

The Klan in Canada

By Susan Jacoby

Special to The Washington Post

CALGARY, Alberta — An apparently thriving Ku Klux Klan has sprung up in this booming oil town on the Canadian prairie where nearly everyone except the Indians seems to be white, but it has hardly anyone to be against.

Tearlach Mac a'Phearsoin, imperial wizard of the Confederate Klans of Alberta, says it is better to stress the positive qualities of the white race than to put down anyone else. And the Alberta Klan considers the Indians white. In fact, one of its grand dragons is a full-blooded Indian.

An investigation of the Alberta Klan and a visit with Mac a'Phearsoin, a soft-spoken 23-year-old with closely cropped hair and a pointed beard, is enough to convince an American visitor even the loonier underside of Canadian political life is more

civil than comparable movements in the United States.

Mac a'Phearsoin eats only Kosher food (excluding meat) because it conforms to his personal ideals of vegetarianism. He quietly regrets the fact that some kosher establishments in Calgary refuse to serve him because of his association with the klan.

He has invited American Klan representatives to attend an initiation ceremony complete with cross-burning in September, but only if the city of Calgary issues him a burning permit. Otherwise, he says the cross-burning will not take place because he believes in observing the law.

Mac a'Phearsoin has visited U.S. klans, and he first became interested in the klan because he had an uncle who was a member in Seattle. However, he stresses that the Alberta Klan is

not a copy of the American Klan. Catholics, for example, are welcome.

"Our klan is all-Canadian," he says, "although of course we regard America as the last great hope of the world. The whole identity thing is very important, I guess in the states as well as here."

Mac a'Phearsoin's grandparents came from Inverness in Scotland. Born Ivan Ross MacPherson, he Gaelicized his name as part of his own search for ethnic identity. His official name is now Tearlach Barra Eoin, Ros Dunsford-Mac a'Phearsoin.

The first thing that strikes a visitor in his living room are huge Victorian portraits of frowning Scottish ancestors and "How to Speak Gaelic" records.

Mac a'Phearsoin's dream is the establishment of separate Jewish, black and Chinese klaverns to support the white klan in the cause of racial purity.

"I am admittedly a racist," he says, "but not a bigot. A bigot is someone who hates another person because of his race or religion. That's not my position at all. I believe in racial purity. We've had an excellent response from the Chinese on the possibility of cooperation, but I regret to say not from the blacks or the Jews."

"I would have welcomed a Negro klan if it stood for racial purity, but many members of a black church in Calgary have white wives. Of course, it's true that there aren't many Negroes here." He says the Klan has "more than 100 and less than 1,000" members.

Calgary, a rapidly growing city of a half a million surrounded by rich soil and cattle country, would seem to provide fertile ground for odd political fringe groups.

It has one of the largest American expatriate colonies in the world. Between 30,000 and 60,000 Americans, many of them Texans lured by the prospect of profits in

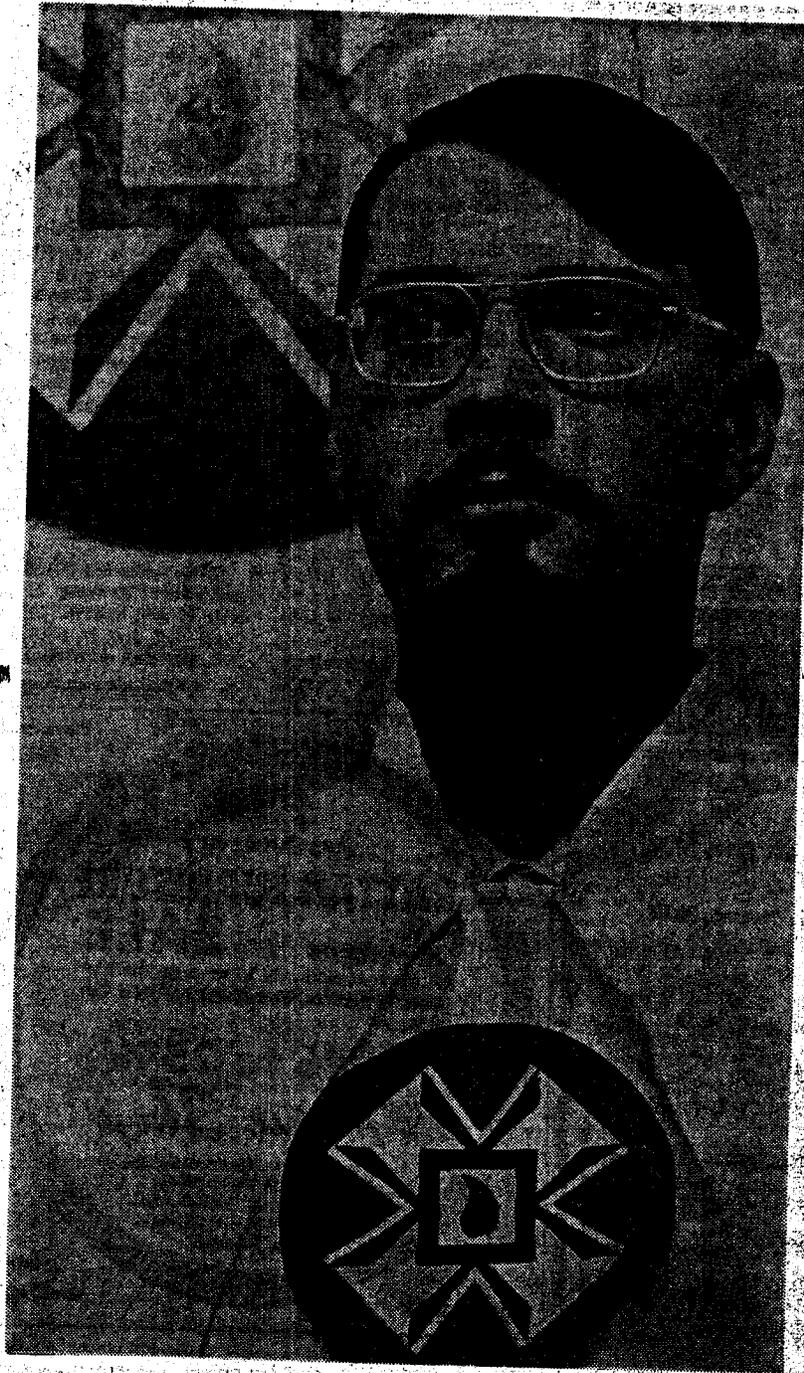


Photo by Bill Simpkins

Imperial Wizard Tearlach Mac a'Phearsoin: "I am admittedly a racist, but not a bigot."

the important Canadian oil fields, are living in the area. Non-WASP ethnic groups are becoming increasingly important in local politics, as they are in many other areas of Canada. Calgary has substantial numbers of Ukrainians, Hungarians, Yugoslavs and Germans. All are welcome in the Alberta Klan.

Mac a'Phearsoin acknowledges that the Klan's strong anticommunist—"I prefer to think of it as pro-religion"—position may be attractive to people who were born in or have relatives in Eastern Europe.

The oil money, population growth and changing ethnic patterns all make for a fluid political situation. "Calgary has become a California sub-

urb as far as attracting crackpots goes," says Mayor Rod Sykes.

Both the American oilmen and the WASP establishment Calgarians are opposed to the klan, though probably not because they disagree with its positions.

In addition to being anti-miscegenation, antidrug, antiabortion and anticommunist, the klan is also

against the government of Liberal Party Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. Mac a'Phearsoin says he plans to speak at political rallies in connection with the national elections scheduled this fall.

"Calgary was known for years as the deep South of Canada," Mayor Sykes said, "but we have unfashionable and fashionable bigotry, and the klan isn't fashionable."