

"Terrible Orange and Government Riot at Middlesex," *The Constitution*, 19 July 1836.

Elections were far from orderly affairs in pre-Confederation Canada. In 1836, for example, Lieutenant-Governor Francis Bond, Head of Upper Canada, purportedly encouraged the Orange Order to intimidate supporters of Reform candidates in the hope of securing a Tory victory.

[Please note that all unconventional spelling and punctuation has been preserved, while incorrect spelling is followed by '*sic*'.]

TERRIBLE ORANGE AND GOVERNMENT RIOT AT MIDDLESEX.

[From the St. Thomas' Liberal.]

It is painful to reflect on the desperate character of the low, Orange Irish; and it is painful to reflect on the palpable neglect of duty, and the total disregard of riot and bloodshed manifested by our Tory Magistrates, and *State-Paid* Ministers of the Gospel, during the Election, who if they did not all directly encourage the miscreant mob to act of riot, bloodshed and MURDER, by their continued presence among them, yet they winked at all those things, and did not, in the slightest degree, interpose their authority to save the lives of men.

Every day of the Election there was more or less rioting. Every man known to be a conspicuous Liberal was insulted; and many persons were grossly abused, kicked, dragged and beaten by the Orange Tory mob. But on Saturday they mustered their strength. It is said persons were sent out on horseback, by the Tory leaders, to the back concessions of London, to bring in the Orangemen; and they came in to town, armed with axe-helves and bludgeons; and rushed in a body towards the Hustings, after almost killing a man named Norton, amidst yells that would have disgraced the regions of the damned. The poll was to be closed at six o'clock, and they had the audacity, as it approached that hour, to walk in front of the Hustings, with the weapons of death in their hands, or half hidden under their coats. The principal objects of their vengeance were Mr. John Talbot, and Mr. Hugh O'Beirne, who acted as Agents for the Reform Candidates. Mr. Talbot got several intimations that he was marked for murder. One person, though opposed to him in politics, sent in a note warning him of the impending danger; and an anonymous friend sent in another note to the same effect, both of which he laid before the Returning Officer, But the Returning Officer not knowing perhaps the desperation of an Orange mob, took no precautionary measures. At length one villain, more bloody than the rest, threw a stone against a fissure in the Hustings through which Mr. Talbot was looking out on the crowd. In a few minutes afterwards, another miscreant, who participated in this act, and who was seen to rejoice at its effect, *added the sin of ingratitude* to the demoniac disposition of a low-bred Orangeman, struck Mr. Talbot through the open space where the votes were taken in. Then, indeed, did the Returning Officer order the ruffian to be taken into custody, but it was to [*sic*] late; the riot commenced; the signal for tearing down the Hustings was given, and the crowd collected to satiate their thirst for human blood. While they were in the front, tearing down the door, and demolishing the building Mr. Talbot escaped to the Court House, which was only a few yards distant; and fortunately before the mob could burst into the Hustings, Mr. O'Beirne had also escaped to the same place. A number of gentlemen escorted Mr. Parke to the house of Mr. Gibbins; and while walking that short distance, several attempts to strike him down were made

by the mob, which had now been joined by other ruffians, besides Orangemen and headed by a huge murderous negro!

They then went through the farce of chairing the defeated Candidates! and a barrel of whiskey was rolled out to stimulate their passions to greater madness. While they were thus engaged, Mr. Talbot left the Court House, and by a circuitous route, got into his brother's house; and Mr. O'Beirne mounted a horse, and fled for his life. When the mob were sufficiently inflamed with whiskey, and what they term *loyalty*! they rushed in an immense body to the house of Edward Allen Talbot, Esq. in which they had found out, that the object of their vengeance was. They approached the door with hideous yells, determined it would seem, to murder every one in it. There happened to be but one rifle in the house, one sword and a dagger. Mr. J. Talbot, expecting that they would dash thro' the windows, said [*sic*] that his life would be sacrificed the next minute, resolved to sell it as dearly as he could, he took the rifle, and had taken deliberate aim at one of the leaders of the murderous crew when just as he was about to pull the trigger a gentleman who thought killing one would only hasten instead of check the fate of their intended victim pulled up the muzzle of the rifle and the contents thereof lodged in the wall. The rifle was charged again, but at this juncture some of the least bloody had got up close to the windows and formed a kind of barrier from the instant attack of the most ferocious. It was then suggested to Mr. Talbot to leave the house, and that when the mob would be told of it, they would desist. He accordingly escaped through a window into the garden and found refuge in the house of the Returning Officer. The mob continued however their hideous yells for about an hour, and then went up street. Mr. Talbot was then recommended to leave town, and the Returning Officer in the most friendly manner accompanied him to Captain O'Dell's, in Westminster.

Many Magistrates were in the town. They witnessed the organization, and the preparations for riot and murder; but being themselves on the same side, they let the work go on. James Chrisler, Esq. Thomas Radcliff, Esq. Peter Carroll, Esq. L. Lawrason, Esq. and others were all in the town, but they never once interfered [*sic*] to preserve the peace. They saw the Clubs in the hands of Savage Partizans. Why did they not order them to be given up? Why did they not swear in Special Constables to protect his Majesty's peaceful subjects? They had theis [*sic*] reasons for not doing so, no doubt; and we can easily divine them. And those demons seeing that their murderous fury was not to be restrained or impeded by either Clergymen or Magistrates were more and more emboldened.

Men of Canada—not only you that have the pleasure of reflecting, that you have been born in this hitherto peaceful land, but you liberal minded men who have sought here a refuge from oppression—from lawless tyranny and blood, we beseech you to reflect, and reflecting to execrate the infernal conduct of the Orangemen of London, and the other ruffians of the Tory pack.—Can there be truth or justice or humanity in the Tory system, which is supported, *and which requires the support of such unjust means and such inhuman monsters?*—Monsters that regard the life of a fellow creature no more than they regard the meanest insect that crawls on the ground!