

Unit 10: Video 1 Transcript

Q1: Introduction

A: I'm Ian Radforth. I teach History in the Department of History at the University of Toronto. I've been at the University of Toronto for more than 30 years now. I teach in a number of areas: the History of Immigration to Canada, the, I teach a course on Political Issues in Canada, I teach on spectacles in the Canadian past and well, I've done—I teach a Social History course at the graduate level.

My research areas have moved quite a bit over time. I began as a labour historian and did research on Northern Ontario and the bush workers who worked in the forest industry up Northern Ontario. I was interested in the transformations in their world over the course of the 20th century. And then I went back and looked at the 19th century for woodworkers in Ontario, a very important occupational group in Canada in the 19th century and Ontario in the 19th century, certainly.

I moved from there to working on state formation, particularly in the mid-19th century in central Canada.

And then I got interested in cultural history and the particular angle I took was on public spectacle, and I wrote a big fat book called *Royal Spectacle* on the first royal visit to Canada. That took place in 1860, and it was a visit by the Prince of Wales, Queen Victoria's eldest son. He later became King Edward the VII, and he traveled from Newfoundland through the Maritime colonies and through Quebec and Ontario, and then through the United States. And I followed him on his tour and talked about the way in which communities tried to greet him and represent themselves to him, and how the press played up all kinds of conflicts that developed along the way.

Q6: How did the 1860 British royal visit to Canada impact the general populace?

A: I've done a lot of research on the first royal visit to Canada, which occurred in 1860. The visitor was the 18-year-old Prince of Wales, Albert Edward, known as Bertie to many. He eventually became King Edward the VII after Queen Victoria died. But in 1860 he was just a young man and he traveled from

Newfoundland through Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and the Province of Canada before going on to make an unofficial tour of the United States.

This tour was a huge media sensation in 1860. People were amazed to think that a member of the royal family was coming all the way across the Atlantic. It was seen as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for people to actually see a real live prince. There was much excitement that perhaps the prince, who was an 18-year-old and not yet married, might find a bride here in North America. And many young women were anticipating his visit with great hopes that one day they could become Queen of England and Empress of the Empire and so forth. This was—so there was much anticipation about the visit.

And communities across all the colonies went to great lengths to prepare for the visit, to decorate the streets. They built these enormous arches over the streets, many of them decorated with evergreen boughs and many of them with symbols of royalty, symbols of Canada like the beaver and the maple leaf, and so forth. They developed programs to entertain him and to help explain who they were to the prince. I was particularly interested in the way in which local identities were expressed to the prince on these occasions. These were concocted events. They were planned ahead of time. They weren't spontaneous in any way. And yet people did put a lot of thought into just how they wanted to be seen by the world.

And so you get a lot of seriousness about how we're a hardworking, sensible people, deeply devoted to the Crown, deeply respectful of Queen Victoria who's the world's most perfect woman and most perfect mother. And they go on and on in this way. But inadvertently they also sometimes showed other aspects of themselves, aspects that they didn't mean to show.

And newspaper reporters traveled with the prince and reported on the events in major newspapers, *The Times of London*, the *New York Times*, all the big Canadian newspapers sent journalists across the colonies to report on what happened. And very often they'd write critical reports. They'd say, oh, the decorations were rather dowdy and they looked like they'd been used before. They'd remark that the fireworks display, which was supposed to be so splendid actually, you know, fizzled because of the rain. Or they'd say the people got broke, and they clearly aren't industrious good citizens. And

many of the English-speaking reporters talked about the French-Canadians as being phony loyalists at this time, you know, we can't really believe that their shows of loyalty are in earnest.

The biggest conflict actually occurred, though, in Canada West, later Ontario, and it involved the Orange Order which was the largest voluntary association in Canada West at the time. This was an organization of men, a fraternal organization, who showed deep respect to the Crown and a belief in the Empire. But it was also respect for the Crown as worn by a Protestant, and it promoted Protestantism and was intensely anti-Catholic and certainly anti-Papist. It was opposed to the power of the Pope, who was seen as a foreigner intruding on the freedoms of the British. When the prince traveled through Quebec he was greeted by members of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. They, of course, were very powerful figures locally in Quebec, and it only seemed right that they should have an opportunity to greet him and to show their respect. And he showed his respect to them by visiting their institutions, their schools and hospitals and churches. The Orangemen didn't like that. The Orangemen of Upper Canada, or Canada West, were outraged at the way in which the prince was, in their eyes, made to show this respect for Catholic institutions. And so they decided to demonstrate. They decided that they would come out in huge numbers, from all across the countryside and assemble in places, particularly Kingston to begin with, because that was one of the first places that the prince would visit. And they came out to greet him by the thousands. The prince arrived at Kingston on a steamboat, and as he pulled into the harbour on a bright, hot sunny day, he saw just massive orange banners and Orangemen singing their songs and beating their drums and playing their fifes.

His advisor said this won't do. His advisor was the Duke of Newcastle, the Colonial Secretary, the member of cabinet in London who was responsible for the colonies. And he traveled with the prince to make sure the prince didn't get into any political troubles, any political embarrassments. And he said the prince cannot visit a place where the Orangemen are making this kind of show. This is an institution that is highly partisan, and an institution that causes us great harm in Ireland. And so the prince will not visit any town where the Orangemen put on a show. He will not travel under any arch of

welcome that the Orangemen raise. He will not recognize them in any way.

The Orangemen of Kingston were outraged by that and said: “but this is what Upper Canada is. It’s mainly a place for Orangemen to celebrate the freedoms under the British Crown. That’s who we are. You must recognize us.” But the prince did not. The prince did not land. He spent two days in the harbour on his steamer, waiting to go ashore, hoping that the Orangemen would disburse. But they refused to do so. The steamer then went on its way along to Belleville. The overnight trains took the crowds of Orangemen from Kingston to Belleville, so they could greet him there. Once again, the prince couldn’t land, and he had to proceed onwards.

This was very embarrassing to authorities in Canada. And the Americans loved to play up the trouble that was being caused and later on they were only too happy to point out how smoothly the royal visit went when the prince went to cities in the United States. And it was these “crazy Orangemen” who caused so much trouble. So this was one of the, in a way, the most deeply troubling moments of the visit but also one of the most interesting moments of the visit when identities were really put on display. And people got behind that veneer of loyalty and formality that had been established at the start.