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The Story of the Episcopal Church

Sectarianism began to raise its ugly head in the early years of the 20th century. In 1909 some 'extreme' Protestants had come to believe that the Catholic Church were plotting to take over the Edinburgh Infirmary. The Hospital Board no longer required candidates for posts to place their religious persuasion on the application form. The Rev Jacob Primmer wrote to Miss Gibb, the Superintendent of Nurses, asking:- "You will much oblige by being as good as to inform me for use at our Queen's Hall meeting on Sabbath night if the statement published by the Catholic Herald on 19.12.08 'that there are a number of Irish and Catholic servants employed in Edinburgh Royal Infirmary' is correct and if so how many of the servants are Papists and if some of these are immediately in attendance on the matron and if any of the nurses are members of the Church of Rome." After discussion the Board replied producing a second letter from Primmer. "Regretting that the Superintendent of the Infirmary and the Lady Superintendent did not profess the national religion of Scotland being members of the Scottish Episcopal Church." That same year the School Board who ran the schools came under pressure not to give out money to needy parents in the Voluntary Schools. These were Catholic and Episcopal schools. The money was spent on books. Some Board members who supported the gifts of money lost their seats in the Board Election. The Edinburgh Evening News even published two columns of candidates –For and Against. In the November Town Council Election campaign one 'extreme' Protestant group demanded that candidates should promise to oppose the appointment of 'Popish or Prelatic (Episcopal) Chaplains for the City Hospital and Catholic Magistrates.

After the war various political groups were set up to defend the Protestant Faith. The most successful of these were the Protestant Action Party. In the years leading up to World War II they managed to elect 7 members to the Town Council. Two of these Councillors were arrested for 'disturbing the peace' when they, and several hundred supporters, tried to stop a Catholic meeting in the Assembly Rooms in George Street. The Episcopal Church appears to have been excluded from their wrath.