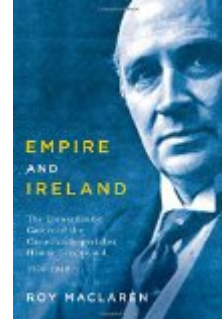


Roy MacLaren. *Empire and Ireland: The Transatlantic Career of the Canadian Imperialist Hamar Greenwood, 1870-1948.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015. 420 pp. \$44.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-7735-4548-9.



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Ireland's decade of centenaries is upon us. The period from 1912 to 1923 is among the most analyzed in all of Irish history, and governments, academics, and private organizations have already begun to observe each hundredth anniversary as it occurs. Commemorated events thus far have included the 1912 signing of the Ulster Covenant, the 1913 Lockout and the formation of the Irish Citizen Army, the commencement of the Great War in 1914, and Irish participation in the Battle of Gallipoli in 1915. Next year's remembrances of the 1916 Easter Rising will no doubt dwarf all these, and it will be fascinating for historians and sociologists alike to see how tributes to the complicated memories of the War of Independence (also known as the Anglo-Irish War) and the Irish Civil War will unfold through the end of 2023.

It is fitting, therefore, that a key Canadian figure from these most celebrated of Irish times is being recovered from historical obscurity. The Honourable Roy MacLaren's *Empire and Ireland* is a well-written, informative biography of Hamar

Greenwood, a Canadian ex-patriot who saw the British Empire as a progressive, enlightened body capable of great things in the early twentieth century. Greenwood was born in small-town Ontario soon after Canadian Confederation and always maintained strong ties to the dominion; however, he became better known on the other side of the pond as an avid advocate of Irish Home Rule in the pre- and post-Rising period, eventually serving as chief secretary for Ireland from 1920 to 1922 in Lloyd George's cabinet. This meant that a Canadian was in charge of British rule in Ireland during some of the bloodiest times in Irish history since the days of Cromwell or the wars of religion in the seventeenth century. Greenwood's time in office included the infamous actions of the Black and Tans, Bloody Sunday, the partition of the island, and the onset of the Irish Civil War.

As MacLaren highlights, Greenwood's position as an outsider was a possible asset: his status as a Canadian meant he could not be dismissed as yet another indifferent or hostile Englishman sent to deal with the Irish. Greenwood himself noted,

"I am a Canadian Home Ruler. I was born in a Home Rule country. My appointment is a sign—and is intended to be a sign—of the British Government's earnest desire to settle the Irish question along Home Rule lines once and for all" (p. 156). From the 1880s through 1914, these words would have found a ready Irish audience. The tragedy of this statement, of course, is that Greenwood's arrival in Ireland with this pro-Home Rule philosophy was nearly a decade too late. While Home Rule continued to be the preference for Ireland's future among Irish Canadians, it was a dead issue at home: republicans would never accept the limits of Canadian-style dominion status after the overwhelmingly pro-Sinn Féin results of the 1918 general election, while Ulster Unionists retained their deep suspicion of anyone who attempted to sever their ties with Great Britain through any measure of independence. Greenwood, as portrayed through MacLaren's retelling of his life, faced a Sisyphean task in governing Ireland.

As a Canadian colonial at the center of Irish-British relations during one of the twentieth century's more turbulent decades, a biography of Greenwood has the potential to expand on current schools of thought in a variety of disciplines, including Canadian imperialism; postcolonialism; Canada's position within a transatlantic paradigm; and the intersections of these themes with class, violence, and gender. Greenwood had an intriguing friendship with William Lyon Mackenzie King; the two men met at the University of Toronto but took very different paths in their approach to "liberal imperialism." The monograph includes a number of intriguing primary sources, and uses insights into personal lives, such as Margo Lady Greenwood's political ambitions and her one-time adulterous relationship with Lloyd George, to illuminate the complexities of British public policy while Greenwood was chief secretary. Indeed, acting as Lloyd George's private confidante on affairs in Dublin while her husband presented the public

face of the administration, Lady Greenwood was often more of a statesman than her husband.

Unfortunately, this biography's potential to engage in the larger thematic context surrounding Greenwood falls somewhat short. MacLaren presents his subject through the lens of a standard, traditional biography with chapters devoted to Greenwood's childhood and schooling and his post-Ireland career, to his death in 1948. He rarely deviates from this broad chronological sweep in order to place Greenwood's achievements and political philosophies on British imperialism within a more nuanced framework, or to take on current scholarship, be it in Canadian, imperial, or Irish studies. While there are numerous pertinent secondary sources listed in the bibliography, there is relatively no engagement with them in the text itself, crippling any thematic insights into Greenwood or his relevance to social, political, or cultural histories. This was an extremely complex period throughout the Atlantic and British worlds, full of duplicitous political negotiation and longstanding intolerances, but MacLaren's approach reduces these episodes of violence and schism to a progressive list of dates, names, communiqués, and committee meetings. He summarizes nineteenth-century Ireland—from the Famine to the Fenians and William Gladstone's attempts at securing Home Rule—in a single sentence, while there is no specific reaction from Greenwood to the horrors of Bloody Sunday or its following reprisals, which were perhaps the most notorious episodes to have occurred during his tenure as Ireland's chief secretary.

The chapters about the Greenwoods time in Ireland make up the most interesting and, not surprisingly, longest period described in the biography. However, his place as a Canadian ex-patriot politician before, during, and after the Great War is also discussed. Greenwood was one of a handful of Canadians who made their presence known in British and Irish political circles in the early twentieth century: Edward Blake, Andrew Bonar

Law, and Max Aitken (Lord Beaverbrook) also had to overcome their colonial status in order to enmesh themselves in Tory-Liberal affairs in London, Dublin, and Belfast. What is surprising, therefore, is the relative lack of scrutiny from a Canadian perspective about how Greenwood—as a “liberal imperialist” (a wonderfully Canadian oxymoron on par with “progressive conservative”)—compared to fellow Canucks in the heart of the British Empire. Closer to home, the disparities between Greenwood’s interpretation of Canada’s place within the empire compared to those of Mackenzie King are hinted at, but never thoroughly unpacked in what might have been a compelling comparison, with Ireland and the empire serving as paradigms to better understand two Canadian players on the world stage in the 1920s.

In MacLaren’s defense, he is critically hampered by the lack of private papers available to him from his main characters, as the Greenwoods’ personal papers and diaries were destroyed in the London Blitz. Furthermore, the biography at no time claims it is attempting anything like an interdisciplinary analysis of Irish or Canadian histories. This makes this recovery of Greenwood from the forgotten annals of history an interesting endeavor, but rather underwhelming in terms of its greater potential. It is a solidly written historical biography, crafting a careful reconstruction of Greenwood’s life. Any future historian examining Greenwood’s time in Britain or Ireland will find this biography to be an invaluable resource, but it is unfortunate that, like its subject, it could have had a much more effective and far-reaching impact given different circumstances.

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