

# Scotland's top defence lawyer exposed as a Protestant bigot

## The Orange Order's continued influence at Rangers FC

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On Scottish Cup Final day this year Rangers Football Club beat their Glasgow rivals Celtic 1-0. The same evening, Rangers vice-chairman Donald Findlay attended a celebratory function in Ibrox Park, his team's ground. There Findlay, Scotland's top defence lawyer, was captured on video leading the singing of sectarian anti-Catholic songs. The *Daily Record* newspaper led with the news in its Monday June 1, 1999 edition and Findlay quickly resigned as Rangers' vice-chair.

Findlay is a leading member of the Conservative Party in Scotland and was the public face of the Tory campaign against Scottish devolution. As a lawyer, he has defended loyalists who have murdered, or attempted to murder Celtic supporters.

Football has long been used as a vehicle through which to foster and encourage sectarian antagonisms in the working class. Throughout this century, the three major Scottish cities have had rival Protestant and Catholic football teams, through which sport became a vehicle for the poisonous influence of religious and social bigotry. Most notorious was the rivalry between Celtic and Rangers. Both clubs built enormous stadiums late last century. The sporting antagonism was added to by Rangers flying the Union Jack, while Celtic hoisted the Irish tricolour. Similar, though less developed phenomena, could be seen in cities hosting rival teams like Manchester (United and City) and Liverpool (Liverpool FC and Everton).

Although the Orange Order in Scotland has ostensibly kept out of politics, on several occasions right wing Protestant politics has emerged as a force in Glasgow and Edinburgh. In 1923 the Church of Scotland produced a report called "The Menace of the Irish Race to our Scottish Nationality". Church

ministers, the Orange Order and the Conservative Party (more correctly, the Conservative and Unionist Party) began lobbying against Irish immigration, which was portrayed as a threat to job security — an image reinforced amongst skilled and semi-skilled Protestant workers by immigrants being used as a low-wage unskilled workforce. The campaign railed against state support for Catholic schools and did its utmost to secure the defeat of Catholic Labour MPs.

In 1931, in conditions of economic crisis, and in the aftermath of Labour's notorious decision to form a National Government under Ramsay MacDonald, the Scottish Protestant League won seats on Glasgow City Council. An even more vitriolic anti-Catholic Party, Protestant Action, won six seats on Edinburgh council in 1936, driving Labour into third place and winning 30 percent of the vote. Protestant Action formed a paramilitary wing, the Kaledonian Klan, and organised large anti-Catholic demonstrations in Edinburgh. A Protestant gang-leader from Glasgow formed a section of Oswald Moseley's British Union of Fascists.

The Labour Party and the trade unions have not distinguished themselves in their attitude to sectarianism. While workers have continually fought to erase ancient divisions, the Labour bureaucracy has provided yet another vehicle for both Protestant and Catholic chauvinism. In *Where is Britain Going?* Leon Trotsky noted the willingness of particular Scottish Labour leaders to defend the rights of the Scottish Protestant Church, some going as far as threatening to annul the 1707 Treaty of Union. ILP member and one-time left Tom Johnston gave space in his newspaper *Forward* to the leadership of Protestant Action.

In other areas, Labour became much like an

exclusively Catholic party. During their long political reign in Scotland, Labour has traditionally received the support of the Catholic Church. This is bound up with Labour's defence of separate schools for Catholic children, as well as the clique relations they established in local government. As late as 1995, a scandal erupted when members of Monklands District Council in Lanarkshire were accused of favouring a traditionally Catholic area for social spending, at the expense of a neighbouring traditionally Protestant town. Similar issues were posed in Glasgow itself, which was notoriously run by a "Catholic Mafia" of Labour bureaucrats with close ties to various building companies and Celtic FC.

During the postwar period, Orangeism remained a significant influence in Scotland until the demise of the heavy industries, where it found its constituency within the relatively more privileged layers of workers. The nationalisations of the 1950s and 1960s undermined the direct relationship with Protestant or Tory employers. The new electronics industry, which has grown up since the 1970s, with its global ownership and production process, is indifferent to the intricacies of religious discrimination and simply wants low wages for everyone.

Orangeism has dwindled, and is mostly confined to Rangers supporters, but nevertheless retains a membership of around 25,000. Among Rangers followers, moreover, there is considerable support for the loyalist paramilitary killers of the Ulster Volunteer Force and Ulster Defence Association. Until fairly recently, no Rangers player could have a Catholic girlfriend, and no Catholic ever played for Rangers until 10 years ago. Rangers player Paul Gascoigne was disciplined when he imitated playing a flute at one match — a reference to the flute bands used to head the Orange marches intended to intimidate Catholic areas. Andy Goram, formerly a Rangers goalkeeper, appears to enjoy hobnobbing with loyalist paramilitaries in Belfast, according to several press reports. Three years ago the entire team was warned not to sing the Orange anthem, "The Sash", in their dressing room after winning another trophy.

The Findlay affair exposes the pretensions of Rangers owner, millionaire David Murray, to have eliminated religious bigotry from the club. Such claims are quite clearly only for public consumption. Murray and his

counterparts and business rivals at Celtic see the sectarianism previously encouraged by both clubs — which has led to several deaths and countless stabbings — as an obstacle to the profits to be made from global TV rights to screen soccer matches.

So Findlay resigned, unrepentant, angry only at having been caught out. The response to this from within the city's social elite has been most informative. A defence campaign of other lawyers has been formed to oppose any attempts to discipline Findlay by his professional body — the Faculty of Advocates. St Andrew's University, where Findlay is rector, has decided to merely delay granting him the traditional honorary degree. The Students Association at the university has given him unqualified support.

The general approach seems to be to hope the affair will blow over. Findlay can get away with a mild censure, and the dignified business of administering Scottish justice and making immense profits out of selling sectarianism wrapped up as football can continue as usual.

#### Sources:

1. Leon Trotsky, *Where is Britain Going?* New Park 1978
2. Elaine MacFarland, *Protestants First*, Edinburgh University Press 1990
3. Tom Gallagher, *Protestant Extremism in Urban Scotland*, in *Modern Scottish History* Vol. 4, Tuckwell Press 1998



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