

Draft of a paper on “Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan: Irishman and Patriote”

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[Thanks to Marianna. Welcome in two languages. Word about “French-Canadian” terminology.]

I first met the man I’ll talk about today years ago while scanning lots of newspapers in English and French published in Quebec (or Lower Canada, as it was then) in the 1820s and ‘30s, during research on another subject. My attention was soon diverted, however, by the unfolding story of a reform movement in the Lower Canada Assembly led by its Speaker, the Honorable Louis-Joseph Papineau. Later known as the *patriote* movement, it grew larger and more militant throughout the 1830s, and finally ended up at the center of an armed uprising against the province’s British government in late 1837.

But what most caught my eye was the name O’Callaghan, which kept cropping up in this apparently French-Canadian saga. With a name like Fitzpatrick, I couldn’t wait to finish my other project and get back to Quebec to find out more about this unlikely Irishman, and what I found intrigues me to this day.

Born to a middle-class family in Mallow, Ireland, in 1797, Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan spent a few teenage years studying sciences in France, and then, in 1823, followed thousands of fellow Irish emigrants to the promising British territory of Lower

Canada. There he headed straight for Montreal and enrolled in a fledgling program for would-be physicians at the Montreal Medical Institution, forerunner of the McGill University Faculty of Medicine. In fact, his name in McGill's archives was the first concrete evidence I found of O'Callaghan's presence in Canada.

He received his physician's and surgeon's license in October, 1827, and a few months later opened a medical practice in Quebec, where the already well-established Irish population provided a likely clientele. By late 1828 he had become surgeon-in-residence at the Quebec Emigrant Hospital, and he and two other physicians opened a clinic in the port quarter of Près-de-Ville to serve indigent immigrants. He also took the lead over the next few years in several other activities aimed at improving the economic, educational and spiritual condition of the local Irish community. He co-founded a Mechanics' Institution and Library for workingmen in 1831, and in 1832 joined a group of other public-spirited citizens to form a Temperance Society, becoming one of its original officers. His most controversial activity was serving as secretary of a Committee of Management formed by Quebec's Irish Catholics who were trying to raise enough funds to buy a site and build a parish church of their own, following years of vain appeals to the bishop. When someone using the pseudonym "L'Impartial" published a bigoted letter in *La Minerve* attacking what he called "des Irlandais se disant Catholiques," describing them as foreigners determined to overthrow the established customs of Quebec, O'Callaghan fired back in the *Quebec Gazette*: "Irishmen styling themselves Catholics! ... "Base calumniator, do you dare impugn our right to the title of Catholics? – Have you ever read the History of that people on whom you thus presume to reflect?" He concluded melodramatically: "I tell you, Sir, and through you, all those who think after

your fashion and tread in your steps, that a Catholic universe, during a millennium of triumph could scarce repay unfortunate Ireland for what she has endured for her honorable adherence to the Catholic religion.”

Quebec’s Irishmen eventually won over the bishop, and in 1833 O’Callaghan got to see the new St. Patrick’s Church rise on the beautiful site he had helped select. I, too, had the good fortune to see the remains of that imposing edifice before its final destruction by fire a few decades ago.

But it was a different role that ultimately had the greatest influence on O’Callaghan’s future. Daniel O’Connell, known famously in Irish history as the “Great Liberator,” had run in County Clare for a seat in the British Parliament, and won. He well knew, however, that Catholics had never sat in the House of Commons because they could not in conscience take the required religious oaths. Now he was trying to test the enforceability of these oaths, and created so-called Friends of Ireland Societies among Irishmen worldwide to generate financial and moral support for his efforts. The first to answer O’Connell’s call in Canada were the Irish of Montreal, who formed a Friends of Ireland Society in September 1828, with another Irish-born physician, Dr. Daniel Tracey, as its secretary. . By O’Connell’s directive, there were no religious or national qualifications for membership. In October the Irish of Quebec followed suit, selecting Dr. Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan as their branch’s corresponding secretary.

In his first speech, O’Callaghan praised John Neilson, the Scottish-born Protestant publisher of the *Quebec Gazette*, for defending the Irish against anti-Irish slurs in two competing newspapers. He also offered a motion to pledge his Society’s support for a new newspaper about to begin publication in Montreal, the *Irish Vindicator*, whose

founder and editor was Daniel Tracey, O'Callaghan's counterpart as secretary of the Montreal Friends of Ireland. The first issue of Tracey's new *Vindicator* appeared on December 12, 1828, and thereafter O'Callaghan regularly used its columns to publicize his own branch's activities. When the French-Canadian vice-president of the Quebec Friends of Ireland drew up a petition to Parliament urging justice for Ireland's Catholics, O'Callaghan praised both the constitutionality of the group's goals and its ethnic and religious diversity. On the subject of religion he now said, "Let no man assert that the existence of the Friends of Ireland in this province has a tendency to disturb that religious harmony which exists among all classes of Christians. It can have none such as our sole object is to assist our Irish fellow-men in their constitutional struggle for the recovery of their religious freedom, and I am proud to testify that we are aided in that good work by many respectable members of society, who are neither Catholics nor Irishmen."

A nexus was now forming that would ultimately lead O'Callaghan into the orbit of Louis-Joseph Papineau and his *patriotes*. While Tracey's *Vindicator* paid due attention to the Friends of Ireland Societies, his editorials also hammered constantly on the resemblance between the Irish and Canadian political situations, and specifically between Daniel O'Connell and Papineau. Tracey was already at heart a full-fledged *patriote*; O'Callaghan would soon become one.

Just at this point events in England took a dramatic turn. In March 1829 Daniel O'Connell's battle appeared to be won when Interior Minister Sir Robert Peel, with O'Connell's approval, introduced two bills simultaneously in the House of Commons. One was a Relief Bill removing the last civil impediments from Ireland's Catholics -- exactly the reform O'Connell had been seeking. The other called for dissolution of the

Liberator's political mainstay in Ireland, the Catholic Association. Both bills passed, and on February 4, 1830, O'Connell took his seat without incident as the first Catholic member of the House of Commons. With the raison d'être for the Friends of Ireland Societies now moot, they too disbanded.

For Daniel Tracey, that meant freedom to shift virtually all his young newspaper's attention to Louis-Joseph Papineau's Lower-Canadian reform movement, based, like O'Connell's in Ireland, on the claim of his compatriots to their rights as British citizens. In the Canadas, Papineau argued that these were threatened by the power given to the appointed Executive and Legislative Councils by the Constitutional Act of 1791, giving the latter the right to veto any bill passed by the popularly-elected Assembly. The effects of this top-heavy structure were particularly iniquitous in Lower Canada, with its overwhelmingly French population. In light of his *Vindicator's* new focus, Daniel Tracey now dropped the word *Irish* from the paper's title, and declared in his New Year's Day editorial in 1830: "The cause of the people of Canada is now to us what that of Ireland was." Barely a year old, the *Vindicator* was already Lower Canada's most influential pro-reform English-language newspaper.

Papineau himself, having grasped the significance of cultivating Irish support, wooed Daniel Tracey to run in the 1832 election as the reform candidate from Montreal's notoriously volatile West Ward. Tracey's political credentials were already impeccable. He and Ludger Duvernay, editor of *La Minerve*, had already served time in jail for breach of privilege after they ran parallel articles detailing how the Legislative Council had ignored the Assembly's long list of demands ~~unanswered~~, vetoed its bills, and otherwise abused its power. Their incarceration turned the two editors into popular heroes to both

reformers and advocates of freedom of the press. At a rally for the jailed journalists held on January 19th in Quebec, where their sentence was being served, the three main speakers were Elzéar Bédard, M.P.P., Étienne Parent, editor of *Le Canadien*, and Edmund Bailey O'Callaghan.

The election later in spring 1832 saw an unusual level of violence in Montreal's West Ward, even by its own brawling standards. On May 21, one day before Tracey was declared the winner, soldiers sent to the polls by the city's magistrates ostensibly to "keep the peace" shot and killed three French-Canadians, giving the *patriote* movement its first genuine martyrs. Tracey's victory did much to solidify the Tracey-Papineau alliance and to popularize *le grand chef*, as Papineau was known, among the Irish of Montreal. But fate still had another card to play. Cholera, which had devastated Europe the preceding winter, had entered Quebec via the immigrant ships from Grosse Isle and soon spread to Montreal as well. Though it peaked there in mid-June and seemed to be on the wane, one of its last victims was the 39-year old *Vindicator* editor and Assemblyman-elect, Daniel Tracey, who died on July 18th, 1832.

While Papineau coped with the political fall-out from this tragic event, his friend, Edmond-Raymond Fabre, a well-known Montreal bookstore owner and warm supporter of reform, bought *The Vindicator* and with Ludger Duvernay's help, began the search for a new editor. After months of indecision and one ill-suited temporary appointment, they finally followed the advice of Étienne Parent of the *Canadien*, responded to the clamor of the Irish of both Quebec and Montreal, and offered the job to Edmund Bailey O'Callaghan, whose name as new editor appeared on the paper's masthead on May 7th, 1833.

The doctor-turned-journalist left no doubt from the start where his ideological sympathies lay. In his first editorial he noted that many European peoples had recently wrested control from corrupt oligarchies, and claimed that a similar erosion of public confidence was growing in Lower Canada, where increasing government suppression of the people's will was destroying the government's own legitimacy. O'Callaghan especially condemned the Council's effort to circumvent the Assembly's control over the public purse. He put himself on record as favoring one of the *patriotes'* most radical proposals, responsible government, or, "the gradual introduction of the representative or elective system of government throughout the country, satisfied," he wrote, "that the rights, the interests and institutions of the inhabitants cannot be deposited in safer hands than those of the people themselves."

The Lower-Canadian reformers were certainly familiar with the revolutions in Europe in 1830, but O'Callaghan instead emphasized the American revolutionary experience, arguing that the government's abuses in Lower Canada were threatening the colonial bond itself. To complement the *Vindicator's* masthead motto, "Justice to all classes – Monopolies and Privileges to none," he gave his own editorial column a new heading: "United We Stand – Divided We Fall." In one issue he featured the text of the American Declaration of Independence on the front page. In another he reproduced a portion of the successful resolutions to boycott British imported goods adopted by the Continental Congress in 1774.

Nor did he avoid risky subjects within the colony itself. On the anniversary of the killing of the three French-Canadians at the polls, he reminded his readers how the soldiers had killed the citizens they had been sent out to protect, and chided the clergy for

producing only one priest for the slain men's anniversary Mass. In another editorial he took to task the once-favored John Neilson of the *Quebec Gazette* for being too ready to compromise with the oligarchy, a weakness he called Neilson's "juste-milieu-ism." He accused the government in yet another issue of anti-French and anti-Catholic discrimination for expediting the approval of McGill University's Act of Incorporation while holding up the Collège de Saint-Hyacinthe's similar request for letters patent.

No question, the situation in the province was already tense. The government's ignoring of the reformers' grievances had propelled the *parties* into their first majority in the Assembly in 1832. Through their agent in London, the Honorable D.-B. Viger, they had been arguing since the mid-'20s against a rumored British plan to unite the two Canadas, but the mild reforms suggested in the 1828 report of a "Canada Committee" created by the Commons had never been implemented. Now, in frustration, the Assemblymen refused automatic funding of the governor's civil list. In 1833 they were heartened, as was O'Callaghan, by the news that Daniel O'Connell himself had undertaken their cause in the Commons and recommended making Canada's Legislative Council elective, but again nothing happened.

The governor, by then Lord Aylmer, convened parliament on January 7, 1834, but his throne speech showed no inclination to compromise. O'Callaghan characterized the dispatches Aylmer had received from the Colonial Secretary as paternalistic, even insulting. Papineau's party now used its new muscle to force referral of the funding issue for debate by the whole House, which met in February "to discuss the state of the province" – a euphemism for drafting a negative reply to the throne speech.

To open the debate, Assembly members compiled a list of all the grievances they had been accumulating all the way back to 1821 – a list that eventually numbered over a hundred items. They finally whittled it down to Ninety-Two Resolutions forming a major manifesto vigorously applauded by O’Callaghan. Faced with this document, Lord Aylmer gave up and prorogued this session of Lower Canada’s fourteenth parliament on March 18th, 1834.

“Ninety-Two Resolutions” now became the rallying cry for the “popular meetings” militant *patriotes* had already begun holding at various sites around the province, all of which O’Callaghan reported on in detail, regularly urging more Irishmen to participate. He presided at the largest St. Patrick’s party held in Montreal that March, which was virtually a *patriote* rally in itself. The guest of honor was Augustin-Norbert Morin, principal author of the Ninety-Two Resolutions. In Quebec, by contrast, the Reverend Patrick McMahon, pastor of the new St. Patrick’s, had attended a St. Patrick’s Day dinner offered by Governor Aylmer, and had shortly afterwards committed his considerable prestige and influence to the Tory cause. This so embittered O’Callaghan that the rift between the two men lasted well into O’Callaghan’s later years in exile.

Worse yet, word reached Canada in June that a private bill to create a Tory-controlled British-American Land Company to sell off unsettled lands in Lower Canada had been surreptitiously introduced in the Commons. O’Callaghan immediately denounced this as a ploy to seize the province’s revenue, reminding his readers that, as the pre-revolutionary Americans had said, “Taxation without representation is Tyranny.” Not at all coincidentally, he published a similar condemnation of the scheme by a new

pro-*patriote* organization, Montreal's Central and Permanent Committee, on the Fourth of July.

Despite all the protests from Lower Canada, word came in mid-July that the British Land Company Act had received the Royal Assent. After Lord Aylmer dissolved the Fourteenth Parliament and issued a new writ of election for October 1834, *patriotes* province-wide made acceptance of the Ninety-Two Resolutions *and* revocation of the Land Company Act the two absolute conditions for their support of any candidate. As all parties continued to compete for the allegiance of the Irish, one very effective *patriote* tactic, first used by the late Daniel Tracey, was to compare the famous Daniel O'Connell to their own Louis-Joseph Papineau, who by no means rejected the comparison. The claim that even *French-Canadians* revered O'Connell was no mere *patriote* ploy. In a grumpy letter to the Colonial Office, a businessman named Nathaniel Gould wrote: "It is astonishing how much the name of Daniel O'Connell is known and used among the Canadians. I have seen in the most distant situations little framed engravings of 'O'Connell the man of the People' suspended on the walls in juxtaposition with the Virgin and the Crucifix in the Bedchambers of the French Canadians."

Election violence again broke out in October at many polling sites, including the Montreal West Ward, where Papineau led the *patriote* slate against a Tory Irishman named Donellan. The Returning Officer finally closed the polls there in the face of outright rioting, but Papineau was eventually proclaimed the winner. In the Richelieu Valley village of Sorel, a French-Canadian named Louis Marcoux was shot and killed at his poll by a Tory named Isaac Jones, later indicted along with three others but never prosecuted. The heavily-French County of Yamaska provided one of the biggest

surprises, electing as its new Assemblyman one Edmund Bailey O'Callaghan, a political choice repeated all over the province. The final vote tally revealed that the bare majority the *patriotes* had enjoyed in the previous Parliament had become a landslide. From then on, even unanimous opposition from more moderate reformers and the few surviving Tories could not prevent passage of any bill favored by the *patriotes*.

Given the rapid growth of *patriote* militancy and hubris, some of Papineau's erstwhile friends now began backing away. In Montreal and Quebec, groups of prominent men of English and Scottish origin in Montreal and Quebec, notably including John Nielson, founded what they called Constitutional Associations. By now, so much republicanism had infiltrated the *patriotes'* rhetoric that the new groups could plausibly claim to be protecting the imperial bond itself. These groups also competed for support from the Irish, on the grounds of common language and British origin. Others, like Étienne Parent of *Le Canadien*, likewise had a nationalist take on the need to uphold the bond with Britain, but from a different perspective. He feared that if it were severed, the next likely step would be annexation to the U.S., in which case the French-Canadians would be submerged in an even larger sea of Protestant Anglophones.

The session of the new parliament finally convened by Lord Aylmer in February, 1835, lasted less than a month. The Governor reported in his throne speech that he had received no new despatches from London addressing the reformers' grievances. A committee including O'Callaghan, drafted a reply in which the Assembly threatened to hold up the entire supply bill until its demands were met. With no apparent solution in sight and now lacking an Assembly quorum, Aylmer prorogued the session on March 9,

naming a date in April to reconvene, but developments in both London and Quebec now changed the whole picture.

The Whigs and their pragmatic allies the Radicals (including Daniel O'Connell) at last ousted Peel's Tories from power. Even before that, the Commons had finally decided to send a commission to Canada to restore calm and try to find out what was really going on there. The much despised Governor Aylmer was recalled, and one Archibald Lord Acheson, Count of Gosford, was named Governor-in-Chief and head of the three-man commission. Their brief actually included both Canadas, since a fractious little reform movement was growing in Upper Canada as well, but the situation in Lower Canada was clearly the more urgent.

Lord Gosford's appointment came as very good news to the *patriotes*, particularly O'Callaghan. His Lordship came from an old, distinguished Irish family – Protestant, but militantly anti-Orange – and was said to be on good terms with Daniel O'Connell. He and his fellow commissioners arrived on August 23 to a generally wait-and-see attitude on the part of the *patriotes*, who, however, did not suspend their provocative public rallies. But as the new October date to reconvene parliament approached in October, they resolved to make their case calmly to the commissioners and hope for the best. O'Callaghan aimed a carefully-crafted column in the *Vindicator* of October 6 directly at Gosford, recalling how the Orange faction in Ireland had used religion as a divisive tool and drawing a parallel with the situation the governor was about to face.

“The object of the Tory, or Constitutional party, in CANADA,” he wrote, “is the same as that for which the Irish Orange faction are contending: – the subserviency of the majority to the minority.”

Equating anti-Catholicism in Ireland with anti-French bigotry in Canada, he concluded: “[T]hose who are determined to judge for themselves the truth of our position, without permitting those interested to blind them through their prejudices, will find, on examination that thousands here, belong to the *French* party who speak not a word of the French language, in the same manner as the Catholics of Ireland have many sincere friends and supporters, who are, at the same time, staunch Protestants.”

Gosford gave every indication of being as anxious as Papineau and the *patriotes* to get things off on the right foot, showing himself as open and approachable as Lord Aylmer had been the opposite. In his throne speech he promised that the commissioners would take the reformers’ grievances seriously and announced the favorable resolution of several small items they had found irritating. The Assembly’s reply reiterated the call for positive action on the Ninety-Two Resolutions, but, by its moderate tone, gave the new governor’s proclaimed good intentions the benefit of the doubt. Gosford then stunned the Assembly – and enraged the Tories – by delivering his response first in French, and only afterwards in English.

The atmosphere beyond parliament’s walls, however, was far different. In December, some 800 fanatical young Tories in Montreal formed a so-called British Rifle Corps, sworn to defend British lives and the “British connection,” which drilled nightly in the streets of Montreal, particularly near Papineau’s home. At the Speaker’s urgent request, Gosford refused their plea for arms, declared the constitution to be in no danger, and ordered the group to disband. The Rifle Corps complied but soon re-formed, changing only its name. It now called itself the Doric Club.

Then Sir John Colborne, Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, dropped a bombshell, devoting most of his throne speech in January 1836 to a diatribe against the Lower Canada Assembly, blaming its “evil majority” for wreaking havoc with immigration, investment, and other aspects of development in his own province. But Colborne warned that despite these miscreants, the constitution must and would be upheld. Lord Gosford was embarrassed, and Papineau, shocked at Colborne’s outburst. Not only was this attack by the head of one province’s government on the elected representatives of another unprecedented, but Colborne’s cocksure statement that the constitution would remain unchanged implied that London had already rejected the Ninety-Two Resolutions, drafted precisely to demand constitutional changes. Given Lord Gosford’s assurance of the commissioners’ open minds, Colborne’s assertion to the contrary caused dismay and confusion in the Assembly, which O’Callaghan moved to convene as a committee of the whole. Clearly it would be a lively debate.

And then the other shoe dropped. Colborne, recalled by London, had been succeeded as Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada by Sir Francis Bond Head, who released to his own province’s Assembly the previously secret instructions to the commissioners. The Speaker of U.C.’s Assembly promptly sent a copy to his counterpart Papineau, who was appalled by what he read. There in black and white lay the proof that the commissioners’ instructions from the outset had been to deny every major *patriote* demand while making unimportant concessions to preserve a façade of compromise. When the Assembly’s debate began, Papineau started reading into the official record item after item of damning evidence from the instructions: no Assembly control of the Hereditary and Territorial Revenue; total independence from the Assembly of judges’

appointments and salaries; no impeachment of judges except by the King; insistence upon a “proper” civil list; no dependence of the Executive on the Assembly; no control of the Assembly over the disposition of uncleared lands; and finally – in a separate despatch – no elective Legislative Council. In short, Colborne had been right. London had indeed already determined its answer to the Ninety-Two Resolutions: a resounding NO.

Gosford now lamely argued that his mission had not changed, but the damage was already done. Lower Canada had not had a normal budget for several years, while successive governors limped along instead on annual supply bills to get official salaries paid. Now the Assembly voted the supplies for just six months. Predictably, its action was immediately rejected by the Legislative Council, and on March 31, 1836, Gosford gloomily prorogued the session he had opened the preceding fall with such high hopes, his bond of trust with the Assembly irrevocably broken. As even more of Papineau’s former friends moved to the right, *le grand chef* looked increasingly for support to the Assembly’s radicals, of whom none was more loyal, or more radical, than the deputy from Yamaska. O’Callaghan’s militancy continued to startle even some of his fellow radicals – he now classified Lord Gosford with Dalhousie and Aylmer as an “enemy of the country” for spending the people’s money without their consent.

Factional tensions intensified throughout 1836, as protest rallies now multiplied everywhere to a new *patriote* rallying cry: “Six Months’ Supply.” The mostly-French crowd at one of the biggest gatherings in Vaudreuil took to heart a theme that O’Callaghan had already suggested in print and voted to boycott all imported British merchandise.

At this point we might note the names of three men involved in three apparently unrelated events that summer – men whose fates would cross again the following year during the *patriote* uprising:

Monseigneur Jean-Jacques Lartigue was named the first bishop of the new Diocese of Montreal. Although he was Papineau's and D.-B. Viger's first cousin, he was strongly anti-*patriotique*, like the rest of the hierarchy in both Canadas.

Wolfred Nelson, a prominent Richelieu Valley *patriote*, sought permission from the *curé* of Sorel to erect a monument in the parish cemetery to the memory of Louis Marcoux, the young man from that village killed during the election violence in 1834. The *curé* consulted his superior, Monseigneur Lartigue (still at the time a suffragan bishop), who eventually granted his approval, but only on condition that the monument's inscription bear no mention of politics. That of course was completely unacceptable to Nelson, who instead erected his monument, with a stinging inscription, on the public square of his own hometown, Saint-Denis.

Sir John Colborne, the recalled ex-Governor of Upper Canada, was in New York on his way home when he received a despatch from London promoting him to Lieutenant General and appointing him Commander-in-Chief of His Majesty's forces in Upper and Lower Canada, currently stationed in Halifax. So he turned around and headed back north to assume his new command.

In the parliamentary session convened on September 22, 1836, Gosford's speech, like the Assembly's reply, was temperate in tone but unbudging in content. Nothing had changed in London. There was nothing left for the Assembly to discuss. With matters at a

standoff, Gosford prorogued the session on October 4. This one had lasted just twelve days.

Assembly members now had all fall and winter to devote to other activities. In the usual pre-St. Patrick's Day scrum in March '37 between the Montreal Hibernian Society, of which O'Callaghan was still president, and the hostile Patrick's Lodge of Quebec, he wrote that the Quebeckers had had to reduce their quorum from 26 to 9 in order, he said, to pull in enough members "to make war, conclude peace, and enter into alliance with foreign states, &c."

But unbeknownst to the *patriotes*, the whole situation had just got much worse for them in London. The report of the Royal Commissioners had gone for consideration to the Commons on March 2nd. Its contents were in fact unexpectedly mild, including an admission that some of the Assembly's grievances, especially the executive's spending of the province's revenues without that body's consent, were indeed justified. Gosford, breaking with his colleagues, had even recommended that both Councils be liberalized to include more men sympathetic to the Assembly's popular majority. The report did, therefore, contain some seeds of possible compromise.

Any such hope was abruptly destroyed just four days later, when Lord John Russell, the current Home Secretary, laid before the Commons ten resolutions he had composed that were inimical to everything the reformers had ever demanded, and even to Gosford's mild attempts at reconciliation. The *patriotes'* allies in the Commons tried frantically to stem the tide they could feel turning against them, but in vain. One by one, Russell's caustic resolutions mowed down every single one of the *patriotes'* demands. By

March 9, 1837, their vision for Lower Canada – at least as a British colony – was officially dead.

But of course, popular momentum couldn't just be turned off like a spigot. When the London news reached Canada in mid-April, O'Callaghan printed the whole text of Russell's Resolutions in the *Vindicator*, and the following week addressed the situation in probably his most famous editorial. There is only time to read you the last short paragraph, which conveys the tone of the whole:

"Henceforth," he told his readers, "there must be no peace in the Province; no quarter for the plunderers. Agitate! AGITATE!! AGITATE!!! Destroy the Revenue; denounce the oppressors. Every thing is lawful when our fundamental liberties are in danger. 'The guards die; they never surrender.'"

O'Callaghan was proposing, in short, that if Britain insisted on governing Lower Canada in defiance of its elected Assembly's wishes, its inhabitants should make the colony ungovernable. On May 7th, he made the case in bold print for outright smuggling. He still insisted that all this was not a call to rebellion, but a plea for civil disobedience so massive that England *must* yield before rebellion became necessary. The same day at Saint-Ours, some 1200 ralliers proposed the creation of a 'Papineau Tribute,' like one Daniel O'Connell had enjoyed in Ireland.

Papineau was now more popular and his oratory more effective than ever. On May 15th, at Saint-Laurent, he gave what the historian Gerard Filteau called "le discours le plus retentissant de toute sa carrière." Anyone who thought Papineau was at heart a moderate would find no evidence to support that view in his two-hour speech, during which he lambasted Lord Gosford, denounced British treachery, exhorted boycott and

smuggling, praised American liberty, and warned of the consequences if England failed to heed the will of the Canadian people. Like O'Callaghan, he denied that he was calling for armed revolt, but warned England not to misconstrue the motives for his restraint – neither fear nor scruples, he said, but the fact that “l'heure n'a pas encore sonné.” But he reserved the right to change his mind.

In fact, everyone's game plan that summer and fall of 1837 seemed to be brinksmanship. In mid-June, Gosford issued a proclamation that fell just short of declaring martial law, and ordered it posted on every church door in the province. He commanded all the province's magistrates, peace officers and officers of militia to help keep the peace and enforce existing laws. Militia officers, many of them *patriotes* themselves, were among those who ripped down the declarations from the church doors in many parishes, for which they were punished with dismissal. Papineau himself was one whose commission was so revoked, based on his remarks at Saint-Laurent.

Eventually, worried by several ugly incidents ~~developments~~, the Governor ordered General Colborne to bring the 83rd regiment from Halifax to Quebec, where the troops arrived in mid-July. More would be ordered to other flashpoints during the ensuing months.

Lord Gosford's startled everyone in July by announcing that he planned to summon the Lower-Canadian Parliament back into session on August 18th, *comme si de rien n'était*. O'Callaghan could only express his bewilderment at this and warn his readers to remain on guard. It turned out that Gosford was simply obeying instructions from London directing him to issue the Assembly an ultimatum: either stop its obstructionism or face enforcement of the punitive Russell Resolutions. What no one in

Canada knew at the time was that the King had died on June 20th, the new young Queen Victoria had acceded to the throne, and on the 23rd, Lord Russell, on the grounds that her reign should not get off to an unpleasant start, had called for a delay in enforcing his own Resolutions. When word of this sudden lifting of the “coercion” threat finally reached Canada, however, it merely seemed like a vindication of the *patriotes*’ agitation-and-smuggling strategy, which they accordingly continued. Muskets, like liberty poles and homespun, now became a regular feature of their rallies.

Montreal’s deputies in the Assembly set the tone for parliament’s upcoming session, debarking in Quebec wearing an assortment of ill-fitting homespun garments described in mocking detail in Neilson’s *Quebec Gazette*. Lord Gosford’s throne speech, grim as expected, simply reinforced London’s demands. And that, said Gosford, was all the business he had. Once again the Assembly voted to limit the funding of supplies to six months, and repeated the list of its own grievances and demands. With all still in gridlock, Gosford prorogued the session on August 26th, fixing October 5 to reconvene, but in fact the Lower Canada Parliament never met again.

Developments now flew thick and fast. Late in August, young *patriote* activists in Montreal formed a paramilitary-style organization of their own called the Sons of Liberty to counter the Doric Club. On September 1, O’Callaghan threw caution to the winds and attacked Monseigneur Lartigue head-on for having ordered a *Te Deum* to celebrate Queen Victoria’s enthronement. Out in the rural areas, disturbances were breaking out regularly between opposing demonstrators, and some militants even organized themselves into so-called “people’s militias,” prepared to fight at a moment’s notice. In mid-October, at the

behest of a fearful Pierre-Dominique Debartzch, *seigneur* of Saint-Charles, Colborne moved troops to Trois-Rivières, the County of Two-Mountains, and nearby Sorel.

Calling it a Convention instead of a rally, the *patriotes* issued invitations for a huge gathering on October 23rd at Saint-Charles, where delegates from five surrounding counties would be asked to create an actual confederation. This *de facto* regional government – what we'd now call a “fact on the ground” – was to be empowered by and responsible only to the people. The first Resolution they voted was copied almost verbatim from the American Declaration of Independence. In response to a last-minute plea, the Convention delegates also voted that day to allow delegates from L'Acadie to join their number, and the alliance created at Saint-Charles went down in Quebec's history as the “Convention of the Six Counties.”

While O'Callaghan disingenuously described the Convention in the next day's *Vindicator* as “moderate in spirit, given the times in which we live,” the *patriotes'* enemies well understood the grave significance of what had just happened. Bishop Lartigue issued a *mandement* that same day admonishing the faithful not to be lured into rebellion against the established order on the pretext that they belonged to the “people souverain.” He warned that anyone who engaged in violence or took up arms in the *patriote* cause should not receive absolution. Tory politicians and their allies, the Constitutionalists, were disappointed when a rally they too had planned ~~a rally~~ for October 23rd on Montreal's Place d'Armes drew less than a third of the number who rallied at Saint-Charles.

The first physical confrontation occurred just two weeks later on November 6, when the Doric Club and the Sons of Liberty clashed in the streets of Montreal, and the

uprising was on. The Sons of Liberty seemed to get the best of the stone-throwing and shooting that occurred on both sides, but scattered and fled towards Saint-Laurent when word came that the magistrates had read the Riot Act and called up the Royal Regiment and Artillery, now fast approaching. The Dorics then surrounded and damaged Papineau's house, and were driven off by troops only after what Papineau's son Amédée later called an unconscionable delay. From there, they proceeded to Sainte-Thérèse Street, where they broke into and plundered the *Vindicator* office, destroying its presses and dumping the remains in the street.

That same day, Lord Gosford wrote to the Secretary of State about the alarming spread of "the poison that the agitators have been scattering," notably at Saint-Charles, and predicting worse to come. Colborne wrote that day to Upper Canada's Sir Francis Bond Head that "in fact the counties between Longue[ueuil] and the upper part of the Richelieu are in a state of revolt." Three days later he would move his own headquarters from Sorel to Montreal. Still on the 6th, the *curé* of Saint-Charles despatched an urgent letter to Gosford, saying his whole area was in chaos and pleading for the government to make at once any concessions it ever planned to. He warned Gosford not to count any longer on local pastors to rein in their flocks, who, he said, would soon form a single voice demanding reparation of the Canadians' grievances.

In Montreal, some Sons of Liberty were rounded up, then released on bond. On November 8th, Papineau sent his younger son and daughter to safe haven with relatives in Verchères. In Quebec, arrest warrants charging advocacy of sedition were issued against several members of that city's *patriote* Permanent and Central Committee. The biggest question on everyone's mind was, What would Papineau do now? He alone had

the stature to make a pronouncement for or against open rebellion likely to be heeded by all the *patriotes*.

On November 13th, Lord Gosford suddenly replaced all moderate Montreal magistrates and other officials with hardline loyalists and announced imminent arrests. That same night, Papineau, to his friends' and family's great relief, at last slipped out of Montreal in disguise under the noses of patrolling troops. From accounts in Amédée's *Journal*, we know his father joined up late that evening with O'Callaghan, also in disguise, and the two spent the whole next day making their way by back roads to the home of a sympathetic farmer in Saint-Marc on the Richelieu. O'Callaghan insisted forever after that his and Papineau's flight had been meant, not to unleash an uprising, but to prevent one. In a letter written years later to François-Xavier Garneau, who reprinted it in his *Histoire du Canada*, O'Callaghan placed the blame for the uprising squarely on Gosford and the Tories. O'Callaghan was convinced they had deliberately provoked the violence to have an excuse to crush the *patriote* movement and civil liberties in Lower Canada once and for all. He told Garneau: "We, my friend, were the victims, not the conspirators; and were I on my death bed, I could declare before Heaven that I had no more idea of a movement of resistance, when I left Montreal and went to the Richelieu River with Mr. Papineau, than I have now of being Bishop of Quebec."

The two friends had in fact escaped just in time. On November 16th Gosford, at Colborne's urging, issued arrest warrants on charges of High Treason for 26 Montreal-area *patriotes*, including Papineau, O'Callaghan, Duvernay, and Thomas Storrow Brown. Two wanted *patriotes* were hunted down and captured at Saint-Jean, but were rescued by fellow militants in an ambush near Longueuil, leaving wounded on both sides. Thomas

Storrow Brown, the “general” of the Sons of Liberty, was drafted at a secret meeting of the *patriote* leaders to play the same role at Saint-Charles, where he installed his headquarters in the now-abandoned mansion of the Honorable P.-D. Debartzch.

Colborne, enraged by the Longueuil incident, decided to attack the *patriotes* at two of their strongest points, Saint-Denis and Saint-Charles. At his orders, a reinforced regiment in Sorel set out on the night of November 22 for Saint-Denis, little knowing that the two most wanted men in the province, Papineau and O’Callaghan, were spending the night there with Wolfred Nelson, and would escape on horseback just before the troops attacked late the next morning.

What actually happened at Saint-Denis on November 23rd has been disputed by historians ever since. Sworn depositions given by at least two persons physically present that day give directly contradictory accounts. One said that Wolfred Nelson went out after breakfast to make sure all his militia’s arrangements were in place, and then returned and begged a reluctant Papineau to leave, arguing that his leadership would be desperately needed later, whatever the outcome of the battle soon to start. In the other version – supported by Nelson himself – Nelson had never come back home that morning, but Papineau and O’Callaghan on their own took flight towards Saint-Hyacinthe ahead of the soldiers’ arrival, leaving Nelson, Saint-Denis and the whole *patriote* movement to their fate. Whatever the truth, everyone agreed that Wolfred Nelson and his militiamen fought that day with extreme bravery. The only sour note was the stabbing of an army advance scout, Lieutenant Weir, by his *patriote* captors, who brandished his bloody sword before the invading troops. Saint-Denis would pay a high price a few weeks later for that stupid act of braggadoccio. By the end of the battle on the

23rd, the British troops, surprised and in disarray, were forced to retreat, leaving behind 30 of their dead to the *patriotes*' 13. A jubilant Nelson despatched word to Saint-Charles and Saint-Eustache: the *patriotes* have won at Saint-Denis!

Papineau and O'Callaghan, meanwhile, successfully hid out for several days in Saint-Hyacinthe, awaiting developments, but all the subsequent news was bad. Greatly outnumbered and inadequately supplied, Brown and his militia in Saint-Charles were routed by the British troops, who then burned many of the town's buildings. Just a month and two days after the great Convention there, the victorious government troops seized its Liberty Pole, still bearing its inscription, "À Papineau, ses compatriotes reconnaissants," and paraded it scornfully through the streets of Montreal.

On December 1st, Gosford issued warrants for eleven patriote leaders still at large, offering a £ 1000 reward for Papineau's capture and £ 500 pounds each for O'Callaghan and the others. Already charged with high treason, these men were now also wanted fugitives. Like hundreds of other *patriotes*, they would grope their way towards the American border as best they could, dodging Tories, troops and now bounty hunters. Meanwhile, the troops who had been humiliated at Saint-Denis returned with reinforcements to attack that town once more on December 2nd, putting it to the torch as its inhabitants tried frantically to surrender. In a final gesture of vengeance, they reduced to rubble the monument that Wolfred Nelson had defiantly erected in the town square the year before to the memory of the slain *patriote* martyr from Sorel, Louis Marcoux.

As they raced for the border, Papineau and O'Callaghan remained together as they had been since their escape from Montreal. Their final desperate push took place on the night of December 4, when they crossed Missisquoi Bay from the hamlet of Alburg to

Swanton, Vermont, where at last they were safe, though now in exile. Their harrowing escape was described by Robert Christie, an enemy of Papineau during *patriote* times who later became his admirer, in his *History of the Late Province of Lower Canada*. Comparing O'Callaghan to Aeneas's faithful companion in the *Odyssey*, Christie described him as truly Papineau's "Fidus Achaëus."

Gosford declared martial law throughout the whole Montreal district on December 5th. On the 14th Colborne himself led the attack on the last remaining *patriote* stronghold, Saint-Eustache, leaving much of it in flames, as did his troops nearby Saint-Benoît the next day. For all intents and purposes the rebellion was now over. Wolfred Nelson's brave battle at Saint-Denis had been the *patriotes'* only victory.

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In the few brief moments left I'd just like to sum up how I think the *patriote* saga might have been different had it not been for O'Callaghan.

First: Although Papineau had consistently based his own arguments for reform on the rights of British citizens, I believe it was O'Callaghan's emphasis on the Irish model and Daniel O'Connell's example that *kept* his chief focused squarely on ideological rather than national principles.

Second: I'm very sure that O'Callaghan's introduction of American revolutionary vocabulary, icons and tactics into the *patriote* mix would not have occurred without his influence. Papineau, by class, background and temperament, would almost certainly have turned instead to the more socialistic French republican model.

Finally, I do believe that for good or for ill, perhaps even unwittingly, the two men egged each other on to greater heights of radicalism than either might have reached alone, especially towards the end.

What one can say for certain about Edmund Bailey O'Callaghan and Louis-Joseph Papineau is that from about 1833 on, neither ever had a closer friend than the other, and that their names should go down in Quebec's and Canada's history as the two were so long in life -- together.

Thank you.