangemen sanction to resist the will of the British Parliament by force of arms if necessary.

On 29 September 1912, Carson and his colleagues orchestrated an even larger event, one of astonishing proportions, and Canadian Orangemen were kept well abreast of every move. Invoking the memory of the seventeenth-century Scottish covenanters, Edward Carson and Sir James Craig gathered with other Members of Parliament, peers, Protestant church leaders, and ordinary unionist citizens at City Hall in Belfast to sign the Solemn League and Covenant. Additional signing ceremonies simultaneously took place across Ulster, after which Protestant religious services followed. The Covenant was a pledge by Ulster men and women to resist the establishment of an Irish Parliament, with many, including Lord Londonderry, signing their names in their own blood. Throughout Ulster, over 447,000 men and women signed the covenant repudiating parliament’s authority to place them under the control of a Dublin Parliament.<sup>69</sup> The language of the covenant starkly expressed the religious and material concerns of the

---

<sup>67</sup> *The Sentinel and Orange and Protestant Advocate (Orange Sentinel)*, 11 April 1912, 2. As events escalated and intensified through 1913 and 1914, editorials continually ran which fully espoused the Orange Canadian viewpoint.

<sup>68</sup> Dangerfield, *The Damnable Question*, 76.

<sup>69</sup> Dangerfield, *The Damnable Question*, 76; Laffan, *The Partition of Ireland*, 28; Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, 6. More women than men actually signed the Covenant -228,991 women and 218,206 men.

Unionists, and also provides a fine example of the inherent contradictions of Ulster unionism: proclaiming loyalty to the Crown while resisting the lawfully introduced legislation of the King's parliament. The Covenant read:

Being convinced in our conscience that Home Rule would be disastrous to the material well-being of Ulster as well as the whole of Ireland, subversive of our civil and religious freedom, destructive of our citizenship and perilous to the unity of the Empire, we, whose names are underwritten, men of Ulster, loyal subjects of His Gracious Majesty King George V, humbly relying on the God whom our fathers in days of stress and trial confidently trusted, do hereby pledge ourselves in solemn covenant throughout this time of threatened calamity to stand by one another in defending for ourselves and our children our cherished position of equal citizenship in the United Kingdom, and in using all means which may be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland. And in the event of such a parliament being forced upon us we further solemnly and mutually pledge ourselves to refuse to recognize its authority.... God save the king.<sup>70</sup>

The Canadian *Orange Sentinel* thoroughly reported on the Covenant signing, and noted that in every industrial and farming center of unionist Ulster "a miniature replica of Belfast" was in

place. The *Orange Sentinel* referred to the official signing ceremony in Belfast as "the patriotic meeting," and described it as taking place in an atmosphere of jubilation, which lasted long after midnight.<sup>71</sup>

Within days of the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant in Belfast, an anti-Home Rule rally was held in Toronto to honor the visiting British Unionist Member of Parliament Walter Long, who served as Chief Secretary of Ireland in 1905 during the last months of the Arthur Balfour government. The *Orange Sentinel* pointed out that, although Toronto Orangemen fully opposed Home Rule, the gathering was not held under their auspices, but was rather "an assemblage of Protestants opposed to Home Rule."<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, the Orange presence was quite evident. Shortly before the rally began, "1,000 Orangemen from the Western District" arrived, complete with fife and drum corps, having marched from their lodges. The turnout for this anti-Home Rule rally at Massey Hall was so overwhelming that an overflow rally assembled at Victoria Hall. At the Massey Hall rally, many prominent Canadian citizens were seated on the platform with Walter Long. They included the staunch Canadian imperialists Col. George Taylor Denison,

---

<sup>70</sup> Edmund Curtis and R.B. McDowell, *Irish Historical Documents 1172-1922* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1968), 304. The belief that the George V was not in support of Home Rule, which has some justification, may have allowed Unionists to reconcile this apparent contradiction.

<sup>71</sup> *Orange Sentinel*, 3 October 1912, 5.

<sup>72</sup> *Orange Sentinel*, 3 October 1912, 2.

who was a founder of the Canada First movement, and Col. George Sterling Ryerson (neither of whom were Orangemen); the Toronto City Controller, Horatio Hocken; Canadian Member of Parliament, T.G. Wallace; Member of the Ontario Provincial Parliament, T.R. Whiteside; three Toronto aldermen, and “numerous other clergymen and leading citizens.”<sup>73</sup> Like their Ulster counterparts, the leaders of the Canadian opposition to Irish Home Rule were some of Canada’s most prominent citizens.<sup>74</sup> The rally, which unfolded without incident, demonstrated the kind of public opposition to Irish Home Rule which existed in Canada, particularly in Ontario.

At their annual meetings, both provincially and nationally, Canadian Orangemen continually referred to Irish Home Rule as an issue of the utmost importance, and also emphasized the commonality of the ethno-religious struggles in Canada and Ulster. On 12 March 1913, in Windsor, at the annual meeting of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ontario West, Grand Master Fred

Dane spoke eloquently on numerous issues of great importance to Ontario Orangemen: French separate schools in Ontario, the Borden government’s Canadian naval bill – intended to help support the imperial fleet by providing Canada with its own navy to protect its coasts – and the need to maintain the unity and integrity of the British Empire. But, he also spoke of the situation in Ireland in such a way as to leave little doubt of the intense emotional connection many Canadians felt toward Ireland. Mentioning that thirty years had elapsed since he “last had the pleasure of celebrating the 12th of July in the city of my birth [Belfast],” he spoke of his visit to the north of Ireland the previous year.<sup>75</sup> He then spoke in stirring terms about the political developments in Ireland, stating:

This Right Worshipful Grand Lodge has gone on record before, and I feel convinced it has not in the least changed its view, and still dreads the handing over of a loyal minority to the tender mercy of a disloyal majority...

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> There are numerous examples of Orangemen occupying positions of considerable importance in Canadian society. The first Canadian Prime Minister, John A. Macdonald, was an Orangeman. At the federal level, prior to the 1930s, almost every Conservative government had at least two cabinet ministers who were members of the Orange Order. In the 1911 Conservative Government led by Robert Borden, Orangemen Col. Sam Hughes and A.E. Kemp served as cabinet ministers. At the same time, T.S. Sproule, resigned as Orange Grand Master to become the Speaker of the House Commons. In Toronto, Orange patronage dominated Toronto politics to such an extent that twelve men on the 1894 Orange register gave city hall as their address. Houston and Smyth, *The Sash Canada Wore*, 150-158.

<sup>75</sup> *Reports of Provincial Grand Orange Lodge of Ontario West*, 12 March 1913, 16, 18. The following year Grand Master Fred Dane was appointed to serve as the Canadian Trade Representative in Glasgow. Fred Dane is another example of the prominent place many Canadian Orangemen held in Canadian society.

I am convinced that the Government of Ireland by a Home Rule Parliament would certainly lead to bitter racial and sectarian strife, be a lasting injury to its commerce and industries, would involve ruin to civil and religious liberties, and would be the first step in the disintegration of the great Empire to the building up of which Irishmen, and in no small degree the descendants of the Ulster plantation, have contributed their full share.

Grand Master Dane then closed his address with an Ulster poem:

They live in peace when left alone,  
 And honest toil pursue,  
 They earn their money, and pay their debts,  
 As honest men still do.  
 They don't believe in dynamite,  
 Or with assassins join;  
 The right they claim their fathers won  
 At Derry, and the Boyne.<sup>76</sup>

Fred Dane was undoubtedly a man imbued with a deep sense of ethnic and familial connection to Ireland, and as such was elected by the members of Ontario West to represent them as their Grand Master. For Dane, an Ulster Canadian, supporting the Ulster unionist cause was an integral part of being a Canadian Orangeman, viewing as he did the fight in Ulster and in Canada as one unified struggle against Catholic encroachment.

In a similar fashion, the *Orange Sentinel* editorial of 12 June encapsulated the situation in Ulster and expressed the sentiments of the Orange Canadians. It

stated:

There is every reason to believe that the Protestants of Ulster are preparing to forcibly resist the authority of the proposed Irish parliament. They are determined people who know how to fight and how to die, and may yet show that there is just as much to be feared by British governments as that of the Fenians and disloyalists who have imposed their will on the Asquith ministry.... We have too much admiration for our own race, to believe that Britishers will cowardly insure their own security by throwing their sturdiest champions to Redmond's wolves....

It is difficult for persons who have never lived in Ireland to appreciate the bitterness of racial and religious differences in that country, a bitterness so intense after centuries of clashing as to make it unwise to give either side complete control over the other. Yet we believe we do not exaggerate when we say that even in Canada the people of Ontario would shed blood rather than submit to any new arrangement of the provinces that would put them under the control of the people of Quebec. If that is true here, with comparative good-will between all races and creeds, can any wonder be felt that Ulstermen who have been persecuted for centuries in spite of British protection, should resist a proposal to leave them absolutely at the mercy of their traditional enemies.<sup>77</sup>

In stating that they had too much "admiration for *our own race*" to envision Britishers sacrificing Ulster Protestants to the disloyal Irish Catholics, the of-

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>77</sup> "Ulster Will Fight," *Orange Sentinel*, 12 June 1913, 1.



*As this parade in the village of Hymers attests, the Orange Order was as strong in small towns as it was in the cities. (Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, 979.1.893)*

ficial organ of the Canadian Orange movement spoke for the vast majority of Canadian Orangemen who possessed similar beliefs as the Ulster unionists. As British Canadians, the Orangemen identified themselves as being ethnically distinct from the purportedly disloyal and untrustworthy Irish Catholics, or even French Canadians. The editorial also intimated that most Ontarians would rather fight and die than be placed in a subservient position to French Canadians. These were telling statements of the fractious nature of Canadian society in the early twentieth century. Moreover, these themes of ethnic and religious distinctiveness, loyalty and disloyalty, and subjugation, would continually be revisited by Orange Canadians throughout the Irish

revolutionary period. Additionally, as the editorial indicated, the Protestants of Ulster were indeed moving toward the forcible resistance of the implementation of a Home Rule parliament.

For two years, Carson, Craig, and the leading men of Ulster had seen to it that Protestant interests would, if necessary, be forcibly defended. In January 1913, word spread that the Ulster unionists had established and were training their own paramilitary organization. The Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) was manned almost exclusively by Ulster Orangemen, and was commanded, at least nominally, by retired General Sir George Richardson, who achieved fame in Africa at Wazari, and the Zhol Valley, and even led a cavalry brigade against the Boxer Rebellion.<sup>78</sup> Although

<sup>78</sup> Dangerfield, *The Damnable Question*, 83.



Richardson's command was bestowed largely for propaganda purposes, the UVF drilled in deadly earnest. Initially, the men were ill equipped, and some practiced with wooden rifles, but preparations were underway to remedy those inadequacies. By late 1913, the UVF boasted 100,000 members, and soon they were to be a well armed, well equipped force ready to resist the lawful will of the British Parliament.<sup>79</sup> The emergence of the UVF at first seemed farcical, and the Asquith Government simply dismissed these demonstrations of bluff and bluster as further examples of Ulster bravado. But, Orange Canadians supported the creation of the UVF, and viewed their stance as the latest incarnation of the Battle of The Boyne.

On 25 April 1914, an explosive news dispatch arrived from Belfast. It indicated that a "sensation was caused by the landing of 40,000 rifles and 500,000 rifles [rounds] at Ulster ports tonight."<sup>80</sup> For the previous two years, arms had been cautiously smuggled into Ulster,

but rarely more than one hundred at a time. In a daring move of bluster, bravado, and sheer luck, the Ulster Volunteer Force landed 35,000 rifles and three million rounds of ammunition from Germany at three Ulster ports – Larne, Bangor, and Donaghadee.<sup>81</sup> Nearly two-thirds of all the cars in Ulster were used in a well executed operation to disperse the weapons throughout the province.<sup>82</sup> Some may argue that this UVF gun running episode might have transpired quite differently if local police had actually chosen to leave their barracks that night, but Ulster Protestant unwillingness to live cooperatively with their Catholic neighbours under a Home Rule government now took on a militaristic intransigence.

The funds to purchase these weapons came from numerous sources. In Ireland, Edward Carson and numerous members of the Belfast business community established the Carson Fund, which included a £1,000,000 indemnity for members of the UVF.<sup>83</sup> In

---

<sup>79</sup>When writing of the UVF, the *Orange Sentinel* proudly proclaimed: "The Ulster Volunteers are made up of the best elements of the population – the solid business men, the capitalists, employers of labor, bankers, professional men, and the better class of workingmen – all of whom rub shoulders in the drill halls and meet on equal terms. They are imbued with the same spirit of 'No Surrender,' which characterized their forefathers, and will fight to the death before surrendering to the enemies of the Empire." *Orange Sentinel*, 16 July 1914, 1.

<sup>80</sup>*Orange Sentinel*, 30 April 1914, 5.

<sup>81</sup>Most contemporary news accounts of the landing put the number of rifles at thirty to fifty thousand, and the rounds of ammunition at three million. Subsequent historical works have settled on a rough figure of 35,000. A.T.Q. Stewart asserts that the figure was lower, stating "the total number of rifles landed was thus 24,600," and that the total number of rifles possessed by the UVF in July 1914 was 37,048; A.T.Q. Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis*, (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1967), 246-48.

<sup>82</sup>Dangerfield, *The Damnable Question*, 111; Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, 18.

<sup>83</sup>"Covenant to Indemnify the Ulster Volunteers," *Orange Sentinel*, 26 March 1914,



Britain, Lord Milner, the former High Commissioner of South Africa, joined forces with Walter Long's Union Defence League and solicited his wealthy friends for contributions. Among those who contributed money in support of the UVF were Lord Rothschild, Lord Iveagh, and the Duke of Bedford, each of whom donated £10,000; as well as Waldorf Astor (son of the American millionaire) and Rudyard Kipling, each of whom donated £30,000.<sup>84</sup> Additionally, financial support for the Ulster Unionist cause was forthcoming from the dominions. As historian A.T.Q. Stewart insists, "the [Ulster] expatriates' most valuable contribution was probably their financial aid, which was considerable."<sup>85</sup> And the greatest contributor of the overseas dominions was unquestionably Canada.

As early as October 1913, an *Orange Sentinel* editorial revealed that Canadian supporters of the Ulster unionist cause were in fact contributing funds to help

arm the Ulster Volunteer Force. The editorial recalled the "Ulster Will Fight" phrase made famous by Lord Randolph Churchill during the battle over the first Home Rule Bill in 1886, and again demonstrated the close emotional connection existing between Canadian Orangemen and events in the "Old Land":

There are thousands of men and women in Canada who believe that "Ulster will fight" and that "Ulster will be right" in her resistance to the authority of an Irish parliament. We have ample evidence that men and money from Canada will be available for that struggle. While this is true, we would like to emphasize the desirability of the most careful consideration of every step taken on this side to give encouragement to the Protestants of Ireland. This is no time for bluff or bluster.... They are looking eagerly... to this Dominion for signs that they will not be left to battle alone for their faith and liberties and the good of the Empire. It would be cruel to delude them with false hopes. For every soldier and nurse Canada offers in

---

5. Any member of the Ulster Volunteer Force who suffered injury "in the execution of their duty as such members or in the execution of any order of the Provisional Government" who made a claim recoverable against this fund was still subject to the "Provisions of the Fatal Accident Act, 1846, The Employers Liability Act, 1880, or the Workmen's Compensation Act 1906; provided the claim made in respect of such injury is approved of by the Executive of said Provisional Government and provided that the Guarantee Fund shall amount to at least £1,000,000." Edward Carson, James Crig, Lord Londonderry, Lord Dunleath, Sir John Lonsdale, and Sir George Clark all pledged £10,000. A.T.Q. Stewart asserts that by 1 January 1914 the fund stood at £1,043,816, and it was "in this way the business community of Belfast underwrote the U.V.F." Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis*, 77.

<sup>84</sup> Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis*, 136.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 140, 262. Financial support for the Ulster Unionists cause came from Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, but the greatest support emanated from Canada. As A.T.Q. Stewart notes, "an Ulster influence was particularly strong in Canada, where there was a long tradition of immigration from the north of Ireland, going back to the eighteenth century." Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis*, 138.

case of emergency, two should be forthcoming, and the volunteers should be so seized with the justice of the cause for which they are enrolled that they would be glad to help it at the sacrifice of their property, liberty and lives.<sup>86</sup>

Contributing to an armed resistance of the British Parliament was a fairly dramatic step to take for avowedly loyal British subjects, whether they lived in Ireland or in Canada. Evidently, there were thousands of people in Canada willing to make contributions to just such a cause, and Canadian Orangemen were most prominent among them.

At the 1914 annual meeting of the Grand Orange Lodge of British America, Grand Master Col. James H. Scott, indicated that Walter Long had contacted him in the hopes of obtaining funds.<sup>87</sup> With the Grand Master's favorable recommendation, the Grand Orange Lodge of British America sent \$1,000 to what they termed the "Ulster Fund." Although this might seem a modest sum, it should be noted that the Newfoundland Disaster Fund received only \$500, and the True Blue Orphanage of Ontario, the Orange Orphanage of Prince Edward Island, and the Orange Orphanage of Nova Scotia received only \$100 each.<sup>88</sup> Thus the Ulster Fund, on very short notice, received considerably more money than did some well established Orange in-

stitutions. Throughout 1913 and 1914, Ulster Unionists solicited money from Canadian Orangemen and any other Canadians who supported the unionist's stance.

Any member of the Canadian Orange Order who regularly read the *Orange Sentinel* was well aware of Walter Long's appeal for funds to which Grand Master Scott referred. The *Sentinel* printed Long's call on the first page of its 30 April 1914 issue. Long stated, "I have authority from Grand Master of Ireland to appeal to you [Col. Scott, of Walkerton, Ontario] as Grand Master of Canada for financial help, which he believes you will be good enough to give to the cause of Ulster."<sup>89</sup> Below the appeal appeared the following; "We are sure our readers will gladly do all they can to help in the preservation of the rights and liberties of the Irish Protestants." Only seven days after this appeal had been written in London, it appeared on the front page of the *Orange Sentinel* in Canada.

Canadian Orangemen immediately responded. Official Orange lodges contributed to the Ulster unionist cause in whatever amounts they could. The Grand Orange Lodge of British America contributed \$1,000, and the Grand Orange Lodge of Ontario West sent \$500 for Ulster's defense.<sup>90</sup> Local lodges also contributed what they could; "£423

<sup>86</sup> *Orange Sentinel*, 23 October 1913, 1.

<sup>87</sup> *Reports of Grand Orange Lodge of British America, 1914*, 27 May 1914, 19-20.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 May 1914, 42.

<sup>89</sup> *Orange Sentinel*, 30 April 1914, 1.

<sup>90</sup> *Reports of the Provincial Grand Orange Lodge of Ontario West*, 11 March 1914, 44. The

from Toronto loyalists, £100 from Ulster and Loyal Irishman's Society of Victoria, £100 from Montreal County loyal Orange lodge."<sup>91</sup> The local Hazeldean Orange Lodge No. 246 diligently sent a notice to the *Sentinel* stating that "at our last regular meeting... although few members were out, we subscribed about \$25 to the Ulster Fund." The *Sentinel* responded in bold print, WELL DONE, HAZELDEAN!<sup>92</sup>

In June 1914 an appeal for the Ulster Equipment Fund also appeared in the pages of the *Sentinel*. The Grand Secretary of Ontario East, Bro. F.M. Clarke, sent circulars to every primary county lodge master in the jurisdiction requesting that donations be made by any wishing to contribute to Ulster's cause. The notice stated that it was not intended that "these subscriptions should be confined to members of the Order, but the lists should be used so as to give any who may be a sympathizer with the Ulster movement a chance to contribute... as it is not purely an Orange matter but one in which Protestantism is generally interested." The original letter from Ireland's Imperial Grand Master read in part:

The manhood of Ulster have displayed a magnificent example to all the world. For

two years they have given their time, leisure, and their money preparing themselves for the coming struggle.... We appeal for subscriptions to the Equipment Fund, to enable these men to defend their homes and their rights as citizens of the United Kingdom....

The rich men of Ulster have already contributed largely to the general funds of the party; the rank and file are prepared to lay down their lives if necessary in the cause of the Union. Each person should carefully consider how much of this world's goods he is prepared to sacrifice to oppose Home Rule, and give it at once.<sup>93</sup>

There can be little doubt of what types of "equipment" these funds purchased, but there were also indications that additional Canadian fund raising networks had been established.

When the *Orange Sentinel* reported in bold letters that the "Grand Black Chapter Voted \$2,000 to Ulster," it also mentioned that the money would be forwarded to the Canadian Unionist League office in Belfast. The statement read:

Regina, May 26- Expressing approval of the course pursued by the Protestants in Ulster, the Grand Black Chapter of British North America, in session here to-day, passed a vote of \$2,000, which will be forwarded to the Canadian Unionist League in Belfast.<sup>94</sup>

---

motion was put forward by the Finance Committee's members - J.C. Boylan, F.R. Parnell, B.H. Walsh, E. Cascadden, W.B. Walker.

<sup>91</sup> Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis*, 262.

<sup>92</sup> *Orange Sentinel*, 11 June 1914, 7. The contribution was forwarded by, G. Edw. Bradley, Dist. M., L.O.D.L. No. 7, Carleton.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *Orange Sentinel*, 28 May 1914, 10.

On 18 May, the Toronto Unionist League forwarded \$1,500 as an “expression of their sympathy with the Unionists of Ireland.”<sup>95</sup> The *Orange Sentinel* even received individual contributions directly, and notified readers that such remittances should be sent to the treasurer of the Canadian Unionist League in Toronto.<sup>96</sup> In addition to the numerous Orange lodges, Canadian Unionist League branches arose as conduits of Ulster unionist fund raising. Although the Canadian Unionist League undoubtedly worked in cooperation with the Orange Order, those Protestant Canadians not affiliated with the Orange Order who wished to demonstrate their support for the Irish Protestants’ struggle were afforded that opportunity by joining or contributing to this indigenous unionist organization. The Canadian Unionist League even maintained an office in Belfast, creating a direct monetary pipeline from Toronto to Belfast. By late summer 1914, Orange-Canadian unionists had contributed more than \$100,000 to the arms purchasing power of the UVF.<sup>97</sup> In all likelihood, Canadian unionists contributed a sum much larger than this, but as a result of the

numerous options to contribute funds directly to the Ulster unionists, an exact figure will never be known.

In a similar vein, the total membership of the Canadian Unionist League, or the level of support outside of Toronto, is elusive. Nonetheless, the level of support in and around Toronto was impressive. For example, membership in the Canadian Unionist League was sufficient to include a Ladies Division, with the *Orange Sentinel* continually running advertisements announcing upcoming meetings.<sup>98</sup> It is possible that Canadian Unionist League branches extended to New Brunswick. At the 1914 annual meeting of the Grand Orange Lodge of New Brunswick, while mentioning the Home Rule situation in his opening address, Grand Master William B. Wallace remarked, “Unionist leagues have been formed and many established in Canada to assist the Irish Patriots.”<sup>99</sup> If Unionist League branches did not extend beyond Toronto, New Brunswick Orangemen were certainly familiar with their existence and function. The mere existence of this organization, moreover, indicated a larger Orange-Canadian unionist community supporting the UL-

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>96</sup> “Send Ulster Grants to Bro. T.W. Self,” *Orange Sentinel*, 11 June 1914, 7; “grants should be sent direct to T.W. Self, 78 Howard St., Toronto, Treasurer of the Canadian Unionist League.”

<sup>97</sup> *Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs, 1914*, 128.

<sup>98</sup> One Ladies Division advert read: “Ladies’ Branch No. 1 Canadian Unionist League meets every Sunday afternoon at 3 o’clock in the Western District Hall cor. of Euclid Ave and College St. Rev. E.E. Scott of Simpson Ave Methodist Church will address the meeting Jan. 25th. Silver Collection—Everybody Welcome—Come and bring your friends.” *Orange Sentinel*, 22 January 1914, 7.

<sup>99</sup> *Reports of Grand Orange Lodge of New Brunswick 1914*, 17 March 1914, 14.

ster unionists' cause.

In early May 1914, the resolute support for Ulster's opposition to Home Rule among Orange Canadians was made clear at another public rally in Queen's Park, Toronto. The *Orange Sentinel* reported that 6,000 men and women from all walks of life, "including prominent professionals and business men, and men who are leaders in public life," turned out to protest Home Rule for Ireland.<sup>100</sup> Held under the auspices of the Canadian Unionist League, the rally confirmed that in and around Toronto a larger Canadian unionist community existed. Men who arrived wearing Orange Order regalia were asked to remove such items in order to insure that the rally was not mistakenly perceived as a purely Orange Order event. The tone of the rally was extremely serious, not like the high spirited Twelfth of July parades. The *Sentinel* reported that many of those gathered at the rally "had relatives or friends in the Province [Ulster] that they believed to be threatened with war or persecution."<sup>101</sup> In an obvious demonstration of Orange solidarity, nearly every man in attendance wore a badge on which a picture of Sir

Edward Carson was printed.

Toronto Mayor Horatio Hocken, who was a devout Orangeman, a fanatical anti-Catholic, and a rabid unionist, chaired the rally, which included prominent speakers such as W.M. McPherson – a member of the Ontario's Provincial Parliament, and the future Orange Grand Master of Canada.<sup>102</sup> McPherson asserted; "Ordinarily, the people of Canada would have no right to interfere in the domestic affairs of the United Kingdom, but there is no part of the Empire which will not be vitally affected by civil war in the Motherland, and that is ample justification for our meeting to-day."<sup>103</sup> With respect to the Irish Home Rule bill, Orange-Canadian unionists clearly believed they were justified in voicing their opinions in imperial matters.

During the rally, Mayor Hocken read a cable from Edward Carson, which asked: "We fight against betrayal and for civil and religious liberty. Will Canada help us?" The crowd responded with "a wild burst of cheering, shouting: 'We will; we will,' as they waved their hats and countless small flags and banners."<sup>104</sup> The cheering carried on

---

<sup>100</sup> *Orange Sentinel*, 14 May 1914, 12.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Orange Sentinel*, 14 May 1914, 12. At a previous anti-home rule rally on 11 October 1913, at Victoria Hall, Toronto Mayor Horatio Hocken proclaimed: "In no part of the British Empire is there more intense sympathy with Ulster's struggle than in Toronto and in Canada. Mr. Asquith introduced the bill only to hold power, and a man, who imperils the safety and integrity of the Empire for personal profit is nothing less than a traitor." Proclaiming the Prime Minister of Britain to be a traitor seems a fairly provocative statement for a supposedly loyal British subject. *Orange Sentinel*, 23 October 1913, 5.

<sup>103</sup> *Orange Sentinel*, 14 May 1914, 12.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*





*Pictures of Carson were prominent in the homes and at the rallies of Orangemen throughout Ontario. (Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, A 35/1/1 Anne J. Barrie fonds.)*

for a number of minutes before Mayor Hocken was again able to speak. At the conclusion of the rally, the attendees unanimously endorsed a resolution condemning Home Rule for Ireland. The resolution fully expressed the sentiments of Orange-Canadian unionists, while at the same time reiterating the Ulster Unionist arguments against Home Rule:

That this mass meeting of the citizens of Toronto, publically assembled and presided over by his worship the Mayor of Toronto, recognize that the peace of Ireland, and indeed the Empire, is in great and imminent peril by reason of the an-

tipated passage by the Imperial House of Commons of the third reading of the Government of Ireland Bill, and believing that the final enactment of such bill will inevitably lead to extreme dissension in Ireland and disaster to the Empire, the degradation of the citizenship of those citizens of Ulster and the other Provinces opposed to the said bill, and do irreparable injury to their material prosperity and harass them in the exercise of their civil and religious liberty, hereby ENTER OUR MOST EMPHATIC PROTEST AGAINST THE ESTABLISHMENT IN IRELAND OF ANY FORM OF GOVERNMENT DIFFERENT FROM THAT POSSESSED BY THE OTHER COMPONENT PARTS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM, and particularly any institution, legislative or executive, which would mark Ireland as a nationality distinct from Great Britain....

...WE ASSURE OUR LOYAL FELLOW SUBJECTS IN IRELAND OF OUR UNITED AND DETERMINED SUPPORT, BOTH MORAL AND FINANCIAL, in their struggle to maintain their rights of full citizenship under the flag of the great and glorious British Empire, of which we, as Canadians, are justly proud to form a part.<sup>105</sup>

The resolution exemplified the inconsistency with which Ulster unionists and their Orange-Canadian unionists allies argued their case against Home Rule. Although Canadian, and Ulster, unionists repeatedly asserted their ethnic dis-

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*



inction from Irish Catholics, they protested the creation of “any institution, legislature or executive, which would mark Ireland as a nationality distinct from Great Britain.” Had not unionists repeatedly argued that the Irish were a distinct nationality? Unionists, be they in Canada or Ulster, argued this incongruous position for one reason: the fear of endangering the Irish Protestant position of dominance in Ireland. If Ireland were accorded its own legislature, Irish Protestants would have been placed in a minority position in a state controlled by Catholics. To the unionist mind this was simply anathema.

Orange-Canadian unionists, many of whom were of Irish Protestant heritage, felt a deep personal connection to the men and women of Ulster. They shared a common ethnic and religious heritage which was diminished by neither generational nor oceanic separation. Many Orange-Canadian unionists still had relatives in Ireland, particularly in Ulster. The Ulster Volunteer Force was potentially made up of people they knew. Canadian unionists were even encouraged, through the *Sentinel*, to enquire as to which regiments of the Ulster Volunteer Force relatives may have been serving. In May 1914, the *Orange Sentinel* ran an article from Belfast whose headlines were captioned by the parenthetical phrase;

Special to *The Sentinel* by “Craigavon,” which covered the training exercises of the Ulster Volunteer Force, and encouraged Ulster Canadians to enquire about the activities of this force in their old country.<sup>106</sup> Craigavon inquired and proclaimed, “Protestant Donegal men and women in Canada interested – and who is not? – in the Ulster Volunteer movement in their old country... The North of Ireland looks with confidence to sons and daughters afar.”<sup>107</sup>

An article the following week, also penned in Belfast by “Craigavon,” mentioned specific regions in which volunteer operations occurred, and how “people in Canada now, hailing from the resident districts in Ulster mentioned, will, I know, read with pride and pleasure of the action of their kit[h] and kin.” The article continued and mentioned that Canadians themselves had actually gone to Ireland and enlisted as Volunteers:

Your readers will be interested to know that Mr. A. Allen, late of the Northwest Mounted Police of Canada, is the company commander [B Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Armagh Volunteers], and takes a keen interest in this branch of Volunteer work [instruction in the use of a new type of rifle].

Ulster people read with deep pleasure of the great meeting held at Queen’s Park, Toronto, presided over by Mayor Hocken, in support

---

<sup>106</sup> Craigavon was the name of the estate of Cpt. Sir James Craig, and Lord Craigavon was the name Captain Craig adopted after he was knighted. While his estate at Craigavon teemed with women clerks and secretaries, James Craig conducted his own North American propaganda campaign through the pages of the *Orange Sentinel*. See A.T.Q. Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis*, 158.

<sup>107</sup> *Orange Sentinel*, 21 May 1914, 1.

of their cause. It has been recorded in all the papers here.<sup>108</sup>

The article further acknowledged that news reports in Belfast of the Queen's Park rally aroused "deep pleasure" among Ulster's Protestants. Craigavon assured Canadian readers that Ulster unionists believed, "Sir Edward Carson's stirring message to the gathering – *We fight against betrayal and for civil and religious liberty. Will Canada help us?* – will find, we know, a warm response in the Land of the Maple Leaf. May God Defend the Right."<sup>109</sup> In this passage Craig, through the pen of "Craigavon," implicitly expressed the shared sense of connection and identity, and most importantly the shared sense of struggle, maintained by Ulster unionists and their Orange-Canadian unionist compatriots. Even if they were written to evoke a sense of shared ethnic heritage between Ulster Canadians and the old country, they were very effective. Orange-Canadian unionists contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to the arming of the Ulster Volunteer Force, and provided a North American counter-weight to the Irish nationalist support found in the United States.

While the stalemate in Ireland held through the summer of 1914, it seemed civil war was inevitable. In July, King George V called the parties to Buckingham Palace for a conference to try one final time to hammer out a compromise.

Unfortunately, a near reaffirmation of previous positions was the only result, with Edward Carson and James Craig demanding six county permanent exclusion from Home Rule, while British Liberal leader Herbert Asquith and Irish Parliamentary Party leader John Redmond would only concede six-year exclusion for those counties voting out of home rule.<sup>110</sup> As the delegates left London on 24 July, the darkening clouds of war were beginning to engulf Europe in a most horrific struggle, which ultimately served to postpone the Irish Home Rule crisis.

When Britain became ensnared in the widening European conflagration in August 1914, Ulster unionists and the majority of Irish nationalists pledged their support to the British war effort. At last, Prime Minister Asquith was afforded an opening, having stumbled his way through the home rule crisis, and being outmaneuvered by the Ulster Unionists at every turn. An amending bill was attached to the Home Rule Bill which, upon enactment, would suspend home rule for the duration of the war. The amending bill also contained a provision which stated that Ulster had to be reconciled before the law could be put into effect.<sup>111</sup> Even though the King signed the Home Rule Bill and it was placed on the statute books in late September, it was not implemented, and any attempt at implementation would require the entire subject be revisited.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>108</sup> *Orange Sentinel*, 28 May 1914, 2.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Bew, *Ideology and the Irish Question*, 114; Dangerfield, *The Damnable Question*, 117-118.

<sup>111</sup> Dangerfield, *The Damnable Question*, 118-119.

<sup>112</sup> *Orange Sentinel*, 24 September 1914, 1.

In as much as historians of Unionism such as Paul Bew try to portray Edward Carson as a moderate unionist and victim, dragged by the extremist military elements in the unionist camp to the brink of armed rebellion against Britain, Edward Carson was the recognized leader of Ulster unionism and willfully beat the Orange drum.<sup>113</sup> Through their speeches, Carson and Bonar Law sanctioned armed rebellion against British institutions and nearly brought the Empire to its knees. Carson and his cohorts clearly followed an Irish tradition that sanctioned armed resistance to British legislative initiatives as a legitimate means of attaining one's political objectives, establishing a unionist tradition continued with great regularity and success in twentieth-century Northern Irish politics.

Orange-Canadian unionists readily recognized and supported Edward Carson as the leader of the Ulster unionists and the nominal leader of the Ulster Volunteer Force. In Canada, Carson was hailed as the valiant leader and saviour of Irish Protestants who were threatened with existing as a minority in an Irish Home Rule state.<sup>114</sup> Carson and his colleagues were hailed as the greatest example "in the world's history... of patience and self-restraint..." The *Sentinel* proclaimed that over the previous two years "the Empire owes a debt of gratitude"

to Carson and Craig who "have so controlled events in Ulster, that a civil war has been averted."<sup>115</sup>

Orange-Canadian unionists, and Canadian Orangemen in particular, were not merely interested in events in Ireland during the Home Rule crisis, they were also active participants. Through moral and financial support, Orange-Canadian unionists wholeheartedly endorsed Ulster Orangemen in an armed resistance of British institutions which should have been contradictory to everything they professed. Orange Canadian support and fidelity to their Irish brethren was based not only on a distrust of British politicians, but also on an ethnic identification with their Irish Protestant co-religionists as being intrinsically British and Protestant, and therefore superior to Catholics. While Orange-Canadian unionists repeatedly avowed an unquestioned loyalty to the British Crown, their active support of the armed resistance by their Orange brethren in Ireland denoted a loyalty which would have been more accurately described as conditional. In the years that followed, while events in Ireland escalated to dramatic levels of violence, Orange-Canadian unionists continued to demonstrate greater fidelity to their Ulster unionist co-religionists than to the British institutions to which they professed such devout loyalty.

<sup>113</sup> Bew, *Ideology and the Irish Question*, 117.

<sup>114</sup> In fact, Carson was so revered in Canada that admirers could purchase statuettes of his likeness from the O.W. Dickens, Co. of Toronto. The *Orange Sentinel* advertised that supporters of Carson should, "Secure a Statuette of SIR EDWARD CARSON." The statuette was pictured with the likeness of the dour looking Carson fully enshrined, stating: "If you are a true Orangemen you will show your appreciation of this great man's work by displaying his likeness in your home." *Orange Sentinel*, 25 June 1914, 7.

<sup>115</sup> *Orange Sentinel*, 16 July 1914, 1.