

The Montreal Irish and the Great War

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This paper began as an inquiry into the response of the Irish of Montreal to the Easter uprising of 1916 in Ireland. Did the rebellion and, more importantly, the executions which followed adversely affect the attitude of the Irish community of Montreal to King and country? Was there any protest or disaffection? Did the widespread opposition to conscription in Ireland find an echo here? How did the Montreal Irish react to the introduction of compulsory military service? How did they vote during the 1917 general election when conscription was the principal issue?

The only evidence to be found of Irish disaffection in Montreal during the Great War was the pro-German statements made by a solitary Irishman. These were made shortly after the Easter rebellion while the executions were being carried out. A worker for the Grand Trunk Railway, he was supposed to have insulted Britain and to have threatened to provide American friends with the schedules of ammunition trains. He was charged with sedition but released by the judge with a reprimand. The judge agreed with the defence that the Irishman had been unduly provoked by British neighbours.¹

All of the other evidence concerning the behaviour of the Irish in Montreal during the Great War points in the opposite direction. Their first reaction to the war occurred very early. During the month that immediately followed the declaration of war a committee of 12 assembled to organize an Irish regiment for the Canadian militia. The principal organizer was a successful, 36-year-old lawyer, H.J. Trihey. A graduate of Loyola College, Trihey had captained the Montreal Shamrocks to the Stanley Cup.² Other members of the Committee included the Honourable C.J. Doherty, the Conservative Member of Parliament for St. Ann's and Minister of Justice in the Borden government, and Father Gerald McShane, the pastor of St. Patrick's Church.³

On the first Sunday after the declaration of war, Father McShane had urged his parishioners to avoid being carried away with the excitement:

¹ *The Montreal Daily Star*, June 22, 1916. (Hereafter referred to as the *Star*.)

² *The Montreal Gazette*, Jan. 12, 1916. (Hereafter referred to as the *Gazette*.)

³ *The Irish-Canadian Rangers*, (Montreal: Gazette Printing Co., 1916), p. 12.

Brethren, if our leaders could speak to us here, they would urge us to remain quiet and prove our patriotism by the calm and undisturbed performance of our every day duties.⁴

Authorization for a militia regiment was received before the end of August. Trihey was named its commanding officer and he selected its number and name: the 55th Regiment, The Irish Canadian Rangers. Its badges would be distinctly Irish, featuring a shamrock on the cap and a harp on the collar. In its first appeal for recruits, the Regiment specified “Irish descent” as a necessary qualification.

It is planned that the latter shall be absolutely a sine qua non. There will be no religious or other lines drawn, but the Regiment will be purely Irish Canadian in the best sense of the word.⁵

The choice for its headquarters, however, was not in keeping with the regiment's Irish character; it was an old Presbyterian church on Stanley street.⁶

There was another distinctive feature about the Irish Canadian Rangers in 1914. It was not being raised to fight overseas. In keeping with Father McShane's advice, Col. Trihey emphasized that the purpose of the regiment was strictly home defence.⁷

The initial reaction to the war by the leadership of the Montreal Irish community seems to have been influenced by -the situation in Ireland. When war was declared, John Redmond, the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, announced that the campaign for Home Rule would be suspended. He also urged Irishmen to volunteer for this just war. Father McShane endorsed Redmond's position in his first sermon on the war. Redmond's policy was also specifically supported at “a mass meeting” which was held in St. Ann's Hall on September 12. An Irish M.P.P., a former Irish mayor, two Irish aldermen and C.J. Doherty were present.⁸

The Irish in Canada were well acquainted with the personalities and policies of the Irish Parliamentary Party. The Honourable Charles Murphy

⁴ *Gazette*, August 10, 1914.

⁵ *Ibid.*, September 2, 1914.

⁶ P.A.C., RG 24, Vol. 4461, File 4D, 6-55-1.

⁷ *Gazette*, September 8, 1914.

⁸ *Ibid.*, September 14, 1914.

of the Liberal Party of Canada and former Secretary of State in the Laurier government corresponded with the Irish Party regularly and his correspondent, T.P. O'Connor, provided weekly letters for the Canadian press. In his first war letter to Murphy, O'Connor wrote,

Ireland is standing splendidly and unanimously with Redmond in support of the Empire in fighting the present struggle which, in my opinion, is one for Liberty, the principal (*sic*) of Nationality, and a lifting from the back of Europe of the menace and the horror of a Military Autocracy in Germany.⁹

According to the press, the response to the Irish Canadian Rangers' recruiting campaign was very good. The ranks of the four companies were soon filled and each was drilled on alternate evenings. Only the Adjutant, Major John Long, had any military experience, although Lt. Col. Trihey attended officer's school in Halifax and was confirmed in his rank in the spring of 1915.¹⁰

That summer the Irish Canadian Rangers raised a company for the 60th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. "C" Company was commanded by Captain E.H. Knox-Leet, a native of Dublin who had been a Major with the Rangers. Major Long became the battalion's adjutant and the eldest son of Lord Shaughnessy, Captain Fred Shaughnessy, commanded "A" Company. The rate of volunteering for the Irish company was the same as that for the other three from the Victoria Rifles, the Grenadier Guards and the Westmount Rifles.¹¹

In addition to raising a company of the 60th, the Irish Canadian Rangers also supplied volunteers to the Montreal Home Guard, a battalion made up of men from local regiments. This "composite" battalion protected strategic installations like locks on canals.

Montreal newspapers continued to pay considerable attention to events in Ireland during the first two years of the war. Readers could learn of pro-German opinion expressed by many Irish American organizations and their condemnation of John Redmond and Home Rule. The story of Sir Roger Casement's attempt to form an alliance with Germany was covered along with the German efforts to raise an Irish Brigade from among captured Irish soldiers.

⁹ T.P. O'Connor to C. Murphy, August 11, 1914. P.A.C., Murphy Papers, MG 27 111 B 8, Vol. 22, p. 9876.

¹⁰ *Gazette*, April 11, 1915.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, June 24, 1915

There was no attempt by Canadian authorities to censor the news from Ireland, if the news originated in Great Britain. The Chief Press Censor of Canada was of the view that “all matters relating to the Irish question which is [*sic*] permitted transmission by the cables is considered as acceptable by the Imperial authorities.”¹² He was much more concerned with Irish news originating in the United States and eight Irish American newspapers were banned because of their German sympathies.¹³ He made clear his reasons for permitting one Irish American journal to use the mails in a letter to someone who had wanted it banned.

The Editor of “Ireland” is an old Montrealer, an acquaintance of mine and I believe yours also. He is an intense and patriotic Irishman, but he believes in obtaining redress of Ireland’s wrongs by constitutional methods and political campaign. He is a staunch supporter of John Redmond and, consequently, has no sympathy with the revolutionary element which has associated itself with the enemies of the Empire.¹⁴

The organization in Montreal which was suspected of having sympathies with Irish Republicanism was the Ancient Order of Hibernians. Some might have had their suspicions confirmed when 1200 of the Order and its friends paraded to commemorate the “Manchester Martyrs” in November, 1915.¹⁵ Yet a week later there were public statements from the Order’s executive that it might break away from the American organization because of its pro-German policy.¹⁶ And in the St. Patrick’s Day parade of 1916, the Union Jack was in the colour party, “which in past years has been conspicuous by its absence.”¹⁷

The news from Ireland in the fall of 1915 focused on conscription. Just as in the case of Quebec and Canada, unfavourable comparisons were being made between Ulster and the rest of Ireland. The number of men of military age in the four provinces was cited and then compared to the number of actual volunteers. Some Irishmen from the south complained that Ulster was permitted its own distinctive badges while the division from the south was not; nor was it allowed its own colours. When the Asquith government

¹² E.J. Chambers to Capt. A.F. Coventry, July 11, 1917. P.A.C., RG 6E, Vol. 613, File 289, p. 8.

¹³ P.A.C., RG 6E, Vols. 491 and 492.

¹⁴ E.J. Chambers to J. Morgan, August 17, 1916. P.A.C., RG 6E, Vol. 525.

¹⁵ *Gazette*, November 22, 1915.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, December 2, 1915.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, March 20, 1916.

announced it was going to introduce compulsory military service, John Redmond replied that the Irish Parliamentary Party would oppose it. As 1916 began, conscription was made law in Great Britain, but not in Ireland.

It was during the controversy over volunteering and conscription in Ireland that it was decided that the Irish Canadian Rangers would raise an overseas battalion for the Canadian Expeditionary Force. It was to be called the 199th Battalion, Irish Canadian Rangers. Thirteen years later, at a regimental reunion, one of the officers recalled the reason for the decision, “the 199th was established at a time when the loyalty of the Irish to the Crown was open to question.”¹⁸

The first task was to obtain a complement of officers. Trihey was appointed commanding officer. Almost all of the officers were volunteers from the 55th Regiment. Most were Roman Catholics and most had been born in Montreal of Irish descent. Father William Hingston of the Society of Jesus and Loyola College became the battalion chaplain. His brother had been with the 55th and was now serving with the 60th battalion overseas. Four of the officers were Loyola old boys. Generally speaking, the officers of the 199th battalion were involved in business, finance and the professions and boasted fine Montreal addresses. This group of Irish Montrealers had done very well for themselves. One was the younger son of Lord Shaughnessy. Only one officer, however, had any military experience. He was Major Knox-Leet, who returned from France where he had been commanding “C” Company of the 60th battalion.¹⁹

The next task was to recruit and train the noncommissioned officers. The battalion had little difficulty finding volunteers and judging by the names as they appeared in the newspapers, the majority were of Irish descent. There was more military experience here, since some had served in the wars of Empire. One had been with American forces in the Philippines and one had fought with Pancho Villa.²⁰

By the spring of 1916 the Irish Canadian Rangers were ready to launch their general recruiting campaign. If such could have a theme, it was Irish unity, the unity that had been achieved by Irishmen in Canada. To celebrate St. Patrick’s Day, and to raise money for the Rangers, a concert was sponsored by the St. Patrick’s Society and the Irish Protestant Benevolent Society. It was the first time in 60 years that both societies had met together. One of the recruiting posters for the battalion featured a map of Ireland with the four provinces, proclaiming “All in One,” “indicating,” according to the

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, September 12, 1929.

¹⁹ P.A.C., RG 11, B4, Vol. 9.

²⁰ *Gazette*, April 27, 1916.

Montreal Gazette, “that the 199th Irish Rangers were the Canadian exemplification of this new United Ireland.”²¹ The same idea was enshrined in the battalion motto “*Quis Separabit*,” Who Shall Separate Us? When Sam Hughes gave the battalion permission to recruit in Ontario, he explained it was “so that the Orange of Ontario could don the Khaki and fight shoulder-to-shoulder with the Green of Quebec,”²² almost as if the colour khaki was produced by blending orange with green. Just prior to their departure overseas, the Irish Canadian Rangers received a second chaplain, a Methodist to serve in the same unit with the Jesuit.

A second appeal to the Irish to volunteer was similar to the one that had been made by D’Arcy McGee during the Fenian raids fifty years before, “[to] give the highest practical proof possible that an Irishman well governed becomes one of the best subjects of the law and of the sovereign.”²³ Such was the theme of Sir Charles Fitzpatrick’s address when the Rangers received their colours: “is it not the duty of Irishmen to show that he (*sic*) appreciates good government when he gets it?”²⁴ In a later address, the Chief Justice of Canada stated, “We Irish have not done badly here” and asked, “Who is the head of the greatest railway in the world? Who is the Minister of Justice in Canada? And what am I?”²⁵

By an extraordinary coincidence, the Irish Canadian Rangers began their campaign to fill their ranks on April 24, Easter Monday, 1916, the very day of the Dublin uprising. For the next three months, while Irish Canadians were being called on to enlist, the newspapers carried stories of the uprising, its suppression, the declaration of martial law, the executions and the trial and hanging of Sir Roger Casement. The impact that this had on recruiting is very difficult to assess. Father O’Gorman of Ottawa, who had recruited on behalf of the battalion in that city, believed that the events in Ireland had a detrimental effect on volunteering.²⁶ Also, in the view of that old Montrealer who edited the Irish American newspaper acceptable to the Canadian censor, “The officers were all Irish-Canadians, but after the Maxwell regime was entered upon Ireland it was difficult to fill the ranks from the same source.”²⁷ After six months of intensive recruiting, the battalion was still 100 men

²¹ *Ibid.*, April 14, 1916.

²² *Ibid.*, July 18, 1916.

²³ T.D. McGee, “Canada Considered as a Whole,” *Ibid.*, December 9, 1865.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, June 16, 1916.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, July 28, 1916.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, March 23, 1917.

²⁷ *Ireland*, January 20, 1917, p. 10. Clipping in P.A.C., RG 6E, Vol. 525, J-2.

short,²⁸ and, according to a Montreal publisher, “it has been a complete failure.”²⁹

With the failure to fill the ranks, the Irish Canadian Rangers’ recruiting campaign became more extensive and intensive. Recruiting officers campaigned in the Richelieu and Chateaugay valleys, in the Eastern Townships and in Ontario. This brought an objection from the Mayor of Toronto, who declared that anyone from that city who joined a Montreal battalion would lose the insurance policy paid for by that municipality. As the full complement of men failed to materialize the tactics became more intense. At some rallies civilians were insulted. On one occasion this led to a near-riot in Place d’Armes. It began when a soldier was addressing a noonday crowd and was confronted “with continual heckling, and several men starting counter addresses, speaking in French opposing recruiting.”³⁰ Fights followed. A policeman tried to arrest a Private Flannigan, but the constable was knocked down. The recruiting party then headed back to barracks. They were overtaken by two cars of policemen, two of whom apprehended Private Flannigan and the officer in charge. Several soldiers then drew their bayonets and a general melee ensued involving the police, soldiers and onlookers. The Rangers made it back to barracks, some with torn uniforms, but with all men accounted for. The Irish Canadian Rangers seemed to be living up to the Irish reputation alluded to by an M.P. from Ireland who declared in an address to the battalion, “Whatever else we Irishmen may be, we are not bigotted worshippers of peace.”³¹

In August 1916 the Irish Canadian Rangers learned they were to have a royal patron, Her Royal Highness, the Duchess of Connaught, wife of the Governor-General. New badges were issued, incorporating the new name of the battalion, The Duchess of Connaught’s Own Irish Canadian Rangers. She personally embroidered the unit’s camp flag and presented it in October. On that occasion the troops were inspected by the Duke of Connaught, who also addressed 65 veterans of the Fenian raids, a campaign in which His Royal Highness had participated. In addressing the Irish Canadian Rangers, the Duke of Connaught declared, “You have one of the finest battalions I have ever reviewed in Canada.”³²

²⁸ *Gazette*, October 28, 1916.

²⁹ N. Murray, “The Catholic Church and the War,” *Current History: A Monthly Magazine of the New York Times*, October-December, 1916, p. 94.

³⁰ *Gazette*, August 25, 1916.

³¹ P.A.C., RG 9, 111, D1, Vol. 4703, Folder 78, File 25.

³² *Star*, October 12, 1916.

Neither a royal patron nor royal flattery worked to bring the battalion to complete strength. The cause was not helped by the behaviour of the Quartermaster. This entrepreneur was selling the men's civilian clothes to a junkman instead of storing them until the men returned. He was also pocketing the proceeds from the sale of kitchen scraps instead of putting the money into the men's mess fund. The Quartermaster was put on charge and dismissed from the battalion.

Although events in Ireland may have tempered the enthusiasm of Irish Canadians towards enlisting, it is impossible to measure. In fact, the decline in recruiting in Montreal between the end of April and the end of November 1916 was paralleled in every other military district in Canada.³³ The problems encountered by the Irish Canadian Rangers duplicated the experience of other battalions in other districts at the same time. According to a Department of National Defence study made during the Second World War, the cost of living was increasing rapidly during the period but military pay remained unchanged. Industrial wages were rising, so the heads of working class families could not afford to enlist.

Another problem associated with the condition of the working class which may have prevented the filling of the ranks was the poor state of physical fitness of many of the volunteers. After three months of recruiting, about 1,000 men who had volunteered to enlist with the battalion had failed to pass medical board tests.³⁴ In later weeks as many as three out of four were rejected. The Rangers presented a button to those who were refused on medical grounds. The button proclaimed "I offered to serve."

Towards the end of November, the Irish Canadian Rangers were ready to be inspected prior to departing for England. The confidential report of the Inspector-General did not reflect the glowing praise of the Governor-General the month before. On November 21, the Rangers were still 200 men short and 66 were absent without leave.³⁵ One company sergeant major was under arrest, yet was allowed to appear on parade under arms. The Inspector-General had to argue with Colonel Trihey in order to have the matter redressed. Almost no officers had military experience and the Inspector-General concluded, "On the whole the unit is only fit for drafts and will require a lot of work to make them fit at that."³⁶

³³ Canada, Department of National Defence, Directorate of History, Branch Discussion File, Recruiting-General, 112.352009 (D27) May 41/Mar. 42.

³⁴ *Gazette*, July 31, 1916

³⁵ *Report of the Annual Inspection, 1916, of the 199th Overseas Battalion, C.E.F.*, November 21, 1916. P.A.C., RG 24, Vol. 1646, H.Q. 683-282-5.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Despite the report, the Irish Canadian Rangers prepared to leave for overseas in December. In a farewell address, their honorary Colonel, C.J. Doherty, repeated the recruiting campaign theme, “you show that in this country all races and creeds live together in amity.”³⁷ Several weeks later, just before leaving, the Rangers received their Protestant chaplain. Major Reverend J. Smyth was the Principal of Wesleyan Theological College.³⁸ Earlier, he had tried to enlist with the Rangers as a private but had been rejected as physically unfit. With two chaplains, the Rangers then symbolized an Ireland united.

It was decided to show off this feature of the Irish in Canada in the Irish Canadian Rangers’ first tour of duty overseas. It was literally a tour, a tour of Ireland. The Canadian-born Colonial Secretary, Andrew Bonar Law, requested the tour from Prime Minister Borden, “With a view of helping recruiting in Ireland.”³⁹ Bonar Law was also curious about the religious composition of the Rangers and was informed that it was 65% Roman Catholic.⁴⁰

The Rangers left Halifax on December 21, spent Christmas at sea and arrived in Liverpool at the end of the month. That Christmas was also Colonel Trihey’s thirty-ninth birthday. Any celebration must have been dampened by the news that ten minutes after leaving Montreal his Westmount home had been gutted by fire. His wife and family would have to live at the Ritz Carleton until the house could be rebuilt.

That was not as devastating as the news that awaited in England. Four days after arriving, Trihey learned that the Irish Canadian Rangers were to be disbanded and used as reinforcements.⁴¹ The decision was not directed against the Rangers in particular but was general policy towards all recently raised battalions. However, those involved with raising the Rangers believed they had a special case. Both the Minister of Militia and the Minister of Justice in the Government of Canada had promised that they would fight as a unit under their own officers and colours. Even the battalion motto had dared to ask “Who shall separate us?” With the Minister of Justice as their honorary Colonel, the Rangers had influence. Doherty appealed to the Prime Minister, who pleaded in turn with the Minister of Overseas Military Services. The latter admitted “These Irish questions are difficult,” but

³⁷ *Gazette*, November 24, 1916.

³⁸ P.A.C., RG 24, Vol. 4493, 48-199-1, MO's Nos. 4 and 5.

³⁹ Bonar Law to R. Borden, October 30, 1916. P.A.C., Borden Papers, MG 26 H, Vol. 85, File OC 418, p. 43763.

⁴⁰ Letter to A. Bonar Law, November 2, 1916. *Ibid.*, p. 43767.

⁴¹ *Gazette*, July 3, 1917.

difficult or not, the decision stood.⁴² Trihey and his second in command resigned their commissions and returned home.

The Irish Canadian Rangers were kept together for one last campaign, the tour of Ireland. For public relations purposes Father Hingston was promoted to Major so that he would not be outranked by a Protestant counterpart. From January 25 to February 2, the battalion visited Dublin, Belfast, Armagh, Cork and Limerick. The men were wined and dined by the municipal corporations and other dignitaries, except that the City Council of Belfast specified that no intoxicating beverages were to be served when the Rangers visited that city. The unit was inspected by the Lord-Lieutenant in Phoenix Park and the officers were entertained by Cardinal Logue, the Primate of Ireland. The speeches repeated the themes of unity and sacrifice for a just cause. The Reverend Smyth read the lesson when the Rangers attended divine service at St. Patrick's Cathedral, the first time a Methodist had done so, it was reported.⁴³

Shortly after the return to England, the Irish Canadian Rangers lost their royal patron. The Duchess of Connaught died three days before St. Patrick's day. To many her death must have symbolized the death of the battalion. The day after her death the distinctive badges of the officers were being returned to Canada.⁴⁴ "L.M.' stood for Louise Margaret," Major Reynolds wrote to the War Records Office, "and 'D.C.O.' for the Duchess of Connaught's Own." Some officers attended the funeral.

The Irish Canadian Rangers remained a regiment in the Canadian militia after the war. But it was a unit on paper only. In 1922 W.J. Shaughnessy, now its Lieutenant Colonel, wrote the authorities that since the war there was "little or no enthusiasm" and that a reorganization of the regiment "appears to be hopeless"⁴⁵. Seven years later, at a battalion reunion, Major M.J. McCrory declared that he was against "revitalizing" the regiment, as the times were different: "We are now free to interest ourselves in purely Canadian affairs."⁴⁶ On February 1, 1936 the Irish Canadian Rangers were formally disbanded.

⁴² G. Perley to R. Borden, January 30, 1917. P.A.C., Borden Papers, *op. cit.*, p. 43818.

⁴³ *Gazette*, January 29, 1917.

⁴⁴ E.T. Reynolds to Officer i/c Canadian War Records, March 15, 1917. P.A.C., RG 9 III DI, Folder 78, File 26.

⁴⁵ Lt. Col. W. Shaughnessy to A.A. and Q.M.G., September 23, 1922. P.A.C., RG 24, Vol. 4461, File 4D, 6-55-1.

⁴⁶ *Gazette*, September 12, 1929.

The initial disbanding of the 199th Battalion in 1917 left a bitter taste with some. After he returned to Montreal, Trihey wrote a public letter to the *New York Post* which was reprinted in the *Montreal Gazette* and translated for the readers of *Le Canada*. He reviewed the history of the unit and the broken promises. Towards the end of the letter he referred to the intention of the Canadian government to raise 100,000 more men by compulsory military service and the attitude of Irish Canadians. According to Trihey, the Irish Canadian realized that Ireland was under martial law and occupied by an army of 150,000 which used machine guns against

those of his kinsmen who believe Ireland to be a small nation worthy of freedom. He wonders if the conscripting of 100,000 more Canadians would still be necessary if the 150,000 men comprising the English army in Ireland were sent to fight in France.⁴⁷

Trihey concluded by writing that if conscription became law, “Irish Canadians will loyally observe the law, for they are Canadians.”⁴⁸ The military authorities believed that the letter contravened the King’s Regulations and Orders, but C.J. Doherty intervened to prevent any action’s being taken.

Six weeks before Trihey’s letter appeared, the headline in the *Montreal Gazette* had read, “Canada to Raise 100,000 by Compulsory Military Enlistment on a Selective Basis.”⁴⁹ The issue was not new to Irishmen. Ireland had been exempted from conscription in the United Kingdom and the Irish in Australia had played a large role in defeating the proposal in a referendum. The man who introduced the bill to Parliament and the man who would be responsible for administering the law in Canada was the Minister of Justice and Member of Parliament for St. Ann’s, the Honourable C.J. Doherty.

In 1917 the Irish character of St. Ann’s was more symbolic than real. The constituency had been represented by an Irish Member of Parliament since Confederation, but the Irish were not a majority in the constituency. The electoral district numbered over 50,000 people, but only 8,000 were listed in the 1921 Census as Irish.⁵⁰ The electoral boundaries had been

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, July 3, 1917.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, May 19, 1917.

⁵⁰ *Census of Canada*, 1921, Table 26, p. 367.

redrawn for the 1917 election, and with the addition of Verdun to St. Ann's, the Irish made up only 16% of the total population.

Nevertheless, all of the candidates in St. Ann's in 1917 were Irish. Doherty campaigned on behalf of the Union Government. The Liberals were blessed with two candidates who claimed they represented the party. One was a former Member for St. Ann's and a former city alderman, Daniel Gallery. He insisted that he had been nominated at a meeting of 56 Liberals in April.⁵¹ But the Liberal organization refused to recognize the results and organized another convention for October. That meeting elected the man who in July had declared he would run as "the anticonscription candidate," Dr. J.J. Guerin.

Despite the French name, Guerin was decidedly Irish. The family was Huguenot in origin and had moved to Ireland in the seventeenth century. Part of the family became Roman Catholic, so that when Dr. Guerin's father arrived in Montreal in 1844, he came as an Irish Catholic.⁵² In 1910 Dr. Guerin had been elected mayor of Montreal. He would be Montreal's last Irish mayor.

Gallery, in the meantime, continued to claim that he was the properly nominated Liberal. He refused to recognize the legitimacy of the October convention and only when his supporters failed to break up the meeting did he not allow his name to be placed in nomination. After the convention, he began to call himself the "Labour-Liberal candidate."⁵³

As the 1917 election approached in Canada, the news from Ireland continued to make the headlines. The formation of the Lloyd George government, the inclusion of the Unionist leader Edward Carson, and the growing talk of partition animated the Irish of Montreal. Large meetings were held to support Home Rule. Over \$1,500 was raised to help support the families of Irish prisoners still in jail and the Ancient Order of Hibernians recovered their ancient fervor, refusing to enter St. Patrick's Church during the celebration of St. Patrick's Day because Father McShane had displayed the Union Jack.⁵⁴ Public memorial services were held for John Redmond's brother, Captain William Redmond, who had been killed at the front. The solidarity between the Montreal Irish and the Irish Parliamentary Party continued to be displayed.

⁵¹ S. Letourneau to W. Laurier, April 28, 1917. P.A.C., Laurier Papers, MG 26 G, pp. 195376-9.

⁵² T. Guerin, *The French Guerin's of the Glen*.

⁵³ *Gazette*, November 26, 1917.

⁵⁴ *Gazette*, March 26, 1917.

Yet the prospects for that party seemed to be fading. Captain Redmond had been a member of the Irish Parliamentary Party and the Member of Parliament for East Clare. His death necessitated a by-election. It was won by Eamon de Valera, the third successive electoral victory for Sinn Fein in the spring and summer of 1917. As the Irish Convention assembled in Dublin in July to try to resolve the Irish question, opinion in Ireland continued to polarize. The dream of a united Ireland under Home Rule began to fade and with it the Irish Canadian conviction that their experience in Canada offered the resolution for the problems in Ireland.

The fall of 1917 brought the Canadian election campaign. The meetings at which the candidates in St. Ann's spoke were rowdy. Hecklers were well organized, disruptions were frequent and attempts were made to break up meetings. Occasionally the police had to be present. Doherty's main argument was that reinforcements were necessary to maintain the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Without them, Canada would have to quit before the job was done. The reinforcements could only be obtained by selective compulsory military service which, according to Doherty, was much more just than the version of conscription that Laurier had included in his government's militia act.

Guerin appealed for loyalty to Laurier, claiming that he was true to Canadian autonomy while Borden took directions from Downing Street. According to the Liberal candidate, conscription had been introduced because the British had demanded it. On several occasions there was an Irish dimension to the contest; Laurier's position was compared to Redmond's and on one occasion a French Canadian Liberal argued that Borden's policy was similar to British coercion in Ireland. The Liberals in St. Ann's also claimed that they were the party of the common people, charging that the Conservatives represented the privileged, the profiteers and the titled.

The man who called himself the Labour-Liberal candidate concentrated on local issues, supporting Laurier's position on conscription. He argued that he had brought public works projects to St. Ann's when he was in Parliament, while Doherty was preoccupied with the country as a whole. Gallery frequently denied that he had been paid to run and split the Liberal vote. One of his meetings brought the best exchange of the campaign. Introducing a metaphor into his remarks Gallery declared, "When you build a house you need an architect."

A Voice – 'You need a foundation first.'

Another Voice – 'Not in Griffintown.'

Gallery's appeal was to no avail; he obtained only 323 votes. He did not split the Liberal vote and Guerin collected over 4,000 votes. But Doherty got over 2,000 more than that, winning his largest majority ever and obtaining more votes than his two opponents combined.

Thus St. Ann's, the Montreal constituency popularly associated with the Irish of that city, voted for the Union government and conscription in 1917. It became one of the three ridings in Quebec to elect Unionists in the most divisive of Canadian general elections. The other two constituencies were St. Antoine, which elected Sir Herbert Ames, and St. Lawrence-St. George, which returned C.C. Ballantyne. When the military votes were tabulated, Doherty had secured the largest majority of the three. His victory was decisive.

Had the Montreal Irish really voted for the Union government and conscription? With only 16% of the constituency could their votes be identified? According to the *Montreal Gazette* they did. In a poll-by-poll, street-by-street analysis, the newspaper claimed that Guerin had obtained the bulk of his support from French Canadian areas and that Doherty had won the Irish vote.⁵⁵

The years of the Great War might be said to mark the centennial of the Irish in Montreal. It had been almost 100 years since the Irish began to arrive in that city in large numbers. The history of the Irish of Montreal during the Great War demonstrates several facets of that community. It continued to be very visible. The Irish had their own churches, their own public schools, a college, a hospital ward called St. Patrick's in Hotel Dieu, the Shamrock Amateur Athletic Association and many other voluntary organizations. The Irish could pray together, study together, march and fight together, play games and suffer together in Montreal. As Sir Charles Fitzpatrick said, and as the occupations of the officers of the Irish Canadian Rangers indicated, some of the Irish had done very well in Montreal. But as the 1917 election in St. An's revealed, many more continued to live in the working class neighbourhoods of Point St. Charles, Griffintown and Verdun. The Irish remained divided according to those who lived above and below the hill. Those who lived below the hill responded much less enthusiastically to the call to arms in 1916, though whether because of events in Ireland or because of the cost of living is impossible to say. They were certainly typical of Canadians in all regions during that period of 1916.

Events in Montreal during the First World War also indicated that the Irish continued to identify with those who spoke their language rather than with those who practiced their faith. From the fistcuffs at recruiting rallies

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, November 26, 1917.

in Place d'Armes and Victoria Square to the polling booths of St. Ann's, the Irish made the marks that distinguished them from French Canadians. When Quebec and Canada seemed to polarize in the 1917 general election, St. Ann's voted with St. Antoine and St. Lawrence-St. George.

Finally, the Irish of Montreal remained identifiable by their continuing concern for Ireland. In the half century after Confederation many Irish Canadians had offered to Ireland and the Imperial authorities the example of how differences between Irishmen could be overcome and maintained loyalty to the crown in the Canadian model of self-government. The Irish Canadian Rangers were a declaration of that tradition, perhaps its ultimate assertion in the willingness to sacrifice one's life. But events overtook both the Rangers and Home Rule, and in the words of Major McCrory in 1929, the Irish of Montreal were "now free to interest [themselves] in purely Canadian affairs."⁵⁶

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, December 18, 1917