

# MIDIS DU CIEQ

DE L'UNIVERSITÉ LAVAL

**JEUDI 26 MARS 2015 à 12h**

Université Laval, Pavillon De Koninck, local 3244

## EMBERS OF STRIFE: D'ARCY MCGEE, SECTARIAN CONFLICT AND THE FUTURE OF CANADA

Une conférence de **David A. Wilson**, professeur, University of Toronto

This paper presentation examines D'Arcy McGee's approach to Orange and Green tensions in mid 19th-century Canada. When he arrived in Montreal in 1857, McGee had already come out strongly against the Orange Order and revolutionary Irish nationalism. During his first years in the country, he viewed Orangeism as the greatest threat to the «new nationality» that he hoped to establish in Canada. The Orange Order, he argued, was a deeply divisive secret society which fanned the flames of religious conflict, and which opposed improved separate school legislation for English-speaking Catholics. With the rise of the Fenian Brotherhood, however, McGee increasingly believed that revolutionary Irish nationalism was an even greater danger to the country. He saw Fenianism as a conspiratorial, irreligious, immoral and counterproductive movement, which would set back the cause of reform in Ireland and produce an anti-Catholic backlash in Canada. As a result, he adopted an uncompromising anti-Fenian strategy that was intended to marginalize and isolate revolutionary Irish nationalists in Canada. At the same time, he came to feel that a compromise was possible with moderate elements of the Orange Order, in both the building of Canada and the attack on Fenianism. In taking this position, McGee angered many moderate Irish Catholics, and was deeply hated by the Fenians – to the point at which he was assassinated by a Fenian in 1868. His status as «Canada's martyred Celt» stimulated Canadian nationalism, and heightened his reputation among constitutional Irish nationalists. But he remained a hate figure among the Fenians, and was treated with suspicion among many Orangemen. The «embers of strife» had been half-extinguished, but they did not disappear.

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