

'Who are these people?'

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A Review of

David A. Wilson (ed.), *The Orange Order in Canada* (Four Courts Press: Dublin, 2007), ISBN978-1-84682-077-9, 213pp.

When I mentioned to my mother, a Canadian of English descent, that I was reviewing a book on the Orange Order in Canada, she expressed surprise that the organisation operated in her country. Her reaction is similar to that of the bemused onlooker, who turned to the book's editor David A. Wilson at the annual July Twelfth parade in Toronto in 2005 and asked 'who are these people?' (p.10). As for myself, I first became aware of the Orange Order in Canada when my reading of Joan Lingard's *The Twelfth Day of July* (1970) revived a childhood memory of attending a Highland dancing workshop in a room in Winnipeg that sported a mural of a long-haired man on a white horse. Sixty per cent of the world's Orangemen may have lived in Canada and Newfoundland at the Order's peak in the 1920s, but today most Canadians would only be aware of the organisation's existence from news reports from Northern Ireland.

This collection of essays is the product of the first conference ever to be held on the Orange Order in Canada. The first two articles place Canadian Orangeism in its international context. Donald M. MacRaild examines the Orange Order as a fraternal self-help society operating within the Orange diaspora around the world, while Eric Kaufmann offers a comparative sketch of Orange social and political power in Ontario, Newfoundland, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The book's focus then shifts to Canadian soil with particular emphasis on Orangeism in the province of Ontario. Ian Radforth's essay explores the troubled relationship between the Orange Order and the Crown through the case study of the first royal visit to Canada in 1860, which was made by the Prince of Wales (and future Edward VII). David A. Wilson delves into Thomas D'Arcy McGee's shift from militant opposition to the Orange Order to his encouragement of 'the political use of Orange influences, provided they were of the "right kind"'. (p.90) Brian Clarke's examination of the activities of the Orange Young Britons charts the pattern of religious riot as pastime in Toronto in the 1870s and 1880s. William Jenkins provides an examination of Toronto's network of Orange lodges in the early twentieth century. These four essays illuminate the activities of the Orange Order in Ontario, and Toronto, 'the Belfast of Canada', in particular, but such emphasis highlights the

need for more research into Orangeism in other parts of the country. (p.10)

The next essay provides some reassurance that such research is being undertaken. In it John Edward FitzGerald shifts the focus from central to eastern Canada with a study of the Orange Order's influence on Newfoundland's decision to join Canadian Confederation in the period 1948-9. As FitzGerald points out, the Loyal Orange Association was the most important fraternal organisation for Protestant males in the colony and (later) the Dominion of Newfoundland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, its intervention in the confederation debate proved to be the swansong of its influence in what was to become Canada's newest province.

An essay by Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, co-authors of *The Sash Canada Wore* (1980), charts the Order's decline since its peak in the 1920s when more than 2,000 lodges existed in Canada. Today 80% of these lodges no longer operate. Changes in the country have made it difficult for the Order to appeal to new members or to wield power and influence. Houston and Smyth note that 'Canada as a nation underwent a fundamental change of identity after the catharsis of the First World War and imperial sentiment waned as national self-confidence grew'. (p.187) As a result, the Order's monarchical and pro-British stance seemed dated, especially when an increasingly heterogeneous immigration policy led to the development of a more multicultural civic culture. As Canadian political culture modernised, religion became less influential in secular matters. The development of the Canadian welfare state also undermined the Order's role as a provider of sickness and death benefits to members. Thus, the values of an organisation founded in eighteenth-century Ireland have become increasingly irrelevant in twenty-first century Canada.

The collection's concluding essay will be of particular interest to postgraduate students and other scholars seeking research topics. In it Mark G. McGowan identifies five pathways for future research in the field of Orange Studies in Canada. First, researchers could pursue in depth investigations of the Orange Order in Canada in the twentieth century, the nineteenth century having been well served by previous studies. For instance, the development of a number of local and regional studies of the Orange Order in the twentieth century might lead to a more sophisticated understanding of the organisation's decline across the country. Secondly, researchers could take a socio-historical approach in order to explore 'the day-to-day life of the [Order] and its function among ordinary Canadian men, their families and their communities'. (p.195) They could examine the Order's function as a 'friendly' society and / or pursue

microstudies of Orangeism in rural areas. A third pathway for research is the study of the Orange Order's relationship with women and the family. The changing ethnicity of the Order offers a fourth area of investigation. McGowan notes examples of German, Italian and English immigrants joining the Order. Finally, scholars of Orangeism should utilise a new range of tools. They could examine the routinely generated records long employed by social historians, such as court records, wills or city directories. They could also use traditional sources in new ways in order to explore the 'collective' memory of the Orange Order and its image.

This engaging collection of essays successfully illuminates the current state of Orange Studies in Canada, expands our understanding of the Orange Order, and suggests potentially fruitful avenues for new research. It will be of particular interest to scholars of Irish, Canadian and Empire studies.