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**Islanders and the Land: A Multi-disciplinary Approach to the
Culture of the Land Struggle in Prince Edward Island**


by

Reg Phelan

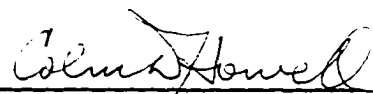
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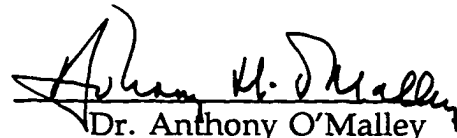
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of my grandfather Jack Kenny, whose stories about the land struggle first sparked my interest, also his first cousin, Joe Kenny, of St. Teresa who helped me in later years with an understanding of the communities' role in this struggle and to Milton Acorn, the people's poet, whose immense interest in these stories helped bring them much more to life.

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PREFACE

I have heard stories about the nineteenth century land struggle since my early teens, from people like my grandfather, Jack Kenny; his first cousin, Joe Kenny; and neighbours like Louis Byrne, Dan Byrne and Joe Walsh. These stories and the many discussions with Milton Acorn, the people's poet, sparked a long standing interest in the land issue in P.E.I. I have been actively involved, this past quarter century, to bring measures to protect the land. I have helped to publish the Broad-Axe, a community newspaper that highlighted the land issue, was a member of the National Farmers Union Land Committee for many years, and a member of Cooper Institute, an institute that has been very supportive of this issue.

I would like to thank my friends, members of the NFU and Cooper Institute, who helped financially in my year of course work at St. Mary's, and for the scholarship offered by the University. I was somewhat hesitant going back to university at the age of 39, but ended up enjoying the year very much.

It has been a struggle to finish this thesis while doing many other work activities. This was not made any easier by my stubborn insistence in carrying out the project as originally planned. Advisors at St. Mary's suggested that my task was too ambitious, and I would be better to concentrate on one particular era. I am thankful for the

encouragement and support from members of Cooper Institute for helping me to get back to this work, in particular Maureen Larkin, Marie Burge and Kevin Arsenault.

Without the support and insistence of my partner and wife, Stella Shepard that “I get it done”, it is unlikely that I would have spent the time to do it. The help of my sister, Paulette Phelan, was crucial in doing the typing, often very close to deadlines, as was Florence Larkin’s help with editing.

I would like to thank the people at St. Mary’s University: my long time friend Errol Sharpe, who took the M.A. program in Atlantic Canada Studies a few years before I did and who presently teaches there; my advisors, Colin Howell and Henry Veltmeyer for their many suggestions and correction on my draft copies, and in helping me to get the extensions in time needed to complete this work; Anthony O’Malley, my outside reader, whose advice in August was much appreciated “Write it as a story, it is only an M.A. thesis”; Gene Barrett who, in September steered me in the way of resources to help with redoing my theory chapter; my course professors while at St. Mary’s, David Cone, John Reid, Anders Sandsburg, Rick Williams, and my fellow students.

I want to say a special thanks to my mother Marguerite, who has been very supportive over the years and to my father Harold who passed away a couple of months before my defence in December, 1996.

ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to put the perceptions of rural Islanders at the centre of analysis, particularly regarding the way they view the land and perceive the forces that are changing its use and ownership. It is my thesis that an understanding of the views shaped by Islanders' struggle for the land in the nineteenth century is crucial in order to grasp the awareness of the appreciation and ties to the land today.

I take the view of culture as the collective output that defines a society's identity, its values and its distinctive character. It relates the past to the present and to the future. I rely on the oral and folksong tradition as a statement of this culture. I also take an ecological viewpoint of the changing relationship between the land environment and culture that gives us a perspective to the struggle concerning land ownership and use over the past quarter century on Prince Edward Island.

INTRODUCTION

In Prince Edward Island, the people's relation to the land is a highly charged issue that strikes a sensitive chord with most Islanders. The struggle over the use and control of land has been on-going for centuries. The tenant farmers' version of the conflict in the 19th century has been, for the most part, ignored in our school system, but it has been kept alive and passed mostly through folk traditions. I became acutely aware of this while a student in the P.E.I. public school system. My grandparents' version of events were different than the 'official' version when reference was made to some of the conflicts in the nineteenth century land struggle. Mostly the events were ignored. Happily, there have been some more inclusive interpretations in recent text books.

It is my thesis that an understanding of the views shaped by rural Islanders' struggle for the land in the nineteenth century is crucial to an understanding of the appreciation and ties to the land today. This history which has stayed alive against heavy odds, informs our present attitudes and perceptions of development. It is also my contention that the relations developed among people during the 19th century land struggle were sufficiently mature to do this. A strong support system was built in the Island society to sustain community values and culture. This support is vital to developing the people's ability to define and achieve their goals.

This study is based on an appreciation of people's ability to organize themselves socially, and express themselves culturally, in order to achieve their goals. Their 'way of life' is based on gaining an understanding of the kind of relationship they aspire to have with the land. There are particular periods in Island history where relationships with the land engendered social conflict, and these records are more discernible and therefore more available for critical analysis. I will look at two periods in P.E.I. history. The early to mid nineteenth century conflict between landlords and settlers and the mid to late twentieth century struggle between farmers and agribusiness.

The relationship between the two periods will be the central theme of this work. Chapter one will outline my overall approach to the work. I will be using a methodological approach that puts people at the centre of analysis. In this way, structural properties can be brought to life in the perceptions, self-understandings and activities of rural people, particularly as they strive to preserve their communities against outside forces. I propose to use cultural and ecological analysis to gain more insight into the strengths of people dealing with an adverse system. Because very little written history is left by tenant farmers, I will be relying on oral tradition and newspaper accounts of events.

The second chapter will examine the land conflict in early to mid nineteenth century P.E.I. This was a time of ingenious struggle on the part of Island tenantry against landlords and their local agents. With their organizational ability, tenant farmers were successful for large periods of time in preventing landlords from having any real say over

lands they claimed to own. I will look in some detail at the cultural, political and military events from the perspective of conflict between two sides which had distinctively different approaches and mandates concerning the land.

Chapter three will explore the recent land conflicts in P.E.I. over the past quarter century.

In 1969, the P.E.I. Comprehensive Development Plan was introduced with the stated intention of bringing P.E.I. into the modern era. The plan was based upon an assumption that "the historical pattern of land ownership is badly adapted to the needs of modern technology..."¹ Immense amounts of federal dollars and resources were used to bring about this change. At the same time, there were many popular responses to show Islanders' opposition to the changes being introduced in agriculture, including week-long tractor demonstrations, the blockade of ferries, and a concerted effort by the farm community to have social clubs, environment and church groups join in efforts to bring about legislation to protect the land. The Legislature passed legislation to curtail foreign ownership and placed an optimal acreage limit on farm size. There was also active opposition to entrenchment of property rights in the federal constitution. The cultural aspects of tourist promotion also had its effect on peoples' view of the land. The Campbell government in 1972 and the Ghiz government in 1989 set up Royal Commissions on the land in response to these pressures.

The concluding chapter will study the relationship between the two periods: the past and the present. In this terrain of struggle and contradictions, we have seen there is no one

homogeneous culture, but different cultures, one more dominant at particular times than the other, expressing different interests, and operating from an unequal and different arena of power. I will examine the role of oral history and popular cultural expression in preserving the perspective of one side in the conflict. The hegemonic and counter-hegemonic aspects of all this will be part of the analysis.

The many aspects of building and sustaining a social movement in both eras will be examined. The prominent role of women in organizing and sustaining community life is especially interesting. An understanding of the household unit of production provides a basis to better understand the values held by many rural people. Land was so central to their family's existence that it outweighed all other considerations. The household unit was part of the local community and it was this community that gave birth to the set of social relations that nourished and reproduced this way of life. The maturity of these relations sustained rural peasant community values and culture for many years to come. This made it much more difficult for industrial capitalist values to dominate in rural P.E.I. I will examine how capitalist values gained a sufficient foothold and built to the dominant force they are today. The significance of globalization and free trade on a long standing land struggle is key in understanding the dangers now facing the land from run-away exploitation. In the summer of 1995 and 1996 the soil and potatoes from some fields have washed into highways, requiring earth moving equipment to clear the roads. The rivers run red with Island soil that ends up silting spawning grounds and killing fish. There is a paralysis and lack of will on the part of the government to intervene or even

make a commentary. It is my hope that the analysis and reflection provided in this paper will encourage others to help build a movement to protect the kind of relationship they aspire to have with the land.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Methodological Approach

The interdisciplinary program of graduate studies at St. Mary's came to my attention when I was looking for theoretical direction in doing research work on the land issue in Prince Edward Island. I concentrated my course work in three areas; the political economy, culture and ecology of Atlantic Canada, all being areas with something to offer in a critical look at the land issue. I thought that there was a need to clarify what the real possibilities were for progressive change in how the land is used and owned in P.E.I.

In doing this work, I want to put the perceptions and understandings of rural Islanders at the centre of analysis, particularly, how they view the land and perceive the forces that are threatening their view of how the land should be used. In studying the 'way of life' and the relationships among those who live in the rural communities, we are looking at how human agency makes possible the transformation of what many believe is a crisis in land use into an opportunity to do something about it.

This methodological approach of beginning with people in society raises some questions about the role of researcher and those researched. Some academics have said that many Islanders studying relations in their community have suffered from 'perceptual limitations' and have intellectually oversimplified their history, or have provided a

'populist' rather than a strictly 'academic' reading and interpretation of it from being too close to their subject.² However, the notion that researchers and those studied need to be kept separate has been challenged over the years. I particularly like how P. Hansen and A. Muzynski approach this in the Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology. On this issue, they call for a more 'ontological' perspective with their argument that "the nature of the research task and the methods used cannot be considered in isolation from the commitments and behaviour of the people 'studied'"³

They make the point that:

Ontology draws out attention toward what binds us together in a common situation, researcher and researched alike. To think in ontological terms is to examine how it is possible for facts and theories to have any meaning at all.⁴

They go on to say:

For in our society economic facts are seen as 'natural'. By making problematic the economic self-understanding that people are said to have, critical research (including political economy) can hold out the prospect of relating those economic facts to the lived milieu from which, after all, they are abstracted. Structural properties can be brought to life for social actors, and so become potential resources for change. They can be 'worked through' rather than simply acknowledged. The researcher's task is to recast structural accounts in a way that contributes to the development of self-understanding of people, enabling them to change their lives. In pursuing this task, researchers can bridge the gap that currently exists between the categories of critical analysis and people's lived experience.⁵

This is the task I have set myself in this study. It is my thesis that an understanding of the views shaped by rural Islanders' struggle for the land in the nineteenth century is crucial to an understanding of the appreciation and ties to the land today. This history which has

stayed alive against heavy odds is embedded in Islanders' views and actions. It informs our present attitudes and perceptions of how we see development.

Embedded Economy

The view that the actions of people in the economy are submerged or embedded in social relationships has been taken in studies by authors such as Karl Polanyi, E.P. Thompson, and Raymond Williams, among others. They have each written extensively on this topic. Polanyi, for one, says that the many assumptions about earlier societies that informed Adam Smith in his work The Wealth of Nations, were mistaken. He contends that the creation of a market economy transformed society, turning 'society on its head'.⁶ Before the advent of markets, labour and land had been organically connected to society with the limits of exchange set by law and customs. It was this legal and customary social framework that was resurrected by the actions of 18th century English crowds studied by E.P. Thompson.⁷

Polanyi outlines four main ways in which resources have been collected, produced, stored, and distributed to meet the needs of society throughout history. As outlined in Robert J. Holton's book, Economy and Society, they are:

1. **RECIPROCITY:** Wants are satisfied through exchange of goods and services within a closed tribal or kinship system designed to reaffirm the interdependence of all members through performance of obligations.

2. REDISTRIBUTION: Wants are satisfied through centralised control over resources, achieved through means such as imperial domination.
3. HOUSEHOLDS: Wants are satisfied through self-sufficiency.
4. MARKETS: Wants are satisfied through market exchange.⁸

Polanyi argues that most economists have neglected the first three types of economy in favour of the market-based economy. In doing this they have neglected the way the economy has been embedded in the wider relations of society when the first three ways of activities were dominant. He further argues that the pure market system is not sustainable and that historical analysis shows that it generates such extreme social and political tensions that a new type of embedded economy emerges.

When economies are embedded in wider social relationships, the economic functions are carried out without any significant sense of separation and distinctions among economic activities. In hunter-gatherer and agricultural societies, for example, the embedded economies depend largely on the land as a productive resource. In native societies, a natural embeddedness is reflected in a special relationship with the land. The land, while providing for material wants, is simultaneously a spiritual source of identification.

Economic activities in this context are not looked upon as separate or distinct aspects of human experience. Community norms exist and are supported for cultural and expressive reasons. They provide the meaning of action for concerned participants. Such an approach renews the possibility and the hope for social and economic arrangements according to

different moral values and visions. This is referred to, by such people as E.P. Thompson, as 'the appeal of the moral economy'.

E.P. Thompson is probably best known for his work, The Making of the English Working Class. A similar approach was taken in, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century." In this study, he examined the reactions of many English crowds to the hunger and disruptions which accompanied the changes to a market economy. In this connection he notes, "The men and women in the Crowd were informed by the belief that they were defending traditional rights or Customs; and in general, that they were supported by the wider consensus of the community."⁹

The custom was that the prices of items like grain were fixed and could only be sold to dealers after they were offered to local people in an open market. It was the export of foodstuffs during these times that provoked the poor to riot. They would often seize the goods being exported, determine a price and sell the goods locally, returning to the owner what they thought was a fair price in the circumstances. These aspects of the moral economy help us to understand the reaction of peasant societies and early industrial societies to the transformation brought on by the market economy.¹⁰

In this context, the task becomes one of investigating the internal dynamics of such systems and the ways they develop and change. This will allow us to gain a wider vision of the complex system of embedded relations among the culture, the society and the land.

Raymond Williams, a Welsh historian who has done a lot of work on this and other dimensions of culture, describes it this way:

A culture has two aspects: the known meanings and directions, which its members are trained to; the new observations and meanings, which are offered and tested. These are the ordinary processes of human societies and human minds, and we see through them the nature of a culture: that is always both traditional and creative; that is both the most ordinary common meanings and the finest individual meanings. We use the word culture in these two senses: to mean a whole way of life - the common meanings; to mean the arts and learning - the special processes of discovery and creative effort. Some writers reserve the word for one or other of these senses; I insist on both, and on the significance of their conjunction. The questions I ask about our culture are questions about our general and common purposes, yet also questions about deep personal meanings. Culture is ordinary, in every society and in every mind.¹¹

Williams' concept of culture entails a very broad view of the complex relations that exist and form between a culture and a society. The idea that 'culture is ordinary' challenges the fine arts conception of 'high' symbolic culture, but sees the importance of it. He sees the relationship between 'society' and 'culture' as dialectical. Culture is not only an expression of social values, it also shapes them. It is a lived experience. Culture in this sense is not separate from a society's political economy but is crucial to an examination of the interrelationship that always exists between the political economy, the ecology and other social institutions in the rest of society. Popular thought, on the other hand, does not acknowledge these boundaries. It does not tend to abstract one or more 'systems' from the totality of lived experience.

The dominance of a particular class, a crucial component of the social structure in many societies, is maintained in many ways. In our society, a lived culture, is a very integral part of how this dominance is maintained. In the literature, this is referred to as cultural hegemony, the saturation of habit, experience and outlook from an early age that is continuously renewed under pressure and limits.¹² This is a powerful force but not pervasive or completely dominant. Some classes can resist at the same time as they are dominated. In this context, both E.P. Thompson and Raymond Williams tell us that it is possible to construct quite a different view of rural society from the perspective of the subordinate classes. Williams observes:

People change, it is true, in struggle, and by action. Anything as deep as a dominant structure of feeling is only changed by active new experiences... . We have to learn and to teach each other the connections between a political and economic formation, a culture and educational formation, and perhaps hardest of all, the formations of feeling and relationship which are our immediate resources in any struggle.¹³

Such feelings and relationships occurred in P.E.I. as the author can attest to as a member of this society, embedded with its culture. The dominant structure was challenged by struggle and action. However, it takes a particular type of society to develop and support the cultural relations that enable this to happen. In this connection, A.G. Bailey, an historian who studied particular times when creative movements developed in the Maritime provinces writes:

Some acquaintance with the culture of primitive peoples, as well as with the rise and decline of ancient and modern nations, has convinced me that it is necessary for societal elements to coalesce mounting tensions through the polarity of their parts, if there is to be a discharge of creative energy in any field of endeavour. At the creative moment the interacting elements

out of which the society is composed are suddenly transcended, and a proliferation of forms ensues that are new and different from any that could have appeared at an earlier period in the community's course. Like metropolitan societies, which tend to be worlds-in-themselves, small communities must become as mature as their narrow limits allow before they can fulfil the purpose that is within them.¹⁴

In the same connection, I believe, that tenant farmers in rural P.E.I. developed the maturity of relationships that permit such widespread cultural development. This belief constitutes an important element of the analytic framework and theoretical perspective of this thesis. The development in question derives from the struggle of Islanders to gain control of the land they farmed from feudal landlords, many of whom resided in colonial England. This was an intense and ingenious struggle which built its base and movement in rural P.E.I., providing the social context for the development of the folksong tradition that ensued. This society had the co-operation and the maturity of relations that enabled them to trick and humiliate land agents in a great number of settings and times. Resident and non-resident landlords were, to an extent, effectively played off against one another. In large areas, tenants effectively prevented any collection of rents. This was accomplished with very little bloodshed. There were three people killed at the Belfast Riot in 1847, and only two known shootings of land agents. However, the Belfast Riots get little mention in the history books. W. S. MacNutt, for example, gives them only two and a half lines, which do little to give us any insight into what happened:

In an election riot at Pinette poll in the Belfast district Scots and Irish attempted to solve their clannish differences with clubs and staves. Several lives were lost and scores injured.¹⁵

Folklore

There are many stories of resistance by Island farmers to landlords in the 1800's. These have been passed on orally from generation to generation and have become a part of Island folklore and character. These stories often have a very different view of events than those contained in history books at school. Unfortunately, they are not documented, and as a result do not normally constitute historical evidence for historians, such as Ian Robertson, Jack Bumsted, or Rusty Bitterman, who in other respects have provided systematic and detailed studies of particular periods in the land history.

I can vividly remember, in my early teens, listening to my grandfather, Jack Kenny, proudly recalling the events surrounding the incidents of March 1, 1847. He was able to name relatives and other acquaintances involved. He told us the names of those who were killed, and recalled that one person was found in the back of a cart the next day. My grandfather explained to me some of the tactics. For example, tenant farmers, most of whom were Irish, turned their shirts inside out so they could identify each other when the supporters of the Selkirk land agents returned to the polls ready to do battle. Because they capture critical elements of popular orally transmitted culture, such testimonies should become part of the documentary bases and records.

In the general election held earlier, Escheat Party candidates, John MacDougall and John Small, were declared elected.¹⁶ This was challenged by Douse and MacLean, Compact Party candidates, on the grounds that there had been intimidation at the polls. A third

election was held on March 19 with Douse and MacLean as the only candidates. This was at a time of a highly charged atmosphere among P.E.I. tenants, particularly those east of Charlottetown, who were refusing to pay rents demanded of them by landlords and their agents. Four landlords claimed ownership of most of the lands in this area: Selkirk, Worrell, Cunard, and MacDonald. Refusing to sell land to tenants and unable to collect rents, these landlords were becoming quite frustrated.¹⁷

Worrell left P.E.I. and went to England. It was rumoured that he and Selkirk were contemplating selling their estates. The land agents and the eventual purchaser of both were prominent P.E.I. politicians at the time. W.H. Pope, of the prominent Pope family, purchased the Worrell estate of over 80,000 acres and later sold it to the P.E.I. government for over double the purchase price. Douse, the man elected by default after the Belfast Riots, subsequently worked a similar deal with Selkirk and the P.E.I. government. One can see that land and politics were a very tensely intertwined issue, and that the Belfast Riots were much more than an attempt to solve clannish differences.

Joe Walsh, who lived a few miles down the road from my family, related a similar understanding to me about the Belfast Riots. He told me that his grandfather organized the neighbours to go to the Belfast Poll because they heard rumours of possible evictions from their lands. Joe was a great singer of old songs and ballads. It was he who introduced Edward Ives to the songs of Lawrence Doyle. Ives dedicated his work on Doyle to Joe, who took great pleasure in singing songs about this era. Doyle often dealt

with the twin themes of landlordism and the need to leave the Island to find work. A few verses from his classic song, Prince Edward Island, Adieu, (a song also performed by contemporary Island artist Teresa Doyle on her album of the same name), serve to show his style:

There is a band within this land
 Who live in pomp and pride;
 To swell their stores they rob the poor;
 On pleasure's wings they ride.
 With dishes fine their tables shine,
 They live in princely style.
 Those are the knaves who made us slaves.
 And sold Prince Edward Isle....

Through want and care and scanty fare,
 The poor man drags along;
 He hears a whistle loud and shrill,
 The "Iron Horse" speeds on;
 He throws his pack upon his back,
 There's nothing left to do;
 He boards the train for Bangor, Maine,
 Prince Edward Isle adieu....

The place was new, the roads were few,
 The people lived content,
 The landlords came, their fields to claim;
 Each settler must pay rent.
 So now you see, the turning tide
 That drove us to exile,
 Begin again to cross the main,
 And leave Prince Edward Isle...¹⁸

These popular versions of events raise questions about the perspective of much of written history. For example, my grandparents' and neighbours' conceptions of the past were quite different from the way many historians have portrayed it, raising questions about the

relative validity - and reliability - of the popular version persisting in folk memory, and the academic version which conforms to the customs of scientific or historiographic research evidence. The latter, while often considered more reliable academically, loses much of the immediacy and essential 'truth' of the popular view of folk memory. In this context, notable events of the past were well remembered generations later, although historians might quibble over 'how well' they were remembered. In folk memory, the sense of injustice was vivid and strong, a feature missing in sanitised academic versions concerned more with documentary traces of specific events than with what they meant to participants. Various vehicles and forms of popular culture and folk memory added greatly to a consciousness of what was wrong and unjust in people's own experience; a consciousness that has been passed on to some of us in my generation.

I have kept an ear open for such stories, and have heard a number of interesting and fascinating adventures which have validity in the reconstruction of the meaning of historical events and development. I adopt this view as a guide for this study and thesis. In this connection, Milton Acorn and I would spend countless hours talking about these stories and attempting to delineate the popular thinking of the time. Milton, an Islander, commonly known as the people's poet, has written some great poems and a play called, "The Road to Charlottetown" that capture the spirit of the land struggle, something that is lost in academic translation. His book, The Island means Minago, published in 1975, contains a number of poems that capture critical dimensions of the land struggle by Island tenants.¹⁹

Review of the Literature

The Broad-Axe, a newspaper published in 1970-71, also attempted to capture some of this spirit by publishing editorials and stories of the land struggle from a paper of the same name published in the 1860's with the motto "Hew to the line, let the chips fall where they may".²⁰ Errol Sharpe, inspired by these efforts, searched the public archives and in a short period of time published his book, A People's History of P.E.I., in 1976.²¹ Prior to these efforts, there was not a lot written from the tenants' point of view. Francis Bolger, a history professor at UPEI, did a great deal to popularize an interest in Island history through his university classes and his written work on the era of Confederation, Canada's Smallest Province.²² David Weale, a theologian and popular story teller, and Harry Baglole, an Island historian, add a more social content to the Confederation debate with their work, The Island and Confederation, The End of an Era.²³ Bolger, Weale and Baglole do talk about the land issue, but as the titles of their works suggest, their main emphasis was on the parliamentary process leading to Confederation.

In 1980, I researched and wrote a paper entitled the "Land Issue" as part of work to complete a B.A. from UPEI; and to promote and support work being done at that time to bring in legislation to protect the land. This paper, along with many others, was presented at a two day "Land Festival and Popular Hearings" held in August, 1987.²⁴ These proceedings, later published by the Cooper Institute, an Island Popular Education and Research institute, provided an excellent popular forum on the issue.

The Dictionary of Canadian Biography has many P.E.I. entries from the 19th century. These biographies consist mainly of landlords, politicians and clerics with the main source of information coming from newspapers of the era. They were done mostly by historians who either grew up on P.E.I. or currently live here. One of those historians, Ian Ross Robertson, wrote a book in 1988 containing an introduction and condensed version of the 1860 land commission. In the summer of 1996, he published a book entitled The Tenant League of Prince Edward Island 1864 - 1867.²⁵ I read this after having completed Chapter two of this thesis, and found it to be generally supportive of the summary analysis of this era provided in this chapter.

J. M. Bumsted in 1987 published a book titled Land, Settlement and Politics in Eighteenth - Century Prince Edward Island.²⁶ He is a teacher at the University of Manitoba who became interested in P.E.I. through researching the Scottish Settlement in the Red River area of Manitoba. He provided an account of Highland Scottish emigration to Canada in a book, published in 1982, called, The People's Clearance.²⁷ Bumsted made extensive use of colonial records in England and in P.E.I. He contends that previous writings about the eighteenth century suffer from an 'Island mythology'. He maintains that people were too close to their history and have 'perceptive limitations' that oversimplify it.²⁸ The old simplifications are replaced by scrupulously documented accounts of the way in which economic structure was established. These old records are inevitably written from a pro-landlord viewpoint where clearances were seen as a necessary pre-condition to the establishment of an economically efficient agriculture

system. The people upon whom these policies were imposed, however, have been almost completely neglected. In Bumsted's study you do not encounter the dynamics of popular struggle as seen from the view of the tenants. The problem seems to be with documented data and sources that are deemed to be 'reliable' records, yet tell only one side of the story.

Rusty Bitterman, a teacher at the University College of Cape Breton, has done graduate research into written records of the 1830s in PEI and from colonial sources in England.

From this, he compiled a history of resistance in this period. He says that:

The hard job of teasing the rural history of these ideas out of the written evidence and more precisely delineating the contours of popular thinking on the land question has yet to be done. In addition, the history of politics in the countryside remains to be written.²⁹

John Stewart published a history of PEI in 1806.³⁰ He was a landlord and a controversial politician of his era. His history concentrates on altercations between resident and non-resident landlords. Judge A. B. Warburton's history of PEI was published in 1923.³¹ He concentrates on five Lieutenant Governors of PEI appointed by England and seven Chief Justices. Very little written history was left by those who settled the land. Written records, therefore, often reflect a view of tenants as seen through the eyes of outsiders, who are detached from the community by their status, education and outlook. Thus, history from the perspective of tenants, is often absent or so obscured that it becomes impossible to perceive the truth.

I think the significance of Islanders' and tenants' view of the past is not to be found in historical accuracy, or lack of it. Rather, it lies in the fact that it enabled them to set the grim realities of the 19th century against a vision of order in which material wealth was combined with security and social justice. This enabled a critique of the social and economic system of landlordism. The reinforcement of traditional beliefs about the nature of rights to the land; and the attachment and dependence on the land was so great that the threat of eviction was almost equivalent to a death sentence.

Oral tradition, handed down through successive generations, reflects the scene as experienced and viewed by people within the community who share the same attitudes and values. Oral tradition consists not only of factual statements, but is also an expression and representation of culture, collective memory, ideology and subconscious desires. Most places have cultural manifestations that find deep responsive chords in its people. This is partly because they draw upon an authentic heritage that helps define the shared image of self and society. Earlier, I mentioned Raymond Williams' and E.P. Thompson's views on culture. They regarded the collective output as society's identity, values and distinctive character. In this context, culture is something continuous, that relates the past to the present and to the future. All members of society participate in the culture and help to create it through social interactions. This study contends that the new identification of self and society cannot be achieved without integrating both the old and the new.

Gender & Household Production

A feminist critique has helped to develop an understanding of life in terms of relationships in communities. Patricia Thompson, in her book, Home Economics and Feminism: The Hestian Synthesis³² sees two domains, "Oikas"[the household] and "Polis"[the city state], as forming a dynamic interrelationship in everyday life. The influences of these two domains, are named after Greek Gods. Hestia represents the world that is centred around the home, and Hermes portrays the sphere of the marketplace. Thompson does not see these two spheres as gender exclusive but rather as gender intensive. Hestia is caring, nurturing, and belonging; characteristic of the personal or private sphere of the household. The "polis", on the other hand, is characterized by hierarchy and control. Under patriarchy, the public sphere is valued over the household. Most studies have dealt with male ideas about the public domain. Of these, Thompson says, "A lot of public arguments make sense only because they eliminate the household and the family which are 'outside' the 'polis'".³³

The household is the basic unit of analysis, with data gathered from diaries. The account books of farmers, merchants and others were also helpful. The household unit exists as a miniature welfare state to provide for the needs and wants of its members. Once these needs were met, there was not a great desire to accumulate more goods or money. If the existing amount of land was sufficient to provide for the household, there was no need to accumulate more land. This situation is usually described as peasant production, where people are both producers and consumers of the social product. In years when crops were

poor or prices low, there was less money to spend. People adjusted to this by consuming less; preferring to limit consumption rather than face further drudgery by putting themselves in the control of local merchant capital.

Wage labour off the farm was also part of the household survival strategy.³⁴ One example would be to leave home to work in the woods during the winter. This provided households with an additional means of getting by, while at the same time, giving them some measure of independence from the exploitative control of local merchants.

Errol Sharpe, in his thesis From the Past to the Future: Rethinking Rural Society and Social Change in PEI, studied the household unit from the diaries and ledgers of the 1930s and '40s in the area of Belmont. In his thesis, he notes: "I have shown that the household was the central unit of production in the study area".³⁵ In looking at external influences, he further notes:

"... until the advent of large corporations and the trend toward corporate farming, the state seemed far away ... the events that shaped their every day lives were close at hand. Life centred around the individual households, the immediate community spatially defined by the boundaries of the school district and the local market towns".³⁶

Sharpe argues that social life was "the glue that held the household and rural society together".³⁷ From the diaries he constructed an idea of what social life had been like in this period. In his study, Sharpe describes a particular household in the year 1937, which either had visitors or whose members went out 279 days of the year. There were only

three days in September when all the household members stayed home and no one visited.³⁸ The following comments by the persons interviewed give some indication of the immense social contact people had with one another: "we generally visited every house in the community" where we could "talk and play rook." (A.B.1) ... "There was always a dance here and there" (A.S.) ... "The young people sure enjoyed themselves at the house dances" (M.B.).³⁹ Telling stories, singing, playing musical instruments and house dances were all common ways of entertaining each other.

The small schools, Sharpe argues, were the main institutional support for community life. Rather than being separate from home life, the schools were seen as an extension of it. The values of home, community and school were very similar. The small one room schools were run by the community. The boundaries of the school defined the local community in which the household units of production were rooted.

The women played a very important role in community life. From the diaries, interviews and the minutes of the Women's Institute, Sharpe was able to get an understanding of their role. The Women's Institute met on a regular basis and played a crucial role in supporting the community. From his analysis, Sharpe concludes "that without the nurturing of the women, the community could fail for lack of social cohesion."⁴⁰

The active role of women pointed to and emphasized by Sharpe is clearly evident in the earlier periods of Island life. In the 1800's, many warrants were issued for the arrest of

women because of their role in defending the land. When communities were small and interdependent, most things that happened were within control of the household. By studying these households, we get a more dynamic view of the influences that helped form people's identity. Grandparents and others in the community were all influential. Family members felt responsible for and protective towards one another, even to the point of hiding some negative aspects, such as violence against women, from the greater community.

The first question often asked by an Islander, to someone they meet for the first time is "where are you from?" By knowing the particular community, an immediate grasp of the many aspects that formed the identity of this person, is known. Sharpe says: "The Rural Society that had been consolidated in the 19th Century remained virtually unchanged until the middle of the 20th century."⁴¹ This is supported by the fact that the size of the family farms on P.E.I. have remained virtually unchanged in acreage for two centuries.⁴²

Ecology

There is great value in using what could be identified as ecological analysis to uncover the processes of long term changes. This has been done in various degrees and ways by many people.⁴³ The ecological approach, in general, attempts to achieve a more encompassing description of the relations between selected human activities, and biological and physical processes. It does this by including them within a single

analytical framework. An ecologist looking at a field, sees not only the animals, plants, flowers and trees, but also what is happening with the balance of nature and the interactions that support what grows. The goal is not to use ecology as an exclusive framework for analysis but as one that can help us better understand the human side of development.

There is a dynamic and changing relationship between the land environment and culture. Depending on the conditions, the relationship will produce contradictions as well as continuities. The interactions of the culture and the land often work in dialectical ways. The land environment will shape the range of choices available at a particular time. Culture then reshapes the environment in response to these choices. It is not easy to know which culture is interacting with which ecosystem and where the boundaries lie. Because nothing is static, there is always a dynamic process of change continually taking place. With this in mind, I have identified three predominant sets of different relationships to the land in Atlantic Canada and the possible emergence of a fourth. These have confronted each other at different times and have resulted in the landscape being so transformed that an earlier way of living with the land becomes almost impossible.

First, the Native community shaped a particular set of relationships to the land. They existed for thousands of years before the permanent arrival of the Europeans. The Europeans confronted and altered the landscape so much so that the native's earlier way of interacting and living with the land became impossible. The results have been

devastating for native culture. The second period is where the European settlement confronted the forest, cleared it and prepared the land for agriculture. The predominant relationship to the land in this period was the smaller family farm, representing an ecological and close attachment to the land. This all changed with the move towards industrial agriculture, which is generated by high external energy and technology inputs, representing a very different attitude and orientation to the land. This third period is dominated by agribusinesses who view land as a commodity to be exploited for maximum returns. The impact of this shift has been dramatic in rural Canada. In the last three decades, we have lost over two-thirds of our farmers.⁴⁴

This type of agriculture although predominant in the region today, is showing signs that it cannot sustain itself. The land is not responding to the increased heavy uses of chemicals in monoculture production. This mining of the land has resulted in losses to the quality and quantity of food. The movement that might stand a chance of counteracting corporate, industrialist agriculture, and saving the soil, is ecological agriculture. This involves a move to less chemical farming in the intermediate term and later to no chemicals at all. This will entail drastic changes in our present social system.

In the next chapter, I will tell the hidden history from the Mi'kmaq era through to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I will concentrate on how the rural people felt about, thought and viewed the land, as well as how they related to the land and thus to each other.

CHAPTER TWO

LAND CONFLICT IN EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY P.E.I.

Introduction

In this chapter, I will explore significant happenings involving the land from the Mi'kmaq era through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The main emphasis will be on the early to mid nineteenth century struggle with landlords by those who worked closely with the land as part of their livelihood. The way people view and live with the land has a immense cultural impact on the way people organize their lives. Examining those struggles will reveal the unique and enduring Island attachment to, and defence of, the land.

The Mi'kmaq Tradition

The Mi'kmaq were here thousands of years before the arrival of the Europeans and had their own way of living with the land. The Native culture influenced the Europeans, and the European ways affected the native way of life. The Mi'kmaqs were mainly subsistence hunters and gatherers with limited means of food storage. They modified the land environment to their purposes, an environment very different from what we know today. The area was mainly forest. The trees provided bark for houses, canoes and containers as well as a home to a wide variety of wild life. There were meadows, marshes, bays and areas burnt by forest fires. These areas provided grazing for wild

animals like moose and caribou. There were many wild berries that were reported to be very large in size, along with a limited growing of some crops. The Mi'kmaq's food supply consisted of whatever was available seasonally which required an intimate understanding of the habits and ecology of many species.

The size and location of their communities changed on a seasonal basis, and all aspects of their life hinged on this mobility. When the ice broke up, people moved to the coast to take advantage of the spawning runs of different fish. In such runs, fish were packed in the river and easy to catch. Shellfish was plentiful in tidal areas and thousands of lobsters appeared in sheltered waters. This environment was very rich, so most of what the Mi'kmaq required for a living could be gathered from the local area.

The Mi'kmaqs maintained close and intimate ties to the habitat in which they were dependent for a living.⁴⁵ They thought of plants and animals as persons with whom they could communicate. The Mi'kmaqs developed rituals to show their respect for the exchange of lives between animals and themselves. This belief affected the way in which they used and hunted animals and plants. They were all part of a complex system. In dances and rituals, people imitated animals so well that, to many, it seemed they became the animal itself. Some dances dramatized the hunts and fights. Other dances portrayed how medicine plants became known as well as the effects they had.

In the division of labour, women set up the camps, cared for children, gathered shell fish and preserved food. The men did the hunting that would take them from camps for days at a time. When food was plentiful in the summer months, there was lots of time for leisure activities. It was said that they lived with little work but great pleasure. They chose, however, to live by labour that was the most pleasurable to them, and in harmony with the ecosystem in which they lived. Natives avoided acquiring much surplus property that would become cumbersome when moving. They were confident that their skills could supply whatever needs arose. This life style was different from the many recently arrived Europeans, who did not understand this style and were constantly annoyed by it. This is reflected in some of their comments on indigenous land use, where they would say that the indigenous person would 'rather starve than work', or that they were 'not able to use one-quarter of land'.⁴⁶ Some of these attitudes are still prevalent today.

In talking of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaqs, a Jesuit priest, Le Cheng, says:

... [they are] so generous...towards one another that they seem not to have any attachment to the little things they possess, for they deprive themselves thereof very willingly and in very good spirit the moment when they know that their friends have need of it.⁴⁷

The Native communities felt themselves to be culturally superior to the Europeans. They felt that European communities must have been inhospitable for people to leave family and friends and come all the way across the ocean to Mi'kmaq land. Their response to the missionaries gives us an indication of this:

Why should we pray to God and believe in Jesus Christ when our corn is as good as yours and we take more pleasure than you?...As we inhabit a world so different from yours, there must be another heaven for us, and another road to reach it?⁴⁸

Not all Europeans were at odds with the Mi'kmaq. In fact, many earlier Europeans joined the Native communities. Cadwellader Coldin, in a history published in 1747, says: "No arguments, no entreaties, not even tears of their friends and relations could persuade many of them to leave their new Indian friends." Hector De Chévicoeur says: "Thousands of Europeans are Indians and we have no examples of even one of these aboriginal having, from choice, become European!"⁴⁹ The Island Acadians for many years lived very closely with the Mi'kmaq in their communities and there were many intermarriages. The largely Celtic influence of many earlier European settlers was also closer to native culture than other European Cultures. There were settlers in nineteenth century P.E.I. who could communicate in Gaelic, Mi'kmaq, French and English. In return, many natives became great fiddle players and enthusiastic participants in many Ceilidhs.⁵⁰

French officials in the seventeenth century promoted intermarriage in order to create 'one people' with the natives, but their attitude changed in the early eighteenth century when most offspring adopted native lifestyles. It was said that 'children took little time to fall in with the Indian ways'. The Natives were noted as treating their prisoners well after a battle, always sharing food and never affronting their captives sexually.⁵¹

The native possession of the land stood as an immediate impediment to the agricultural 'civilization' of the Europeans. The concepts of land and property were very different and were expressed in a number of cultural differences, as outlined earlier in this chapter. The differences were more pronounced in English areas. The early Acadians tended to settle along the marshes, which did not offer much challenge to the native habitat. The natives never saw land as private property to be possessed and bounded. They simply wanted use of it at particular times for hunting and gathering. Having the use of the land was important, because the Mi'kmaq did not settle in one spot, but hunted some areas temporarily and then left them to replenish. When the decision was taken to move, a whole community was gone in a couple of days. The boundaries of Europeans and Natives were fundamentally different, and were interpreted differently because of their cultural concepts. Natives used ecological labels to describe how the land could be used. Europeans used arbitrary place-names, which reflected the names of owners or were similar to places they had left.

In the treaties, the Natives gave the English claim, not to the land, but to what was on the land during the various seasons of the year.⁵² This concept of property, although different from the Europeans, was shared by many agricultural people throughout the world. The conflict over these concepts still exist to this day. On the native side, a sale had to be agreed to by the entire kin group, and it applied to only specific uses of the land. They did not give up any of their important hunting and gathering uses, but instead conferred an ownership identical to their own; not to possess the land as something to be bought and

sold but as a resource to be cared for, lived with and shared. To the Europeans, however, land meant money, and was a source for the accumulation of wealth. To the Mi'kmaq, the accumulation of capital made little sense. They fully believed that their values were better and continued to have immense confidence in their way of life.

The sweeping changes that were to take place meant, for the Mi'kmaq, an end to the life they knew. One of the factors which contributed to this change was the spread of European diseases among the Mi'kmaq. They lacked the proper immunities to fight them and eventually these diseases wiped out 75% of the Mi'kmaq population.⁵³ Although, studies of native bones revealed a number of diseases, the major killers were smallpox, influenza, and syphilis. People were terrified, frightened and saddened by such a disaster. However, in spite of the fact that most native societies were decimated, somehow they remained intact. They fought many battles with white populations after this and remained strong for many generations, keeping Europeans at bay over their lands.

Missionary efforts gained momentum. At the same time, the fur trade developed. The Mi'kmaq became an important intermediary group in the fur trade between other native groups and the Europeans. This involvement decreased, with the decline in furs along the Atlantic area and the Europeans' move further inland. More Europeans moved into the Atlantic area via the United States after the War of Independence, and the Mi'kmaq were pushed further into the interior. Because their strength declined vis a vis the white

settlers, the previous treaties were ignored. Large numbers of Mi'kmaq were left to starve in the eighteen hundreds because their lands no longer supplied sufficient food.⁵⁴

The adjustment and assimilation to European ways never happened for the Mi'kmaq. The native people of Atlantic Canada today maintain an ethnic integrity that is found in their self description and set of values. The Mi'kmaq and Malecite people find themselves discontented with their lifestyle, but frustrated and incapable of changing their ways. No traditional native community exists in the old sense, and none could, with the changes that have occurred in the land environment. There is no possibility of re-establishing an ecosystem which would support a hunting-gathering population. Yet a much bruised population is growing in spirit and getting ready for some dialogue and action.

The native traditions and understanding of the land environment is still very much alive. The myths and ceremonies of native people acknowledge the understanding and development of human culture and society. They imitate nature in crucial ways, following its evolutionary and ecological developments. There is the sense of belonging to a living, changing, social whole as an extension of one's self. There is an intimate relationship with Creation and a self identification. This living, holistic view is gaining a wider appreciation today, as signs of environmental degradation grow more ominous.

The Early European Settlers

Over fifty million people left Europe in a space of one hundred years, with many of them coming to Canada.⁵⁵ People were forced to leave, severing many generations of natural attachments to their native land. These bonds are normally so strong that it takes circumstances of an unusual nature for people to be induced to leave. There were many changes in their use of land and attitude to farm land. The enclosure of the commons into private property, 'sheep eating men', Highland Clearances and the Potato Famines, were all symptoms of earlier changes. These early European settlers saw land in a new continent as a way to build a new life with prospects for enjoying some economic, cultural and religious freedoms.

This was not an easy task. They were strangers in a new country, unaccustomed to its ways, to the character of its soils, adaptation of crops, or its inhospitable climate. It was backbreaking work to clear all the trees before crops could be planted and a house built. They had many physical obstacles to overcome before they could establish a home, and years of hard work before even a moderate security could be established. Many did not have the necessities for survival, and relied heavily on native Indians to share with them their food and skills.

These Europeans had an obsessive attitude about the 'wilderness' which had to be 'tamed'. They considered trees a curse that took a lot of sweat to remove by cutting, burning and stumping. This took years of life and toil, and with it, a growing hostile

attitude towards the forest. A lot of prime lumber was used to manufacture ships to carry cargoes of timber back to Europe where the forest had already been devastated. These attitudes and actions eventually demolished the way of life for the Mi'kmaq.

Some Europeans, such as merchants, shipbuilders and landlords, viewed the land as a commodity to be exploited for profit. And although this group did not represent the predominant attitude to the land in the ensuing period, they did provide the seeds from which the next predominant attitude, that of industrial agriculture, grew.⁵⁶ For many years to come, it was the region's many small farmers who carried the day in terms of cultural attitudes to the land. The organization and politics of this will be explored later in this paper.

After years of wresting land from the forest, the Europeans had immense pride and respect for what the land produced with their care. Settlers worked as families and neighbours to produce a living together with a sense of partnership to the land. A keen understanding grew, of how nature and the laws that governed it, worked. The improvement of land and regeneration of crops and livestock, which were the main goals, had an air of permanency. Some occasionally competed with one another in friendly rivalries but the overwhelming principle was the maintenance of a social bond. It became a bond with the land itself and was reflected in one's self-image. The land and farming were 'a way of life'. This era is reflected upon and highlighted by many novelists in Atlantic Canada.⁵⁷

This 'way of life' has been constantly changing over the years. And numerous crises appeared to threaten it. People responded in many ways; taking a job off the farm in shipbuilding, working in the lumber woods, mines, or moving to the New England States for a period. The home place, for many, would remain one of permanence to which they would return. People specialized in one or more seasonal activities, such as farming, fishing, working the woods in winter, and trapping, as ways of filling the spaces between seasons. Work and life revolved around the seasons and people took pride in the value of diversification offered them. Memory and recollections revolved around the experiences of working a particular season when a given event happened. People can recall with a fine image a particular thing that happened in a certain season and reflect on it. This has built an immense knowledge of information about natural resources and a strong link to historical information of how a place works, some of it passed on from past generations who helped put it together.

The ability to work the seasons comes from an awareness that nothing in the land is static. Events are governed by social, economic, and environmental conditions. This may not always be obvious to those who work full time in the cities, some of whom may view those who work seasonably as jobless and without security. The following verse by Tom Brown ponders this misunderstanding:

Security

Of education, I have little or none;
 never thought I needed one.
 For my wife and I worked side by side,

Steady as the endless tide,
 Sharing sorrow and work and mirth,
 And living off the good old earth.
 In summer I farmed and worked in the wood;
 In winter I hunted and trapped and lived real good.

To me the world was more than kind.
 For I had happiness and peace of mind.
 Then folks began to talk to me
 Of building up security -
 Security in dollars and cents
 So off to the factory to work I went.
 The years have come, the years have passed,
 The so-called security I have at last.
 But to me it was a waste of time,
 For I lost my happiness and peace of mind.
 So just remember and listen to me,
 Happiness and peace of mind are worth more than security.⁵⁸

For many there was always a security in the land: 'You can always make a buck in the woods and a dollar in the bay'. This confidence that lasted for generations has now become severely eroded by, not only economic forces, but cultural attitudes as seen by references to country 'bumpkin' or 'hick'. Recently there has been some attempt to change this image. The MacKenzie Bros. have enjoyed immense popularity with their use of words such as 'proud to be hosers' 'bayboys', 'woodsmen' and 'farmers'. The reference to people as 'transplants' and CFA's (Comes From Away), all bear a reference to the land, and a way of speech that is ingrained in a relationship to the environment. For Islanders, "Where are you from?" is considered more important than someone's name.

The Island Lottery and Settlement

On July 23, 1767, most of P.E.I. was lotteried off to those in line for patronage from the British Crown. Twenty-three were members of Parliament, and the others were military people, aristocrats, and merchants.⁵⁹ A feudal land system was to be established on Isle St. Jean. The grants were given on three conditions:

1. Each lot was to be settled by one person per 100 acres in ten years.
2. It was to be settled by foreign Protestants from thirteen colonies or other European countries.
3. Each landlord was to pay an annual rent, called 'quit rent', to the Colonial Office.

The quit rents were set at two, four and six shillings per 100 acres according to Holland's assessment of land value. The landlords assessed rent to tenants at one shilling per acre for the first year and increased it as land was cleared. This would have yielded incredible profits for landlords at the tenant's expense.

Each lot was to reserve 100 acres for the Church of England, 30 for a school master and 500 ft. frontage on all land bordering on water for fisheries. Failure to comply with these conditions resulted in forfeiture of land to the Crown. As we shall later see, these conditions were not taken very seriously by landlords or the Colonial Office in England. The majority of landlords did very little to encourage settlements. By 1775, only twenty-two lots were still held by the original grantees.

The Island was at this time populated by the Mi'kmaq and Acadians who had escaped the British deportation of 1758. The Mi'kmaq refused to surrender after the fall of Louisbourg and held out until the signing of the Royal Proclamation of Oct 7, 1763. This proclamation ensured security of their lands and freedom to move as hunters and fisherman. It also recognized them as a nation in which future negotiations were possible. In typical European aristocratic fashion, no mention was made of this when the Island was lotteried off.

The first settlers from the new landlords didn't arrive until 1770. James Montgomery, who had acquired 65,000 acres by 1775, had settlers from Perthshire, Scotland, come out in May of 1770. Robert Stewart and tenants from Argyleshire arrived on Lot 18 at Malpeque the same year. The largest of the new settlements was that of Capt. John MacDonald who brought over 300 Highland Scots to Lots 35 and 36, during a very rough time in Scotland for highland tenants. After the battle of Culladen Moer in 1745, the British army brutally repressed the highlanders. In doing so, they removed the obstacles which traditional society had put in the way of the highland clearances. The Highland chiefs and landlords then fell into an easy alliance with commercial and industrial capitalism of England. They required commercial profitability and so called efficient estate management to enable them to gratify their aristocratic tastes and aspirations. The removal of most of the tenants from the land, and grazing more sheep was the way they attempted to accomplish this status.

As part of this new alliance with the British, Captain John MacDonald acquired over 40,000 acres on P.E.I. Another aspect of this alliance was the change of religious persuasion of many highland lords. The landlords, now mostly Presbyterian, were forcing their tenants to change religion. This brought the Catholic Church into supporting immigration to P.E.I. with a priest to accompany them.

Many of the new settlers were not very pleased with the conditions found on P.E.I. Within a year, many were looking to move elsewhere, most notably Nova Scotia and Quebec.⁶⁰ Later, some did move to Cape Breton, among them the brothers and sisters of Bishop MacEachern. The MacEachern family had moved east of the McDonald Estate to St. Andrews, in the Savage Harbour area.⁶¹ A larger group of these settlers moved to Eastern P.E.I., to St. Marguerite and further east. This settlement provided considerable leadership in activities of the Escheat movement in opposition to landlords. Other MacDonald tenants moved to the Orwell area and east. Many of the Irish tenants from the Ft. Augustus and Tracadie areas of the MacDonald Estate moved to areas east and south of the estate.⁶² The MacDonald family was one of the few resident landlords. The land in most other areas was claimed by absentee landlords and they had a harder time enforcing their control.

The Island became a Colony with a Governor in 1769. The first Governor was Walter Patterson, one of the landlords. The government was to be supported by 'quit rents' that

even at this early stage were not forthcoming. The proprietors sent a dispatch to London saying:

Owing to the quit rents not being paid, and that regular payment of them could not be enforced without appointing an Assembly to complete the Legislature.⁶³

Patterson sadly commented in the spring of 1773:

The Island as a government will shortly come to nothing, for I know of no means the officers have, to maintain themselves any longer...they are obliged to support the appearance of a gentleman without the means.⁶⁴

The first Assembly held on July 4, 1773, passed 'an Act of the Effective Recovery of his Majesty's Quit Rents'.⁶⁵ In 1774, they passed a law giving them power to sell by public auction, land on which quit rents were not paid. An auction of some of the properties was held, and Patterson and other government officials took the lands in lieu of salaries owing them. This enraged the absentee landlords in England, and they put pressure on the Colonial Office to have the land returned to its former owners. This struggle between nonresidents and local landlords continued for many years with land changing hands among them. The Governors who went to the colony usually alternated according to their allegiance to resident or non-resident landlords.

The absentee landlords managed their affairs through land agents, who collected the rents or threatened to confiscate tenants' property if they were not paid. These agents were considered little more than highwaymen by the tenants and resistance began to grow against them. In 1796, a pamphlet was published calling for the establishment of a Court

of Escheat on the Island.⁶⁶ By this court, lands would revert to the Crown for nonfulfillment of original grants and those lands granted to tenantry. Tenants protested by refusing to serve in the military.

The next largest flow of immigrants were the Empire Loyalists from the United States in 1784. Patterson promised them land on lots taken in 1774 auctions. The Loyalists were caught in the crossfire of those earlier sales being rescinded. It was they who were the authors of the pamphlet calling for Escheat, referred to earlier, and many became involved in the escheat movement activities that spanned nearly a century.

The early 1790s saw another influence with the coming of over 800 of Highland Scots and some Irish by way of Scotland. In 1803, the Selkirk settlers arrived. In 1804, The population was still under 7,000, about the same population as before the expulsion of the Acadians a half century earlier. Shortly after this, the pace of immigration began to pick up because of the numerous ships coming and going, many of which were built on P.E.I., and loaded with lumber and produce for Europe and other markets.

The Irish came in large numbers in the early eighteen hundreds from the counties of South East Ireland. It is estimated that about 4,000 came from this area of Ireland. Many would have experienced the very brutal crushing of the revolt in 1798 by the British army, who outrightly slaughtered people in this area. After it, the town of Wexford had only 200 people remaining alive.⁶⁷ The second wave of Irish immigration was in the mid

19th century after the potato famine with a similar number of people coming from the north and west counties of Ireland.

Tenants and the Struggle With Landlords

Life was very tough for many settlers on P.E.I. They would spend years clearing land and erecting buildings, only to be forced to vacate and move elsewhere by landlords. The Acadians were put in this situation many times. In 1812, most of the Acadians in St. Eleanors, outside Summerside, were in ongoing conflict with Colonel Compton. After much intimidation by English immigrants to the estate, they moved further west. A tradition among the Acadians, tells of one of Colonel Compton's tenant, Joseph Arsenault, nicknamed 'Joe League and a Half', who found a notice stuck with the tines of a pitch fork to his barn door. The notice said he would receive similar treatment if he didn't leave. The Rev. John MacMillan had this to say of Joe League and a Half:

Mr. Arsenault was a man of considerable influence in the community. He was in a certain sense a leader amongst his countrymen. Fearless in upholding their rights and outspoken in condemning their wrongs, he stood in the ways of English aggression and obstructed these cavetous newcomers in their efforts to obtain possession of the fertile farms of the Acadians. It was necessary therefore that they get him out of the way.⁶⁸

The situation was similarly rough for other Island tenants as well. Angus McAuley, land agent for Landlord Selkirk, wrote to him:

I wish to serve you and the people, it was impossible. The bulk of the inhabitants on this Island consist of entrapped Loyalist and illiterate Roman Catholic highlanders, the latter floating over the face of the

country like Scytheens, without money, bedclothes, or permanent building or residence.⁶⁹

These were rough times which were not made any easier when Governor Smith and Receiver General Carmichael moved to collect rent in Lots 36 and 37 and the more eastern lots in Kings County. They demanded instant payments of arrears or promissory notes redeemable within ten days. Refusal to honour would result in sale of stock or danger to lives. In February, 1823, Carmichael attained judgements in the Supreme Court against small properties of some 40,000 acres in Kings County.⁷⁰ Most of this was never acted upon and could not be enforced. Resistance to such actions was growing, and tenants were refusing to pay rents demanded of them. As early as 1797, landlord MacDonald was complaining of the existence of a Levelling party to Governor Fanning.

Levelling party [that] has been for a year past employed in disseminating principles among our tenants and the people at large which may vie with the like which have laid France in ruins.⁷¹

Captain John was also not pleased with the local Catholic church and its leader, Bishop MacEachern, the son of a family who came out in the original highland settlement with MacDonald. He forbade his tenants from either going to, or contributing to a new church in St. Andrews.⁷² He had Mass said at his own house by his brother Father Augustine MacDonald. Although this ended with his death in 1810, the rift between the MacDonald family and local Catholic clergy continued for many years. The MacDonalds accused many local clergy of helping and abetting the work of the Escheat movement. Most of the new local priests would have been sons of Capt. MacDonald's farmer tenants, and many

of them had relatives active in the Escheat movement. St. Andrews College was set up in 1831 to educate the new clergy. The instructors of this college, and later St. Dunstons were mostly Irish born priests like Walsh, Brady and Phelan.⁷³ They came from the southeast part of Ireland, the area of heaviest resistance to British landlords in late eighteen and early nineteenth centuries. Donald MacDonald, son of Capt. John, complained of Father Brady in a letter to Bishop Bernard MacDonald in 1844. He considered Brady to be responsible for much of the discontent on his estate; and even threatened to evict catholics and replace them with Protestant settlers who would not be influenced by Brady or any other 'escheating, levelling Priest'.⁷⁴ Donald MacDonald, his brother Rev. John MacDonald and other relatives were on the board of St. Andrews College where Father Brady was teaching. In 1844, thirteen years after it opened, the College was closed because of the political differences that existed.

One of the most remembered instances of the resistance occurred in 1819 when Edward Abell, a land agent for James Townsend, was killed in Lot 56 attempting to seize a horse of tenant Patrick Pearce. This memory has been kept alive in many ways with stories such as the following:

This old fellow was in Fortune Church and he went to sleep and the minister was preaching about Cain killing Abel. He woke up. 'You're wrong, sir,' he said. 'It was Pat Pearce. I can show you the exact spot'.⁷⁵

Abell is described in the memory of local people today as a cruel 'son-of-a-gun'. His wife, Susannah Abell, is described in similar terms as 'a selfish and unscrupulous woman who goaded him (Abell) on to acts of harshness and injustice'. In Patrick Pearce's case, it

seems that he had a horse that Suzanne very much wanted. A 120 pound sterling reward, a large sum in this time, was offered for his arrest, but he was never apprehended. His whereabouts was not a secret to local people. Pearce hid first on the Burke farm and then on John Black's at Cape Spry. In the spring, he crossed Blackett's Creek and stayed the night in the attic of George Bank's home at Annandale. Early next morning, the two young Banks girls, Mary and Elizabeth, dressed him in their mother's clothes and rowed him out to a vessel anchored in Grand River.⁷⁶

The land agent who succeeded Abell later resigned in disgust, and joined the struggle of the tenants. He was later elected to the legislature in a by-election in 1831. Male Catholics were given the vote at this time, and as most were of the tenant class, their vote would change the make up of the legislature. William Cooper was the man elected in this by-election, even after a riot was created to disrupt voting. From the recorded speeches of Cooper in the Legislature, we gain a good insight into tenants' view of the struggle. In his first speech of March 27, he argued that the fight over the control of land was really a fight for the control of labour, and challenged the notion that landlords had any real interest in the land itself.

Did they use or occupy the lands themselves? No. Then why did they wish to hold the lands they could not use or occupy? It was not the lands they wanted, but by holding the land, to have claim on the labour of their fellow subjects, who had equal rights with themselves.⁷⁷

Cooper argued that the landlord monopoly of the land was in fact the monopoly control of labour. The land monopoly led to labour enslavement and since British law did not permit

the enslavement of British subjects, such a land system was illegal. He asserted as well that the value of the land really lay with the labour that had been applied to it. If tenants had not cleared the land, it would not have been of value to others. In addressing the tenants he said:

They have wasted their youth in clearing land for others, they have planted their labour where the forest grew ... and built a cabin where the bear has had his den. [There cannot] be greater power given to one man over another than the right of a landlord over poor tenants... . The more I consider the Escheat question, the more plain it appears to me that nothing less than a general Escheat will do justice to or satisfy the inhabitants of this Island.⁷⁸

He argues that tenants had a natural right to the land they farmed because it was they who cleared the land and gave it value. Cooper challenged the whole laissez-faire notions or property relations and the role of the state.

I have been told that ... all restrictions was against the principles of justice, every man had the right to do what he liked with his own property ... That, for example, why should the Miller be restricted more than the Blacksmith, or the Baker more than the Shoemaker or Tailor, or the lenders of money more than the Merchant? Sir, property is the labour of men, and the more that passes through the hands of one person, the faster it would accumulate, if not restricted ... If it is admitted that labour is money, and money is power, then wealth collected by avarice, extortion and fraud, to a great amount, and wielded by craft and deceit, might crush the liberties of mankind; therefore restriction, when applied by justice, is the security of the people's rights and the bulwark and support of Government; and what applies to one class of mankind applies to all; but there cannot be a greater monopoly of the labour of man, than holding the possession of large tracts of land; and where is the restriction on them?⁷⁹

To Cooper, the 'liberties of mankind' were of much greater value than any property rights of individuals. The unrestricted accumulation of private property was opposed to the well-being of society at large. The primary duty of the state was the protection of the

people and their liberties, not property. This ideological position Cooper and others were proposing, ran counter to the flame of liberalism.

The tenants combined organized resistance with electoral politics to prevent landlords from collecting rents or seizing properties. On January 8, 1834, the Royal Gazette carried this story:

On Sunday, June 8, 1834, the Deputy Sheriff and Peace Officers well armed, left Charlottetown to issue warrants against accused in Kings County who refused to come to Court.

The accused being Allan, Isabella, Ronald and Nancy MacDonald and Archibald McCormick... . When the party arrived they encountered a large group of settlers armed with spears, pitch forks and muskets who refused to let them issue warrants saying they would die to a man first.⁸⁰

The tenants' group in the St. Margarets and Newfrage area had a long history of resisting and dealing with landlords. To escape harassment, they or their parents had left the MacDonald estate in Tracadie area years earlier and moved east. Now they were being similarly harassed by landlord Townsend. The community, not to be daunted by harassment, continued to resist and provide leadership to the Escheat movement for many years to come. John Dhru McIntosh, a Gaelic speaking member of the community, was elected as Escheat Party Representative to the legislature in 1835.

Milton Acorn wrote a poem about McIntosh challenging Rev. John MacDonald, who was the son of landlord Capt. John MacDonald. Rev. MacDonald, a priest, was also a landlord, and was suspected of being influential in bringing the army to the area March 9,

1843. Many settlers had to leave their homes and hide in the woods for long periods, to escape being arrested by the army. The poem goes as follows:

John Dhru Macintosh Stands Up in Church
(Saint Margaret's: 1844)
Young John MacDonald...Father as yer called:
A curse it be upon yer father's name
That you bear the same.
Landlord and priest!

Did the shaggy fiend I see standing ahind ye
Think up that combination?
Or was it yersel' since I never knew him
Except thru watching you and yer action.

What a fine life ye hae, coming round
Wi' one a yer claws stretched out fer rent
An'the other one fer tithes,
Hearing confessions! How can we
ever get to own our own land
wi' you onto all our secrets?
Now as the scripture says
We've all took our heads an' reasoned together.

Figured we paid ye enough an' more
For any sacrifice yer father made
an' declare the land is ours: but
we'll hae mercy upon ye.
Gae ye the chance t' make up fer all yer sins.
Take up all yer gear an' leave this parish
Or be a martyr...⁸¹

MacDonald was eventually forced to leave the parish. He stayed around for over a year after Bishop Bernard MacDonald asked him to leave. He refused to vacate the house he lived in without being compensated and eventually he removed the house and buildings from the parish lot. The Bishop assigned Rev. James McIntyre, a newly ordained priest

from the area, to the parish. With Rev. John MacDonald refusing to leave, the situation became tense. Rev. John MacDonald writes of the incident in the following terms:

From September 1843, till August 1844, the Rev. James McIntyre continually interfered, without any authority, in my district or parish, undermining me, and endeavouring to obtain there a footing for himself. He was, as it were, the chaplain of the Escheaters; during which time the Students of St. Andrew's College, submitted to his charge, being mostly without a master, were losing their time, going by night to dances and parties of pleasure; and when at home, entertaining their relations and friends, at the expense of the College.

I wrote to Mr. McIntyre, begging of him to desist interfering in my district, on account of the injury he was doing me. His answer to me was, 'that he would not; that he would report my doings to the Inquisition at Rome, and that tyranny and oppression were the coat of arms of my family.' When I gave up my parish and came to reside here at Tracadie, the Bishop armed the Rev. James Brady with a suspension against me, in case I should presume to perform any clerical functions within his district.⁸²

MacDonald did eventually leave the Island but not before he succeeded in having St.

Andrews College closed. He left, a very dejected man, and in speaking of the Escheaters

he says:

The whole of their energy, skill, and twelve years experience in agitation, was concentrated against me alone. Their fury was increased by their despair of ever obtaining escheat; by their hatred towards me as a proprietor, and a friend of order; by the disgrace of troops having had to be sent after them, and that their cowardice in fleeing to the woods at the approach of the troops, was revealed to the world; and lastly, by the hopes, through the Bishop's pliancy, and favour, of ruining me.

I am represented in an unfavourable light, both in Rome and in Canada, where they knew that an attack on my reputation would affect me most. I am aware that calumnies are believed of me in the latter place, and have been for upwards of twelve years, which it would be too painful for me to undertake to refute; and under which I must lie, not only till the hour of my death, but until my memory is entirely obliterated; and on account of these calumnies all the Bishops of British America are shy towards me. It was an

unfortunate day for me that ever I returned to America. If I had remained in Europe, I should have been esteemed according to my merits.⁸³

MacDonald's despondency casts light on the extent of the influence of the Escheat movement. They had contacts far beyond the borders of P.E.I., and could be effective in using them when troops left the Atlantic region to squelch revolts in the Canadas in the late 1830's. This corresponded to an opportunity for the movement to exert increasing pressure here and this they did.

There were many incidents similar to Eastern Kings County in other parts of the Island. The New London area and Tignish were hot spots also. The October 1832 edition of the British American carried this story:

... some weeks ago Mr. John Collings; a sheriff's officer, went to Lot 1, with a view of executing processes for rent, against some of the tenants of that township; they resisted him in a large armed body at Tignish Bridge and obliged him to return. Several of James Townsend's reforming tenants, being indebted for their rents, the same sheriff's officer, was sent with process against them, and on his return with his assistant they hired a boat to ferry them over the river. The boatman rowed about half way over and then tried to upset the boat in deep water, using the most abusive language towards them; his name is...Aitken, and he lamented that he had not taken out an axe and scuttled or chopped the boat.⁸⁴

The Tignish area tenants' experience with landlords also dated back many years. A number of them would have been Acadian settlers, forced to leave the St. Eleanors area some years earlier, and joined by a number of Irish from the Miramichi area of New Brunswick in 1813. They were in no mood to be pushed around again.

As we can see from these accounts, tenants were widely organized in the resistance to pay rents. On December 18, 1836, a large group of over 700 tenants met at Hay River near Souris and advocated the withholding of rents maintaining that the tenants of the Island "...were victims of fraud, deceit, and oppression on the part of the land monopolist, ... to pay rent any longer to landlords was to foster oppression and reward crime."⁸⁵ On December 24, 1836, tenants from Southern Kings met and unanimously adopted the address and resolutions of the Hay River meeting. When the House of Assembly met after the Hay River and other meetings, Cooper, McIntosh and LeLecheur were expelled by a vote of nine to four for helping to organize those meetings.

Tenants Escheat Party Wins Majority

In the election of 1838 the Escheat Party won 18 of the 24 seats of the Assembly. Cooper was elected Speaker (synonymous with Premier today). With a clear mandate, the party introduced many pieces of progressive legislation, among them the end the leasehold tenure system. These resolutions were passed during the assembly sessions of 1839, '40, and '41. Each time, they were rejected by either the Council or the Colonial Office. In 1839 the Assembly sent Cooper to England to see the Colonial Secretary, John Russell. Russell, however, refused to meet him. The tenant farmers grew despondent about any chance of justice from the electoral system. For them to be involved in electoral system, and operate without fear of being arrested, their rents needed to be paid up. In the election of 1842, the Escheat party held only Kings County.

The tenants spent more of their time organizing active resistance. In March of 1843, tenants of New London in Queens County met and voted to join the eastern tenants in withholding their rents. They passed a resolution saying, “ ... that the government of this Colony, unlike the government of any other Colony, did not govern for the benefit of the majority of the people but for the benefit of a couple of dozen land speculators, thus anxious dependents and parasites.”⁸⁶ This was a strong condemnation of government and showed a high level of frustration in dealing with them. A close look at who these government members were revealed many of them to be land agents who were closely related to one another.

Shortly after the Escheat Party won a majority in the House of Assembly, Governor Fitzroy appointed several Legislative and Executive Councillors. The Escheat Party called for a disclosure of the family compact relations in these appointments. The 1941 Assembly records revealed that landlord Donald McDonald was closely related by marriage to two of his eleven fellow Legislative Councillor, and had more distant family connections with three of the four remaining members of the Executive. This is even more astonishing considering that McDonald was the only Catholic appointed to these groups. Other members were even more closely related. Most of these appointed members were land agents and speculators. This group dominated P.E.I. politics for many years, and became more influential as many landlords gave up in frustration with the strength of the tenants movement. Landlords like Worell left P.E.I. and went back to

England. His 80,000 acre estate as well as Selkirk's and Townsend's were in the area east of Charlottetown which was dominated by the tenant movement.

Land agents took advantage of this situation. With government connections, they were in a good position to frustrate any settlement of the land issue. Some made large fortunes exploiting the long struggle between landlords and tenants. James Yeo, 'The Bully of Lot Eleven' as he was known in a song by Larry Gorman, began his fortune by collecting rents and debts on land claimed by someone else and retaining the proceeds himself. Stories of his misappropriation of the Ellis inheritance are often repeated to this day. He helped himself to lumber on thousands of acres of land where deeds were uncertain.

James Yeo, his son, and other associates were all members of the Assembly, and on many occasions family members were given important government appointments. His son-in-law was Collector of Customs, and his son, James Jr., was Collector of Land Tax. An old employee was appointed Post Master. All these positions were very convenient for Mr. Yeo who was the largest shipbuilder, exporter and importer on the Island. He often boasted that his payroll was larger than government, and that he loaned government money on occasions when they needed it.

Yeo never hesitated to use the power of the ledger to obtain votes. A letter appearing in the newspaper read:

Port Hill, 8 June, 1858--Mr. John McLean; Sir--I am creditably informed you are supporting of W. Grigg in the Election, and he maketh promise to

be adverse to the proprietors. I will advise all Tenants of Lot 9 to be carefull what they are doing, as if any tennents vote for Mr Grigg they had better be prepared to pay their rent; if not, then the must expect Trouble Imeditly. I might say you saw plenty of this kind of work in the year's of 1845, 1846 and 1847, but some are generaly bent for mischef to injure themselves as well as their neighbours. I am, James Yeo.⁸⁷

James Warburton, in evidence given before the Land Commission of 1860 said: "Yeo has shown him no less than thirty-two writs he was issuing against those who had voted against him."⁸⁸ It was also reported to the Commission that tenants from many lots were intimidated by Yeo not to give evidence to the Commission. In his own evidence to the Commission, he said that tenants on part of one of his lots held their land "by their pitchforks". They would never let him or his men near enough to them to take any rent.

The Pope family was another who prospered as land agents and politicians. The father, his two sons and in-laws were all members of government. James was Premier, and William, was Colonial Secretary and a Father of Confederation. William was the principal speculator in the sale of the Worell Estate. His father-in-law, Theophilus DesBrisay, persuaded Worell to sell his 80,000 acres in Kings County to the P.E.I. government for 10,000 pounds, and then with no justification, told Worell that the government no longer wanted to buy it. Worell was then willing to sell for 9,000 pounds, and Des Brisay suggested he talk to his son-in-law; William Pope. Pope made a deal with Worell and in turn sold it to the P.E.I. government of Coles and Whelan for 24,100 pounds.⁸⁹

Coles and Whelan were not land agents, per se, and because they would not support the tenants call for Escheat and withholding of rents, they found themselves in a situation of very little power. Pope was well aware of this and knew if he used threats to take tenants to court for payment of rent, the result would be wide spread riots in northern Kings County. By using the threat of potential rioting, he was able to exhort an exorbitant price for this large estate. This resulted in tenants paying many times over for land they spent most of their livelihood clearing and bringing to agricultural production. Whelan and Coles both died young from personal tragedies. Whelan, died shortly after his defeat at the polls, having served continuously for 21 years from the age of 22. He denounced the Tenants' League and Fenianism, which he called the 'infamous conspiracy', while running in an area of Kings County where both had strong support. Rather than recognising this, he blamed his defeat on a particular Priest; Fr. William Phelan, who actively campaigned for the candidate who supported the tenants cause.⁹⁰ Of George Coles, Milton Acorn has this to say:

"How do you sleep? George Coles?"

"Restlessly."

"Hasn't a hundred years
improved your nerves?"

"It's the pain in my heart."

"You were the duelist
whose aim never scored
until you turned the gun against yourself..."

"That pellet still hurts
but it's not the worst..."

"What then do you hurt for
The Island or yourself?"

"Both"

"Why?"

"I should've siezed history by the throat
and I tried to outsmart it."⁹¹

Tenants had a clear distaste for the government and the practices politicians employed to stay in power. With our open voting system, declaring one's vote orally, the parties involved knew the tally of votes during the election, and who was winning at three o'clock. It was not uncommon to create a disturbance at that time, if it was clear that your side was not going to win. Many supporters were recruited by both sides to keep in check the intimidation that would likely occur.

The Belfast Riots and More Direct Tenant Actions

On many occasions election riots would occur, the most notable one being the Belfast Riots referred to earlier. There were many injuries and hard feelings resulting from this riot. And the Escheat Party candidates did not contest the third attempt at election even though they were declared elected in the first round. The disillusionment after Belfast brought about a move for more direct action on the part of the Tenant League.

In the early 1850's a number of buildings, cottages and houses belonging to landlord Donald MacDonald were destroyed by fire. Large rewards were offered but no convictions ever resulted. MacDonald himself was shot a number of times on the morning of July 25, 1851, at the outer gate of his property in Tracadie. It was said that shots came from both sides of the road and MacDonald:

... fell weltering in blood. So detested was he, that several persons passed by without rendering him any assistance. At length one of his own

tenantry, coming by, took him into Charlottetown in a cart, but was obliged shortly afterward to leave the Island, to escape from the vengeance which would have overtaken the succourer of a tyrant.⁹²

A reward of 100 pounds was offered by the Lieutenant Governor for information, but as usual, such offers did not have much effect in rural P.E.I. Such acts of shooting were not a common occurrence. Tricking, humiliation and harassment of land agents and sheriffs were much more common. My grandfather used to recall an incident where the sheriff was locked in a local turnip cellar. The farmer was forewarned and a plan set up. He was freed only when he tore up the writ, making it impossible for him to continue with seizure of property and arrest. A warning system was set up when ever one saw the sheriff travelling. Conch shells and tin horns were used to warn people that the sheriff was approaching. Groups of people would then gather to harass and attempt to slow and prevent his passage. On a few occasions the sheriff's horse was shot. Milton Acorn's poem describes one such incident:

Incident from the Land Struggle

Well sirs, then we're agreed on the plan.
 Black John here will fire on this Englishman.
 And miss (make sure of that, lad
 The Battle depends on this)
 One quarter mile on, White John
 Will miss too, but closer, and if that
 Stinking piece of rent-collecting manure
 Who dares to call himself a gentleman
 Keeps on, Red John will shoot his horse.
 Old John here will then happen along
 And lend him his horse - the red stallion.
 Once He's on that beast, no more worries
 Except to collect the remains, living or dead
 And carry them back to Charlottetown
 And, of course demand our expenses

Be very particularly
angry
about that.⁹³

With the Land Commission of 1860, the leading landlords suggested how it was to be established and the powers it should have. The British Government wanted unanimous decisions from the members, and agreed to these concessions with the hope that they would abide by decisions made. This was not to be the case. The Commission recommended against some proprietorial interest, and its recommendations were not accepted by Colonial Office. Tenants, snubbed by the political system, further resolved to build an Island wide tenants union.

Island Tenants Union

The early meetings to form this Island wide group were held in Fort Augustus at Callaghans' Tavern and in surrounding areas, with the founding Convention held in Charlottetown on May 19, 1864. All tenants were to sign a pledge that read:

That we the Tenantry of _____, individually and collectively, virtually and solemnly, pledge our honor and fidelity to each other, to withhold the further liquidation of rent, and arrears of rent, and thus voluntarily enroll our respective names as a Tenant organization to resist the distraint, coercion, ejection, seizure and sale for rent, and arrears of rent, until a compromise be effected, in conformity with resolutions proposed and carried by the meetings in Lots 48, 49 and 50, and further understood that each signature hereto annexed, bear a proportional share of expenses in connection with this organization.⁹⁴

By December of 1864, the Union had a membership of 11,000 and were openly defying the sheriff and his posses. In early March of 1865, all attempts to arrest James Callaghan of Fort Augustus failed. On St. Patrick's Day, March 17, a large group of tenants met at Southport and crossed over on the ice to form one of the largest demonstrations ever held in Charlottetown.

As all Tenant Union members had signed a pledge to no longer pay rent, they could be arrested at any time by the sheriff. On the occasion of the St. Patrick's Day demonstration, Sheriff Curtis and Justice Des Brisay attempted to arrest Samuel Fletcher; a scuffle ensued and he was able to get away. This was a poor move on their part, as the tenants had made it known that they would assemble in force and rescue the victims in jail. On March 22, the Governor issued a proclamation declaring the Tenants' League an unlawful association and took action to arrest some of its leaders. On April 7, a force of two hundred assembled to travel to Alberry Plains to arrest Samuel Fletcher.⁹⁵ The force was composed mostly of citizens of Charlottetown, many of them sympathetic to tenants. The Cavalry, composed of land agents and sympathizers, went ahead, driven by horses. The infantry took up the rear, but with the roads muddy, the trip was slow. The cavalry being far ahead was faced by a 'battery of canons' apparently manned by a large number of people. The approaching troops were struck with terror and sent forth a flag of truce. The fort consisted of a number of stovepipes manned by a number of hats placed on poles. The hatless Tenant Leaguers watched from the woods. Though embarrassed, the Cavalry continued to Fletcher's farm. Seeing Fletcher standing by the gate, they made a charge,

only to capture the straw-filled effigy of Fletcher. They marched back to Charlottetown to face a taunting public.

The sheriff and posses continued to make visits into the countryside, and on every occasion were met by tenants who would gather in large numbers to prevent writs being served or arrests being made. In one confrontation in July of 1865, Charles Dickinson, a tenant farmer from New Glasgow, was arrested and jailed in Charlottetown. On the day of his trial, a large demonstration of tenants made the day tense for armed guards in Charlottetown. There was an attempt to rescue him from authorities that nearly succeeded.⁹⁶ Later, he was released from jail.

There is an interesting account in Robert Harris's diary of Tim Monaghan's trial. Harris and others came across a number of angry Monaghan Road settlers while attempting to survey land for the Stewart Estate.

The sequel of affair much talked of at the time, was a trial for riot and assault in Charlottetown, Tim Monaghan and the most active of his friends being prosecuted. ... The case was of course, perfectly clear against the men. At that time, however, it was nearly impossible to get a jury to convict in a trial in which the Settlers were the aggressors against the Landlords.

Accordingly, after a very uncomfortable visit in the County Jail, the valiant Mr. Monaghan and his Colleagues, who, as they said, 'were in it wid'im' were set free.

...in fighting for what he considered the rights of any man who chopped out a living in the wild woods, the old cock would perhaps have been well rewarded by having the road's name changed in order to commemorate his name and exploits. For as our friend of the moving machine observed, he was in his day a "fine, lively auld devill."⁹⁷

The settlers had the name of the road changed to honor Monaghan and informed landlord Stewart and Harris of this.

The government and legal system of the colony were almost powerless to match the strength and wit of the Tenant Leaguers. The tenants had no respect for them and even had harsh words for Liberal politicians like Whalen. A meeting of the Tenants League declared Edward Whalen “a bitter enemy of the tenantry of P.E.I.”⁹⁸ The local Sheriff; Thomas A. Todd, in a letter to the Colonial Secretary wrote:

I am completely powerless to execute any writs placed in my hands. This Case is one of such serious nature that no time ought to be lost in taking the military into your serious consideration.⁹⁹

Seeing the overall support for the Tenant League and its aims, the Government and Judiciary panicked and sent for British troops. A garrison was sent from Halifax, but while on the Island, many of the soldiers were enticed to desert. The number that deserted was so high that authorities feared that the Colonial Office might recall them. Laws were passed to forbid soldiers from entering taverns.¹⁰⁰ People were arrested and jailed for enticing soldiers to desert. A new ingenious trick was played on them upon their arrival. Ray Gill of Elliotvale recalls a story passed on to him about his ancestors, who being blacksmiths, were busy making cannon sounds from heated anvils (they contracted when water was poured on them), to disperse soldiers when they were marching in the countryside. Once the soldiers were dispersed, people were able to talk to them

individually about the real conditions.¹⁰¹ Ross's Weekly, a publication sympathetic to the Tenants Union, described the army presence this way:

On the 6th of August, a company of red coats arrived, who marched up Queen Street, armed to the teeth, evidently expecting every moment to meet a deadly assault from some unseen enemy. They, however, advanced without interruption, until they arrived at a field in the vicinity of Spring Park, where tents were pitched, arms stacked, and sentries placed at every vulnerable point, ready for any emergency. As no enemy put in an appearance, they prepared their dinners. Night coming on, and no hostile tenants approaching with murderous intent, the wearied soldiers threw themselves upon the grass, waiting in battle array for the bugle call, at the least alarm. To the astonishment of both officers and men, they found themselves on the following morning, located in one of the most peaceable communities that could be desired. The citizens heartily welcomed the strangers, and vied with each other in showing them all the courtesies possible, to make them feel comfortable while lying in camp. In course of time commodious barracks were erected and occupied, while the gallant soldiers enjoyed one of the finest seasons that could befall their lot. An occasional excursion to the country for the sake of appearances, was all the duty they were called upon to perform, and so far as could be learned, they were exceedingly sorry when orders came for their withdrawal from the colony. They then bid adieu to a people, who were not only peaceable, but law abiding, and looked upon their being sent here as a huge burlesque.¹⁰²

The climate became such that landlords had no credibility or influence as landlords.

Haviland, the Colonial Secretary in 1871 declared: "I am not any longer a proprietor."

Pope, Premier at this time, declared: "There is not a proprietor at present in the House".¹⁰³

This didn't stop the sparring over the land issue, however. In 1872, Pope described MacNeil, a Tenant League member of the assembly, as a Communist General in the Pares Commune. MacNeil retracted that Pope attempted to rule the Island by bayonet, the handcuffs and the jail.¹⁰⁴ The remaining landlords were bought out with a loan from the Government of Canada as an enticement to join Confederation.

The Rural Community

One might think from all this struggle that not much of economic value would be produced. The very opposite was the case. The economy expanded at a rapid pace from the late 1820's and continued to grow until the late 1860's. Agriculture expanded rapidly and accounted for more than two-thirds of the export value from the Island.¹⁰⁵ In addition, between 1830 and 1864, 2,362 vessels were built on the Island. These vessels were used to transport Island produce and greatly facilitated trade. The Island had many small industries located in the rural areas which made them very self-reliant, and for the most part, independent of Charlottetown. Tenants were able to keep it this way because of their strong organizational abilities. They used communication systems superior to those of land agents and lawyers in Charlottetown, or 'Charlotteville', as it was often called to describe the attitudes of the gentry who resided in Charlottetown and attempted to rule from there.

The attitude of the 'Charlotteville' gentry towards women was different than rural P.E.I.'s, and tenants took advantage of this. The males would often hide when the sheriff approached, as the writs were issued in their names. The women, left to deal with the sheriff and his posse, were often not very kind to them. Some women, like Isabelle and Nancy MacDonald, were arrested after attacking the Sheriff and his party. It was not uncommon for women in rural P.E.I. to be pretty good scrappers and boxers. My grandfather would recount stories where his women cousins were able to clean up on trouble makers at dance halls.

Errol Sharpe, in his thesis: "From the Past to the Future: Rethinking Rural Society and Social Change", looked closely at the role women played in rural P.E.I. He studied a number of diaries and interviewed older people who had a good recall of the way things were in years past. He says:

The social relations ... largely orchestrated as they were by women, maintained and reproduced the rural community which was organized economically, politically and socially as a self sustaining community situated on the periphery of industrial capitalist society.¹⁰⁶

There was very little change in the size, and number of rural households in P.E.I. until the mid-20th century. In 1881, there were 13,629 farms, 13,701 in 1921 and 12,230 in 1941. The size also remained virtually the same; an average of 83 acres in 1881, 89 in 1921 and 96 acres in 1941.¹⁰⁷ The dramatic change in the number and size of farms occurred from the mid-20th Century onwards. By 1971, the number of farms was down to 4,543, a drop of 7,687 since 1941; a decline of over two-thirds. The diaries Sharpe examined revealed that just as the number and size of farms remained the same, so did the type of household and community. There was a very high amount of social contact. One household either had visitors or went out themselves 279 days of the year.¹⁰⁸ People found deep roots in the community and households of which they were a part. This gave meaning to their lives and a sense of belonging. The community knew itself very intimately, and developed a maturity of relationships that permitted widespread cultural development. A strong support system developed to sustain this. The role of women was crucial in organizing the social needs and activities in nurturing this cohesiveness, from 'rearing the kids', to 'looking after the visitors, the needs of the school, nurturing the sick and

organizing social events'. This was all very crucial to sustaining the community which was forged by the long and continuous struggle to gain control of the land they farmed, from landlords.

From the events described in the preceding pages, we can see that the mid 19th century was a time of a very successful and ingenious struggle on the part of Island tenantry. With their organizational abilities, tenants were successful for large periods of time in preventing landlords from having any real say over lands they claimed to own. This period developed into one of the most prosperous times in Island history. Many of the large rural homes we see today, were built in those days on land for which some tenants had no registered deed. I believe this to be an immense tribute to the political action and organizational ability of Island farmers at this time. The prosperity of the time was directly related to this. Our ancestors demonstrated that the freedom to order their lives was dependent on the right to have control of the land as well as the surplus which the land provided. They built the base movement in rural P.E.I. that has provided the social context for the development of many of the traditions that ensued. One of those traditions was a strong folksong movement.

Folksongs

"All the place down there years ago was full of poets. Everybody was making poems."¹⁰⁹

Edward Ives, who has written about P.E.I. folksingers like Larry Gorman and Lawrence

Doyle, quotes Jim Whitty as saying this about eastern P.E.I in this era. The strength of character and co-operation that was effectively built in rural P.E.I., provided the relationships where an oral culture could easily thrive and grow. The tradition of satire played a large role in shaping attitudes within a community. There was a disdain for those who were anti-social, 'big feelin'', 'coy', or overly materially oriented as individuals. Such people were often 'songed', with humiliating effect. The satirized society is often the author of satire. The satirist must experience an identity with what he or she satirizes. The song becomes a powerful weapon for those who have a sharp perception for the weakness and failures of character and can respond to the challenge. Larry Gorman was a master at this, as evidenced by his song, 'The Bully of Lot Eleven', about James Yeo, a large landlord, shipbuilder and politician, detested by Gorman and others. The twenty verse, 'The Shon Van Vogh', is an adaption by Gorman from a well-known Irish patriotic song. The title meaning poor old woman, in Gaelic was about a particular woman who threatened Gorman not to make a song about her. Other songs in this tradition, by Gorman, are: 'The Bachelor's Hall', 'The Horse's Confession', 'The Pack of Hounds', 'The Gull Decay', 'Mic Riley', 'Michael O'Brien', 'Dame Bruin', 'McElroy', 'Yeo's Party', 'As I Was Going Down to Mrs. Yeo's', 'Lord Be Praised', and 'I Am Amazed'. There are scores of them. Edward Ives, in the Appendix to his book; "Larry Gorman": The Man Who Made The Songs", lists ninety-six that were reported or taped by him.¹¹⁰ A number of them involve lumber woods themes, with the lumber bosses bearing the brunt of the satirical treatment. Once 'songed', it was unlikely that such a boss would be able to assemble a very good crew again. Gorman's family was involved in the tenant farmer

movement with his father being a sitting member of the Escheat Party in the Island Assembly when they held the majority of seats in the late 1830's.

Ives talks of many other songmakers he was introduced to, while doing his work on Lawrence Doyle. Doyle's songs are not of the same satirical fashion as Gorman's. He takes a particular pun out of a situation, as in the song, 'The Picnic at Groshount', which is about an occurrence at a particular tea party. Tea parties were a common summertime event that attracted thousands of people and usually lasted for a day or more. They were often sponsored by a church or community group. This particular one was going to serve non-alcoholic cider, so alcohol was freely passed out earlier in the day. The barrels got mixed up; the cider was very strong and so was the reaction. Songs like the 'Merchants of the Bay' and 'The Bay Bridge' were social commentaries on events of the time.

Many of these songs are sung by local singers today. Teresa Doyle, a well-known Island folksinger, has recorded a number on her album, title, "Prince Edward Isle, Adieu". This song is attributed to Lawrence Doyle, and a few verses were cited earlier in this paper, when we talked of Joe Walsh and the Belfast Riots. The song talks of landlords and 'the knaves who made us slaves and sold Prince Edward Isle'.

Folksongs are a powerful statement of a people. Often more can be learned about people by listening to their songs than in any other way. Into the songs go the hopes, angers, fears, wants and aspirations. Songs have always been the sharpest statement of people and

cannot be easily ignored or destroyed, especially when coming from the type of society described in this chapter. In 19th century rural P.E.I. culture was maintained and transmitted by word-of-mouth. Folklorists study culture and how the quality, substance, and style is determined by the conditions of the society that produces it. Ray B. Browne; a folklorist, states:

The folklore that lasts is the creative acts of single individuals and the recreative acts of many persons - the mass of the folk. Larry Gorman, Woody Guthrie, and others of their kind, were creative geniuses who were of the folk. The material they created was from and of the folk, containing characteristics easily taken up and possessed by the folk. ...The material they accept, and recreate must be their kind of lore.¹¹¹

This quote is also commendable, in that it mentions Larry Gorman with Woody Guthrie and others. It is an indication of how well recognized Larry Gorman and the rural culture of 19th Century P.E.I was.

We have seen from the discussion in this chapter that the way people view and live with the land certainly has a cultural impact on the way people organize their lives. The early European settlers had immense pride and respect for the land, and built a strong and lasting culture that reflected this. The Mi'kmaq people had close ties and a strong cultural communication with the land that strongly influences them to this day.

Landlords and merchants like MacDonald and Yeo had much different concepts of land, a culturally abstract relationship to the land. They wanted unlimited ownership and control, which necessitated controlling people as well as the land.

In the next chapter I will look at late 20th Century P.E.I., and how the community and culture built in the era just discussed influenced present day concerns about the land on P.E.I. Changes in the past three decades have brought the issues of land ownership and use into the forefront where it has become a sensitive and highly charged issue. It remains the big issue of the day, even if the institutions have changed over time. In chapter three, I will concentrate on the Co-operative movement, the emergence of business dealers, and the push for the industrialization of agriculture implicit in the P.E.I. Development Plan. I will also discuss the responses to how people view these issues about the land and their relationship with each other.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PAST QUARTER CENTURY

The Tractor Demonstration

In the summer of 1971, at the height of the tourist season in mid-August, tourists and other motorists found the travelling extremely slow on Prince Edward Island. Hundreds of farmers were out on the major highways slowing traffic to a 'snails pace'. On the tractors were signs with the following messages:

"Campbell wants 2 out of 3 Farmers Kicked Out."
 "N F U on the March."
 "Land Development Corporation. Hands off Our Farms."
 "Campbell. Your Land Policy Stinks." (with a picture of a skunk)
 "We Farmers have been pushed around too long. We want an answer."
 "If you think this is Slow Ask the Government for Something."¹¹²-

The tractor demonstrations, mass rallies and pamphleteering were spread over a period of ten days until bus loads of RCMP and heavy highway equipment were called in.

A leaflet called the 'Highwayman' passed out to motorists during these demonstrations had this to say about the 'Just Society':

Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau is an immensely rich and powerful man.
 Premier Alex Campbell presented Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau with a gift last week--A piece of Prince Edward Island.
 The dispossessed farmers -- those who have been foreclosed on by the P.E.I. government's Land Development Corporation find it difficult to understand how this fits the concept of a 'just society'? Why forcibly take land from people who are producing food and give it to someone for a playpen that might, at best, be used for only a couple of days of the year?

Why take the land and homes from families that have worked hard yet have nothing, and -- at the same time -- give land to a man already overstuffing with power and privilege? Your attitude makes farmers angry Mr. Campbell. So does yours Mr. Trudeau. And all the three ring circuses in the world, such as you staged here last week, will not change that one bit. We will judge you on your performance -- not on your public relations stunts.¹¹³

The pamphlet also contained a message entitled 'Our Heritage':

Over one hundred years ago the British monarchy paid off some of its old war debts by giving Prince Edward Island to their creditors. The new owners immediately set about enriching themselves by raising the price of land rentals. The farmers refused to pay the unjust increased rentals. The new owners complained to the King who had the sheriff sent out to collect. No collections were made so the King sent in the Army. By this time Island farmers had organized the P.E.I. Tenants League. The main point, however, is that the farmers organized to protect themselves against exploitation, they fought and they won! Does this sound familiar?¹¹⁴

This demonstration and show of force took many on P.E.I. by surprise, especially many of the establishment figures. They were not prepared for such a reaction. There was no indication in the established media that there was such dissatisfaction with the direction of the 'Development Plan'. The local media carried all the government press releases describing the 'wonderful' work being done on P.E.I. with federal dollars. They also covered in great detail the many lavish events organized to show the 'wonderful' work being done by Federal and Provincial governments. The local media seemed dazzled by the extent to which it was wined and dined at so many events. While the tractor demonstration was in progress, a number of high profile events were taking place with Federal and Provincial Cabinet Ministers. Federal Ministers, Jean Marchand and Don

Jamieson, were flown by helicopter from one event to another. On one day, they visited the Brudenell Kitten Club in the morning, the agro business of C. M. McLean's and Eric Robinson's in the afternoon, then flew over Summerside where they had intended to visit the Mayor at a complex on the waterfront. They flew over Summerside, rather than landing, because over 1500 farmers and their supporters were there to meet them. Instead, the helicopter flew on to visit a tourist complex being built by the government at Mill River.¹¹⁵

The Premier refused to meet with demonstrators and attempted to avoid the situation. The only demonstrations they had experience with in the recent past were students who they were in the habit of ignoring as much as possible. The strategy of relying on the locally established media to gain Islanders acceptance of the development plan initiatives was beginning to unravel, and government officials did not know how to react to this. As seen below, the feelings of many Islanders about the role played by the established media was revealed often in letters to a new publication appearing in 1971, known as the Broad-Axe:

Dear People

I just recently read the first edition of your paper; "The Broad-Axe", and if nothing else, was very impressed by your frankness in dealing with some of the bigger issues that face us around the Island. When the daily papers so abuse the truth of many local situations by their refusal to make it public, it is good to find someone with the guts to reveal it.

Yours Sincerely,
Pat Callaghan¹¹⁶

Dear Sir:

I have just finished reading your first edition of the Broad-Axe.
 Congratulations on doing such a good job. Your paper surpasses anything
 available to our people in this province in terms of being evocative.

Best Wishes

Alfred Morrison¹¹⁷

Dear Sirs:

I have read your second (my first) issue of this paper, and please find
 enclosed my subscription. I really cannot afford it, and yet, I also feel I
 cannot afford to be without it, because it has brought me the most
 enjoyment I've had in a long time. You speak my language, that is, the
 words I can understand.

Forgive me, I've been carried away, and please do not use my name; it is
 too cold to be kicked out.

Yours Sincerely.¹¹⁸

Gentlemen:

I have read the first issue of your paper and am very glad to see that
 somebody is starting to get mad about the horrendous things that the
 government is doing to the Island.

Best Wishes

D. L.¹¹⁹

The Broad-Axe began publication monthly in August, 1971 and continued for a couple of
 years. It was published by the Tenants' Union with contributions from the Farmers
 Union, as well as labour, native and welfare groups. In its first issue, the newspaper
 describes the:

"Rebirth of the Broad-Axe"

Maybe it is just coincidence but the Broad-Axe was first published in
 1871. Maybe it is just coincidence but things needed to be said then as
 they do now. So we decided we should start to say them and decided to

bring back the old name. From one end of P.E.I. to the other people are getting shafted. They are the victim of some kind of screwed-up development that both parties have attempted. The result is that things are now worse than ever. The other result is that all of this goes unnoticed by the local media, or if it is treated at all it gets distorted.

Farmers, Fishermen, Tenants, Kids in the Court System, and many others have not had any worthwhile access to the media, --- until now, that is. The Broad-Axe has been reborn for just that reason. Use it. It will be here for the next hundred years !!!"¹²⁰

This quote from the Broad-Axe, along with the letters supporting the publication, show a high degree of dissatisfaction with the coverage of events in the established media, as well as a high degree of admiration and support for a paper willing to talk about issues that people felt were important.

People had long and enduring values attached to the society in which they lived, and wanted those values to be part of the future. They were not prepared to ignore the past; instead, they were determined to draw from it, in order to shape and build their future. The leaflet 'The Highwayman', with the insert 'Our Heritage' quoted earlier, demonstrates the influence of this earlier period in the staging of the tractor demonstration. As well, the Broad-Axe of the 1970's included a number of editorials and articles on the Tenant League from the Broad-Axe of 1871.

In the preceding chapter, we discussed how relations constructed during the 19th Century land struggle were sufficiently mature to sustain rural peasant community values for many years to come. The attachment to these values made it much more difficult for industrial

capitalist values to grow and become as dominant as they were other places. It took the immense infusion of federal dollars with the Development Plan of the 1970s and more recently, the ideological shift associated with free trade for capitalist values to become firmly entrenched on P.E.I. In the struggle between traditional values and the capitalist market, there were many demonstrations and battles to win concessions to protect the land and character of rural P.E.I. These struggles will be highlighted in this chapter.

Co-operatives

Over the past century or more, many co-operatives developed in rural P.E.I. The first peoples Bank of North America operated from 1864 to 1897 as the Farmers Bank of Rustico. The stone building with the name still stands today. The first co-operative dairy in Canada, for which there is a record, was formed in the 1890's. A unique egg grading and poultry co-operative operated in many areas of P.E.I. between 1913 and 1940. The pooling and marketing of potatoes began in the 1920's. There were also livestock and wool marketing co-operatives. The first Fishermans Union of record in Canada was established in Tignish in 1924.

John Weir in his doctoral dissertation on co-operatives in P.E.I. says: "The rural areas of Prince Edward Island are typified by a strong solidarity and by attitudes of egalitarianism and tolerance."¹²¹ He talks of the many study groups and clubs formed in the 1930's that went on to form Credit Unions and other Co-operatives. Some of the organizational

direction for these groups came from the extension department of St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, N.S. and from St. Dunstons in Charlottetown, P.E.I. The directors of university extension departments, and personnel in the P.E.I. Department of Agriculture worked with co-operatives, and encouraged the use of new technology to modernize farming and fishing. The uncritical acceptance of modernizing approaches and the paternalistic way they were introduced, however, often ran into opposition from Co-op members. Many farmers had doubts about the effects of chemical farming on the land, and fishermen were suspicious of the use of dragger technology on fishing stocks. These and others tensions, resulted in a call for a complete investigation of Co-operatives and Credit Unions on P.E.I. at the 1953 Annual meeting of the P.E.I. Co-operative Union. The investigation, however, never happened.

The Federation of Agriculture was a federation of co-operatives and other agriculture associations. Of it, John Weir says:

It does not try to improve the position of its members by means of participating in the market, rather it tries to benefit them by exerting political pressure on their behalf, and supplying them with information on various topics.¹²²

This orientation of the federation of agriculture and service co-ops left farmers in a very vulnerable position in the market place. Private dealers and other capitalists were moving towards increasing positions of power in the market place. The modernization push would help them to further consolidate and move to a higher level of capitalist development. Some members of the Rural Development Council, an association made up

mostly of cooperative members and clergy became alarmed and through community schools, were instrumental in bringing the National Farmers Union to P.E.I. Others members of the Rural Development Council were content to work with the P.E.I. government, and signed a contract with them to become part of the implementation of the development plan.

The Development Plan

The Development Plan began as a federal initiative with objectives similar to the Federal Task Force on Agriculture released in 1969. Its purpose was to modernize Island agriculture which was considered to be 'backward' and underdeveloped in relation to the industrial sector. The Plan, staffed mainly by 'experts from away', wanted to train people in the modern virtues of entrepreneurship and competition. This along with other measures would, they believed, lead to the creation of 'viable economic units'. To quote the Plan:

The historical pattern of land ownership is badly adapted to the needs of modern technology for Agriculture, forestry, and tourist development ... In this environment, the first step required to permit full development of the Islands' resources, is a province wide land management program... . The objectives of the measures to be implemented for agriculture is to double net value by 1976. This income may be produced from a resource base formed by 2,500 commercial farm units.¹²³

The plan talked of removing two-thirds of the farmers from the land. They proposed to do this in a number of ways; by having farmers sell land to the government in exchange for a

pension, by foreclosing on farmers in debt, and by denying credit to farmers not considered viable economic units. The Plan would not accommodate those who were not in a position to expand, capitalize, or invest in new technology.

The modernization approach disregarded the Island's previous history and proposed capitalism as the answer to the 'backwardness' of farming. According to the modernizers, the problem was not markets and prices received, but people, and how fast they were prepared to accept the end to their way of life. The Plan says:

The limiting factor on the rate of development will not be markets so much as the rate at which it proves possible to achieve the structural and social adjustments required to use the Island's agricultural resources more fully.¹²⁴

History has shown, however, that you cannot solve farm problems by ignoring income and markets, and concentrating only on the elimination of farmers. Farmers have been eliminated, and the problems associated with earnings remain.

It is clear that the basic considerations guiding the policies of the Development Plan were other than farmers and the land. There was no reference made to the sources of problems in the Island economy, or their underlying causes. No alternatives to capitalist modernization was considered in the Development Plan. Instead, there seemed to be a preoccupation with capitalism to the exclusion of many other possibilities. There was no consideration for the culture, the community or the way of life of Island farmers. The planners, it appears, held a similar view to that of the landlords involved in the highland

clearances in Scotland. In both cases, they considered the removal of most farmers as a necessary pre-condition to the establishment of an economically efficient agriculture system. Many Islanders, as their ancestors before them, were not impressed and were determined to resist the direction and aims of the Development Plan. The remainder of this chapter will highlight this resistance.

There was a concerted effort on the part of government to get groups and community organizations on side, in the days leading up to the official signing of the development plan agreement. Members of the Rural Development Council and other organizations were hired to be part of the implementation. When the Development Plan people learned that students from Prince of Wales College were going to picket the official signing and initiation party to launch the Development Plan, representatives were dispatched to prevent such a picket.¹²⁵ The Plan later hired the Student Union Executives of St. Dunstons University and Prince Wales College as summer students in 1969. These measures to prevent any public signs of dissent involving the Development Plan didn't succeed for very long. In early 1970, students from U.P.E.I. occupied the offices of the Provincial Department of Education.¹²⁶ Many had sleeping bags and were determined to stay for as long as it took to prevent government plans to raise tuition and residence fees. High school students across the Island boycotted classes in support. And because many UPEI students worked with the National Farmers Union and the Tenants Union, they also received support from both of these organizations.

Over the next year government was becoming increasingly frustrated in its attempts to control dissent. In the 1971 legislature session an act to 'Prohibit Certain Public Gatherings' was introduced. The Act passed all readings in record time. By this act, any meeting of two or more people would need consent and approval. The Government attempted to justify this extreme measure by saying it was concerned about outside influences on Island youth, especially in connection with a rock concert being planned for P.E.I. that summer. Other probable influencing factors were the ruffling of some cabinet ministers at a UPEI Teach-In the same year, and undercover reports on visiting speakers like the Black Panthers, and representatives of English, German and Japanese student movements.¹²⁷

There were numerous demonstrations against the "Act to Prohibit Certain Public Gatherings". Demonstrators kept up a picket at the Provincial Legislature. A weekend rally was held in Rochford Square, and on April 7, a large demonstration of 1,500 farmers and students filled the Legislative grounds.¹²⁸ Because of this determined opposition, the Act was never enforced. Surprised by the extent of the resistance, the Government agreed to set up a committee to review the 'Act to Prohibit Certain Public Gatherings'. They also met with the Farmers Union at a later date, and agreed to request some small changes from the Treasury Board, which was set up with federal and provincial representatives to administer the Development Plan. These were turned down, as the Federal Government was determined to proceed with the original objectives of the Plan. The farmers responded with the tractor demonstration referred to at the beginning of this chapter.

The tractors started moving on the highways on August 12, and over the next few days the numbers kept growing. Soon, there were fifty to one hundred tractors located in numerous places across P.E.I. Although many motorists and tourists visiting the Island were inconvenienced by the slow moving traffic and long line ups, the response from them was generally favourable to farmers' concerns. One survey taken by the media, showed that over 70% of slowed motorists supported farmers concerns.¹²⁹ Premier Campbell did not see it the same way, however, and in a radio broadcast on August 20, he condemned the tractor demonstration: "The government I lead cannot and will not govern under the threat of ultimatums."¹³⁰

The construction trades went on strike during the summer of 1971, and there was talk of the possibility of a general strike. This was averted when the Provincial Government made a deal with representatives of some international unions to bring in a new Labour Act in exchange for not supporting a general strike.¹³¹ The tractor demonstration ended after the roads were blockaded at Borden and the ferry to New Brunswick closed down. The RCMP with military backing moved in to remove the blockade and arrest Union leaders.¹³²

This demonstration was a highly educational experience for most Islanders. The issues were debated in kitchens and coffee shops all over P.E.I. Feelings ran high and sides were taken on the issues. The Tourist Association was the only organization to publicly support the government and condemn the farmers. It was worried that the image of P.E.I.

would be hurt by the demonstrations. The government was now on the defensive and over time were forced to recognize the support and respect gained by the Farmers Union. Over the next two decades, there were many times when the N.F.U. would become the 'unofficial' opposition to succeeding Liberal and Tory governments.

Tourism and Land

In the early 1970's, the P.E.I. Government boasted that tourism would overtake agriculture and fisheries as the number one industry on the Island. Large amounts of public dollars were put towards building tourist establishments and promoting the Island as a tourist paradise. It was not long before the results of this promotion came into conflict with traditional views on how land should be used and who should own it. The Development Plan proposed two new National Parks on P.E.I. In the summer of 1970, the public participation sector of the Development Plan were busily passing around internal memos discussing ways to relocate people from 12,000 acres in Eastern P.E.I.¹³³

The success in tourist promotion created a crisis in non-resident ownership of land and shore frontage. A survey in September, 1972 revealed that 92,000 acres of land were in non-resident holdings which included 100 miles of shore frontage.¹³⁴ This survey did not include land holdings of corporations with only a 'paper' office in P.E.I. These figures were alarming to Islanders who remembered the history of absentee ownership. I will

examine this issue along with the National Park issue in more detail after reviewing the Plan's concept of tourist development.

According to the P.E.I. Department of Tourism Handbook in the early 1970's:

Prince Edward Island still maintains the charm of a century ago... . It is a place of leisure, an area of contentment, a holiday haven. It is a small pastoral province on the seacoast of Eastern Canada renowned for its excellent white beaches, Its hospitable people and its quiet but modern summer resorts.¹³⁵

The cultural image of Islanders as a placid, simple, quaint, pastoral people was further denigrated with a large caption advertisement placed in Island daily papers in June, 1973. Islanders were told to be 'a Sidewalk Ambassador' and given instructions in how to relate to tourists:

WELCOME A VISITOR WEEK JUNE 25 - JULY 1
Be a Sidewalk Ambassador Welcome a Visitor

1. Ask if you can give help when a stranger appears lost or hesitant.
2. Take time to give accurate and specific directions.
3. Speak slowly and distinctly (but don't "shout") when assisting a foreign visitor.
4. Walk with him a block, or even more, to point out the way.
5. If he is a photo fan, offer to take a snapshot of him with his camera. Many tourists appreciate this courtesy.
6. Be enthusiastic and well-informed about your local sightseeing attractions.
7. Post this on your office, union, church or synagogue bulletin board.
8. Be friendly. Be Helpful. Be hospitable.

REMEMBER: Some travellers most lasting memory of your town or city may be you.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM¹³⁶

These insidious instructions did not fit well with many Islanders, who had a proud cultural image of their heritage.

The Department of Environment and Tourism engaged large city firms as consultants for advice on tourist development. Project Planning Associates in their Tourism and Recreation plan say:

... that the entire Island will be a special North American environment where vacationers will find the quiet and serenity which the Island now provides. This is the atmosphere which cottagers seek, and because there are fewer and fewer places in North America where this quality can be found there will be increasing interest in the Island as a place to build a vacation home. Not only is the unspoiled quality of the environment an increasingly scarce commodity but the Cultural and Political stability of the Island make it a desirable location for investment. The Island has interesting historic locations, the people are culturally similar to the 50 million person tourist market within two hours travel time of the Island; the Island is a part of a politically and economically stable country; there are no race or class problems. Partly because of these factors, substantial investments are now being made in land on the Island. This will be followed by construction of good quality seasonal homes if investors know that planning and development controls will protect their investment.¹³⁷

Taking this advice, it is not surprising that Premier Campbell and the Tourist Association were worried about the wrong image of P.E.I. being created by tractors demonstrating on the highways. No where in the tourism promotion literature is there a mention of the needs of Islanders. Tourist development was thought of as pandering to the fantasies of the metropolitan rich. Foreign investment in Island land was considered a positive benefit, while no thought was given to the relocation of Islanders to form the parks needed for tourists. Tourist complexes were built in Brudenell and Mill River. In 1972,

Charlottetown had over 600 motel units, 186 having been built that year, but only 74 low cost housing units existed in the whole province.¹³⁸ Tenants were starting to organize in Charlottetown and Summerside about poor local housing conditions. Government, however, was more interested in promoting tourist revenues of its wealthy supporters than with improving local social conditions. They and the locally established media continued to present their message of tourism as an economic windfall. The question of 'for whom' was never addressed.

The affront to many Islanders of this type of development seemed to go unnoticed by development planners and local government people. There were signs in Charlottetown that read: "30 minutes parking Tourist Only".¹³⁹ Much of the land and shore front bought by foreigners contained 'no trespassing' signs, which was usually the way people could identify land owned by non-residents. The standard sign the government used on property purchased by the Land Development Corporation contained the words: "Trespassers will be Prosecuted".¹⁴⁰ This emphasis upon private ownership, and the prohibiting of others from crossing over land to get to a fishing place or beach was something new to most Islanders. Many non-residents, who insisted on this concept of property, soon found their cottages burnt to the ground, (in some cases more than once, if they failed to get the message). A similar approach was taken to the booths at the entrance to the National Park, when the government started charging fees to enter the beach. The booths were burnt to the ground on a number of occasions. Of course, no one knew of anyone who would do this!

In 1970, the Provincial Minister of Tourism announced the establishment of a federal park in the East Point area. He said the park would consist of 6,000 acres, most of which was not presently used for farming, but if farm land fell within the Park, then farmers could continue to farm it. This expressed concern about farms was only part of the process of having the people of eastern P.E.I. accept an already formed scheme in which they had no part in forming. The Park was to consist of 12,000 acres and the agreement between the two governments read:

...Prince Edward will (a) deliver vacant possession of those lands to Canada and ensure that any and all interest therein of whatsoever nature and kind lying with any person or persons are terminated; and (b) transfer to Canada the administration and control of these lands.¹⁴¹

This meant that over 600 people who lived, farmed and fished in the proposed area could not stay. The park map published in the Broad-Axe, contained three shaded areas within the boundary of the proposed park that were exempt. One of these was the farm of the Provincial Minister of Agriculture at the time. The Broad-Axe also published a memo circulated by Robert Blakely of the Development Plan to other members of his staff, entitled "Social Motivations in the East Point Relocation Area." It stated:

The first contact with the people in the East Point Relocation area will probably set the general tenor of relationships between these people and the agency responsible for the relocation. For this reason it is of the utmost importance that an open meeting NOT be the first step in this procedure.

First contact should be made by professionals in social motivation. There are two people whom we might be able to get ... Community Development Officer with the Rural Development Council, and ... Community Development Worker for P.E.I. Newstart Incorporated.

... upon establishment of a satisfactory relationship, organizational activities will be proceeded with to develop a citizen group or groups whose orientation will be towards participation in rational planning for all aspects of the Relocation Program. If properly handled this organization will most likely have a participatory and co-operative orientation rather than a conflict orientation which could easily develop if an open meeting approach were used initially or if other procedures were followed.¹⁴²

A second memo, on June 1, went on to say that "... the object was to persuade as many people as possible that the change is for the better, prior to the issue becoming critical."¹⁴³

The issue, however, did become critical for the people of Eastern Kings County, and much more quickly than the government anticipated. When people of the area heard what was being planned for them, they fought it without compromise, for they saw it as the elimination of their way of life. People in the area saw the park proposal as a plan to expropriate farmland for recreational use. They were angry that the Land Development Corporation had purchased local land without acknowledging the non-agriculture use for which it was intended. This amounted to the expropriation of farmland for the needs of non-residents, a very sensitive issue in which Island politicians moved quickly to disassociate themselves.

This area of eastern P.E.I. had been a hot bed of social unrest in the mid-eighteen hundreds, as mentioned in Chapter Two, when the army moved into the area and the residents hid out in the woods. The history of this struggle was not lost on the people of the area and they let politicians know it. Farmers of the area had been involved in the tractor demonstrations of 1971 and showed considerable confidence in dealing with the

government. The government backed off and cancelled the proposed park, only to try and resurrect it a year and a half later without success. Premier Campbell was forced to tear up the agreement with the Federal Government at a public meeting on June 28, 1973. The issue of more National Parks in P.E.I. was dead, and no amount of federal dollars or bureaucratic manipulation would have any effect on establishing one.

Legislation on Non-Resident Ownership & Royal Commission on Land

The other form of expropriation of land for non-residents, most of whom were Americans, was through non-resident purchasing of farms and shore frontage. To the rich tourist, land on P.E.I. was 'dirt cheap'. The Island farmers, however, were being forced out of business and were no longer able to afford to keep their farms in the family. In the early 1970's, the rate of non-resident farm purchases was beginning to escalate. If it continued to escalate at the same rate, Islanders would soon once again become tenants on their own land. The very thought of this, moved a legislative committee to recommend some action to restrict non-resident land purchases. The Cabinet was reluctant to do this, but did agree on one point. The Real Property Act was amended to require an Executive Council approval for all non-resident land purchases exceeding ten acres or five chains (330 ft.) of shore front. The government then appointed a Royal Commission to study the issue in August of 1972. Charles Raymond, a land use planner with the federal government, was appointed chairman. The Commission reported a year late, and paid

very little attention to the land ownership issue, focusing instead on land use. The report stated:

Land use is more important than land ownership The belief that who the owner is, is not so important as what use is made of the land, is intellectually, morally, and otherwise appealing.

For all these reasons, the Commission recommends that the present restrictions on non-resident land purchases be removed.¹⁴⁴

This recommendation may have been very appealing to a federal bureaucrat, but to people who had a sense of history and struggle with the land on P.E.I., it was a gross insult. The legislation on non-resident ownership was not removed, but was weakened to the point where it would have been difficult to enforce it. Nearly all applications for purchases over ten acres were approved by Executive Council. The amendment to the Real Property Act has been mostly a formality with local lawyers collecting a fee for services.

The fact that the legislation remained on the books, has none the less acted as a deterrent to foreign purchases. The federal court's upholding of the constitutionality of this law, when it was challenged in the federal courts, also helped to limit non-resident purchases. Both upheld the image that the Island was not for sale at the lowest price.

Many organizations who had presented briefs to the Royal Commission emphasized the importance of dealing with the ownership question. The National Farmers Union (NFU), in their brief, drew attention to the speculative nature of such purchases:

Non-resident ownership contributes nothing to rural communities. ... It would, we believe, be ironic if the people of P.E.I. were to be the ones to gain the least from the natural attributes of this province simply because outside money is readily available at this time to capitalize on possible quick capital gains and investment returns.¹⁴⁵

The NFU recommended that all land sales to non-residents of Canada be prohibited, and a moratorium on sales be placed on non-residents of P.E.I. until a land policy could be put in place. They also recommended that anti-corporate farming legislation be passed, to prohibit industrial corporations from engaging in farming as part of a vertical integrated operation. The NFU also wanted a higher rate of taxation to be place on non-resident properties.

The Royal Commission on land ownership and use, while finding it appealing to separate land use from ownership, did recommend a 200 acre ownership restriction on companies, exempting family farm corporations, without the consent of Executive Council. They also recommended that "A loose form of zoning is acceptable."¹⁴⁶

The Liberal Government of Alex Campbell was not willing to take a pro-active stand on the limited land use recommendations, but motivated by the possible fear of losing power, they reluctantly pushed for restrictions on ownership. In 1974, concern was growing over the vertical integration of companies in farming, and the many cases of non-residents establishing 'paper' corporations in P.E.I. in order to buy land. To arrest some of these fears, government introduced an amendment to the Real Property Act to apply

the land ownership limits to all corporations. In addition, a very limited land identification was added to the Planning Act, which allowed for identification of lands purchased by non-residents, and land purchased by farmers from the Land Development Corporation.¹⁴⁷ This would ensure that this land would remain in agricultural use, and not be subdivided for a minimum of ten years. The implementation of this amendment was delayed until 1977, when increasing evidence showed that non-residents were failing to fulfil commitments made in their applications for permission to exceed the limits.

The Liberal government of the day did not take its own limited land identification very seriously. In 1977, it applied and received permission to build a Tourist Information Centre on expropriated agricultural land. The National Farmers Union appealed the decision to the Land Use Commission who ruled in their favour, saying that the proposal constituted a measure of good farmland and that alternative sites were available.¹⁴⁸ This ruling would enhance the reputation of the Commission, a government appointed quasi-judicial body, in the resolution of land use conflicts. The Provincial Government was slowly beginning to get the message to keep tourism in its proper place. It began to recognize that tourism initiatives must proceed carefully in the area of land conflict, or it would lose the goodwill of the public upon which it depended. Islanders were increasingly on guard against some of the 'colonial' aspects of tourism, which threatened the culture and dignity of people who work in the traditional fields of farming and fishing. In 1976, a consultant's survey on the impact of tourism, determined that 76% of Islanders did not want any further increases in tourism, nor did they want the government

spending money to promote it. The consultants reported to Cabinet that "the Island had not reached the environmental limits but has already reached the sociological limit".¹⁴⁹

Small Family Farms and 'A Way of Life'

The Women's Institutes of P.E.I., in their submission to the Royal Commission on land ownership and use in 1972, pointed out their impressions of P.E.I. and the contradictions that can develop when tourists buy land.

The uniqueness of our landscape with its pattern of fields edged with trees, its tidy farm holdings, its small villages has an appealing charm that draws thousands of visitors every year. Their frantic attempts to gain for themselves a bit of this fast vanishing pastoral life may result in destroying the very thing they seek.¹⁵⁰

This view and the importance of retaining the way of life in rural P.E.I., gained so much prominence that by the late 1970s it enjoyed a level of moral hegemony as a superior way of life. Many non-farmers associated themselves with the need to maintain the family farm. Many younger people, while working elsewhere, lived in the local communities in which they grew up. Strong ties remained with a way of life that was centuries in the making.

The view of P.E.I. that was threatened by the development process, was gaining a much wider appreciation. People were more self-confident in dealing with such issues, after a decade of much political debate and awareness of the development process. The issues

confronted by students, farmers and others in the early seventies, were kept very much alive in the minds of most Islanders. The established media became much more open to covering the issues and concerns of community groups.

The Development Plan served as a focal point of discontent, with people alarmed at the effects its policies were having on agriculture, tourism, fisheries, education and their communities. Organized groups, like the National Farmers Union, the Tenants Union, and the Concerned Citizens for Education, had firm roots and support in the communities in which they lived. Their determination and resolve was supported, on many occasions, by professional associations, such as the Social Action Commission of the Catholic Diocese, The Brothers and Sisters of Cornelius Howatt, the Civil Liberties Association, the Farmer-Clergy Group, and the Latin American Mission Program. It was the groups described earlier with firm roots and support in the communities that were the real political opposition in the decade. They were able to outmanoeuvre the opposition parties and government on many occasions by going directly to the people through the use of electronic media and other resources.

By the late seventies, after two terms of attempting to implement the Development Plan, Premier Alex Campbell, and some of his advisors began to recognize that they were in political jeopardy. They responded by setting up the Institute of Man and Resources. By this time however, their credibility gap with most Islanders, was too great for this move to be taken seriously. The Institute did look at some alternative energy proposals and

sponsored a conference on Ecological Agriculture.¹⁵¹ The conference was well attended and brought together some of the best practitioners in ecological approaches to farming. This change in attitude and approach by some in government was welcomed. Nevertheless, the decade of modernized development in agriculture had forever changed farming and the way the land was used in P.E.I. A report to Executive Council in 1979 on soil erosion on P.E.I. says:

In Agriculture serious concerns are raised. Rates of soil loss under some conditions are severe, far above replacement rates. Modern coping practises and shifts in our agriculture economy would be expected to accentuate the problem.

The Sediment products of erosion are causing significant problems in Island water ways. In particular, marked effects on fresh water fish are reported.¹⁵²

Recommendation five of the report says:

Government should consider as part of its agricultural strategy:

- a) increased emphasis on promoting livestock production in comparison to cash cropping;
- b) redesigning the limestone policy...
- c) encourage the establishment of organic farming enterprises;
- d) encourage the use of soil-conserving tillage machinery.¹⁵³

This report warns about the forces working against the proper use of the land, especially the industrial agriculture practises resulting in soil erosion, and recommends some cultural practises to help prevent this.

In the 1980s, the Irving Empire moved into agriculture in a big way on P.E.I. with the opening of a very large processing plant. Most of the work of the NFU and others on land

ownership and use centred on measures to attempt and prevent corporate control of the land. Before moving into a discussion on the struggle to gain land legislation to protect against a corporate take over, I will elaborate on the process of the move to industrial agriculture. I will also discuss the situation of farmers working in such a system, as well as the changes offered by a move to ecological agriculture.

Industrial Agriculture

While driving through P.E.I. in the mid-summer, you will see a province with lush green fields of forage, grain crops, field after field of potatoes, and harbours full of small fishing boats. It is a land rich in resources from the land and sea, with the potential to remain that way for many generations. There are, however, forces working against sustainable resource use which, if not checked, have the potential to destroy the existing resources. Large fishing draggers have already ruined some fishing grounds and stocks. Cod, which was once plentiful, has dwindled to the point where they are not worth fishing. The rivers and estuaries, the spawning grounds for such fish as salmon, are suffering from increased siltation and chemical contaminates. After a rain storm, most rivers run red in colour with Island top soil. While highway construction counts for a portion of this loss, most comes from agriculture soil erosion, as a result of practices used in potato production. This is a serious problem because P.E.I. produces 112,000 acres of potatoes, more than any other province in Canada.¹⁵⁴

In some springs, when erosion is severe, bulldozers are required to level the gullies that are left. Losses have measured between 15 to 30 tons per acre in a number of fields with as little slope as 12%. At this rate, the Island's fertile top inch will be gone in 20 years. Some fields have had losses of up to 65 tons per acre.¹⁵⁵ The rebuilding rates of fields with a decent amount of organic matter, is about three tons per acre and in most potato fields, it is, of course, much less. In the short term, some of these losses are masked by increased uses of chemical fertilizer to keep up yields. The problem, however, gets worse with increased mining of the soil. There is little organic matter left to hold plant nutrients and some fields lose up to 40% of applied nutrients that end up somewhere else, causing damage.

Longer rotations, diversion terraces and cover crops help to contain some of the problem. A more serious problem, however, remains; the land can no longer sustain the production capacities forced on it. Lower yields and quality problems are showing up in the field, and with the crop later in storage. The weakened plant is more susceptible to insect attack and less resistant to disease. Insects feeding on weakened plants are becoming resistant to increased doses of insecticides. The problems are causing monoculture potato growers to actively search out land from dairy and livestock farmers to grow crops on, while they attempt to rebuild their own soils.

The soils of Prince Edward Island are particularly susceptible to deterioration with high chemical use. Because of the low clay content, the organic matter drops rapidly. Most of

the soils fall into the Canadian Land Inventory Class Three, and are, therefore, capable of producing good crops with good management; something which has been practised for years, before people were led to increased chemical use as the way to future prosperity.

Many of P.E.I. wells, the source of drinking water, contain dangerous levels of nitrate because of the leaching of the soil. Since 1983, water specialists have been conducting tests on Island wells. One pesticide they are very concerned about is Aldicarb. Don Jardine of the Department of Environment says, "Wherever Aldicarb is used it usually gets into the water."¹⁵⁶ It has been found in a number of drinking wells still being used by some people. This pesticide is applied in the spring time as a powder covering the potato set. As the plant grows, the insecticide moves through the set, up the stock and kills bugs on the leaves of the plant. Most growers have discontinued using this product. Thiodian, an insecticide tested by Environment Canada, has been known to kill fish 200 meters from the target site.¹⁵⁷

Recently, there has been a push from the Department of Agriculture for intensive grain production. They are offering incentives for chemically forced increased yields as a trade off for increased freight rates due to de-regulation. The management practice calls for herbicide spraying before planting, chemical seed treating, growth regulators, numerous applications of fertilizer with high nitrogen levels, and various herbicide and pesticide sprays. In addition to the damage inflicted by the chemicals, all these trips over the field add considerable compaction to the soil.

Farmers and the System

Farmers and others are becoming increasingly aware of the environmental limits to current patterns of production that are brought on by industrial agriculture, as evidenced by an editorial in the Island Farmer entitled: "What in hell is going on?"¹⁵⁸ The problems are manifested in many ways; through a loss of fertility, erosion, soil compaction, and chemical pollution of air, surface and ground water, and food. Animal and plant health have declined, and cyclic outbreaks of pests are common with the heavy use of intensively applied pesticides. Local crop varieties have been replaced, resulting in the loss of genetic diversity. Rural areas are becoming depopulated, and land ownership is being concentrated in the hands of a few.

These are all symptoms of a much deeper malaise. The causes are complex and deeply rooted in the system. Agriculture is one of the major fronts in which a struggle is being waged over these contradictions. Farming is in a state of uncertainty and change. Farmers are having to cope with problems for which there often seem to be no solutions. Agriculture is low on the priority list, when government, dominated by an urban-industrial point of view, allocates its resources. In fact, there is a deliberate cheap food policy to subsidize urban and industrial expansion, along with an immense pressure to increase production in a treadmill approach. Many who do not agree with this approach, find their farming days numbered. The irony is, that with the increased production and industrial efficiency, one's farming days are numbered anyway. Most of the farmers in financial difficulties, and in likelihood of losing their farms, are the most productive in

the conventional sense. Agribusiness sees the farmer as the bottom rung supplier of cheap raw materials for industry. Output is increased by increasing inputs, and if this does not work, production is shifted to where it will, like the rain forest of Brazil. There is overwhelming evidence that this cannot continue, and that a fundamental restructuring is necessary. We need to confront the reality of the social system from which this problem arises.

Under the current constraints, there is very little room to try alternate ways of production. Yet, many are attempting to do so with little ability to absorb short term losses, thereby jeopardizing their farms. In the last thirty years, there has been a 70% loss of farmers. The hardships and suffering this causes are immense. Most farm women and men work off the farm in addition to their farm work. The unpaid labour of farm families is the greatest undocumented factor keeping the Canadian food system functioning. The stress level is incredibly high, as farms are not just property, but an indefinable part of a farmer, intimately connected with his/her self-worth. There still seems to be the common view that the 'failure' of a farm is the result of 'bad management'. Industry views it as a way to weed out the 'inefficient' farmers. A farmer's time is spent mastering the technology of production, and finding a way to pay the bills in order to survive. There is very little time left over, to comprehend the consequences of the economic and social process without the aid of farm organizations.

The industrialists' view of agriculture, and the power they exercise through the control of market forces, have shaped today's unsustainable agriculture practices. Farms are but one of many components in the international chain, and become mere commodities to be exploited world wide. Food can be imported in large quantities from places like Chile, who have large foreign debts to repay with the export of cheap food.

The Agribusiness system is fuelled by external energy inputs mostly in the form of petroleum products. It responds to problems that arise, with commodified solutions like the Green Revolution and the clearing of the rain forest. The system is not prepared to solve these problems by recognizing and changing the conditions that created them in the first place. The recent 'Free Trade' push is designed as a conventional attempt to continue this process of exploitation. Natural resources will be exploited at a faster rate in attempts to maintain a short term standard of living, postponing the time when sustainable concerns will need to be addressed.

The confidence of this approach has its roots in people like Isaac Newton and other scientists. The splitting of atoms and the development of isolated chemical reactions led to a science that was suited to analytical methods of controlled experiments. These scientists viewed the world as composed of individual parts in isolation from the whole. This scientific approach appeared to be successful when applied to industry and agriculture. Production grew rapidly, as did the confidence that science could solve any problems that might arise. Industry deals with mined materials that were formed centuries

ago. Farming deals with a living process that exists in a complex system requiring constant renewal. When the land is considered only as a medium for chemical reactions, the degradation process resembles one of mining. Years ago, A.N. Whitehead described this approach to nature as "one-eyed reason deficient in its vision of depth".¹⁵⁹ Survival in the living process of nature demands participation in the complex network of organisms, with a spirit of joining rather than a dualism that isolates.

Ecological Agriculture Movement

We need to look for solutions that do not blame food producers and users. The aim should be to make the commodity approach to agriculture obsolete. This requires changes in attitudes and values, and the regeneration of new cultural approaches that respect people and the environment. There are many versions of sustainable agriculture, ranging from a narrow focus on economics and production to the inclusion of culture and ecology. Wendell Berry, an American farmer and poet, and a participant in the 1979 Conference on Ecological Agriculture mentioned earlier says, "a sustainable agriculture does not deplete the soils or people".¹⁶⁰ In fact, sustainable agriculture nourishes people and the entire system. It is an agriculture designed to last, and has been widely defined as 'a sustainable agriculture that is ecologically sound, economically viable, socially just, and humane'. The ecological approach is holistic. It emphasizes the whole rather than individual sets. There is a respect for, and desire to understand nature and the laws which govern it. Ecological science focuses attention on relationships, mutual dependency and

interaction of species in nature. As a coherent system, it draws on an historically accumulated knowledge and understanding of modern science. All facets are intimately interrelated and man's role is that of nature's partner in the creation and recreation of life.

This ecological concept has a long history. Native Canadians have had a highly spiritual and close relationship with their environment. In the Atlantic region, many small farmers had, for centuries, an understanding and a sense of partnership with the land. Farming was highly respected and understood by most of the population, including many of the urban people who had an interest in natural history. Wendell Berry offered the following definition of a farmer:

The good farmer, like an artist, performs within a pattern; he must do one thing while remembering many others. He must be thoughtful of relationships and connections, always aware of the reciprocity of dependence and influence between part and whole. His work may be physical, but its integrity is made by thought. We will not understand what we mean when we say that he works with his hands, if we do not also understand that he works also with his mind. The good farmer's mind, like any other good mind, is one that can think, but it is by that very token a mind that cannot in any simple way be thought for.

The good farmer's mind, as I understand it, is in a certain critical sense beyond the reach of textbooks and expert advice. They can be useful, but only as a means, ... of translation from the abstract to the particular.¹⁶¹

The value of expert and general advice on farming is restricted, because farming is done in particular places with different variables. Industrial agriculture and the Green Revolution tried to deny the importance of this. There is a need to find a way where ecologists and farmers can work together to demystify science in a way that is not condescending and denying. We need to build a foundation for a more holistic, balanced,

and humane way of doing things, which will utilize the knowledge, skills, techniques and methods of past and present generations. Only in this way, will we be able to provide a living for farmers, and optimal nutrition for humankind.

In producing food, the emphasis needs to be on the optimum, not the stress-induced maximum level of productivity. Alternative ecological agriculture methods offer the possibility of a level of production that can be sustained indefinitely. A healthy fertile soil must take into consideration many things: the optimum ph level to allow for release of mineral nutrients, high organic matter and humus, rebuilt soil fertility from natural nitrogen cycles, and the establishment of beneficial soil organisms. A wide variety of methods and products need to be used to build and feed the soil so that it, in turn, can feed the plants. With better plant and animal health, pest and disease management will be easier. Human health will improve and we will have a 'Farmcare' System to complement and rival that of Medicare.

Earlier in this chapter, we discussed the support for the smaller family farm which encompassed some of the above values. The Development Plan proposals were seen as a threat to these family farms, and to local communities in danger of losing their schools. Ten years of concerted efforts to modernize capitalist development took its toll. The Liberals were voted out in 1979, and replaced by the Conservatives under Angus MacLean, whose campaign included a call for 'rural renaissance'. MacLean, a long

time Member of Parliament, who retired to blueberry farming, was sympathetic to smaller family farms and organic agriculture.

Acreage Limits on Land Ownership

In an open line radio program during the election campaign, MacLean promised to look at legislation which would prevent industrial companies from becoming involved in farming. Often referred to as anti-vertical integration legislation, the National Farmers Union had been consistently asking the government for its implementation since 1971. In 1974, they even presented a draft copy for proposed legislation. In the winter of 1980, union members lobbied their M.L.A.s for the introduction of such an Act, and packed the Legislative galleries for two days while proposed legislation was introduced and passed first and second reading. Just before the bill was to go to third reading, Eric Hamil, the Executive Manager of The Federation of Agriculture, on behalf of the executive members, delivered a letter to the table of all M.L.A.s stating:

The Federation of Agriculture should not allow our M.L.A.s to be coerced by a few disgruntled promoters and forced to enact legislation which will further control legitimate expansion of our agriculture industry.¹⁶²

The Federation of Agriculture went on to accuse the N.F.U. of having a 'socialist orientation', and of being influenced by Communists. This was sufficient to give M.L.A.s a reason not to pass the original legislation. Instead, they introduced what they thought was a compromise legislation, which would have all corporations list their land holdings

with the P.E.I. government. The N.F.U. members were very disappointed with the Federation's position. They decided, however, not to publicly confront them, but to outmanoeuvre them by going to the community for support and asking them to apply pressure to have this important legislation passed. The land committee of the N.F.U. made contact with community groups and service organizations that had an interest in the issue. This work was greatly aided in 1981, by the Irving Oil Company who had bought the land and processing company of C.M. MacLean Ltd. They were proposing to expand this purchase by buying a further 6,000 acres. In the heat of the debate, they even threatened to dismantle the newly expanded plant and rebuild in New Brunswick.

At a demonstration at the Provincial Legislature in 1981, NFU members and supporters held a meeting with Premier MacLean and questioned him on his promise to bring in legislation. He promised a legislative committee to look at the issue and questioned the possibility of also looking at larger farms who may be able to get around the Unions' proposals. In response, the N.F.U. land committee initiated a discussion in N.F.U. locals on optimal farm size. An upper limit of five hundred acres for farms was agreed to, with no land at all for vertically integrated companies.¹⁶³ The Committee was very active in getting support from many other groups on the land size issue and in making reports to the Select Standing Committee of M.L.A.s. Rev. Andrew MacDonald, a member of Cooper Institute, wrote the song, No! No! Don't Sell P.E.I. for the Committee hearings.

No! No! Don't sell P.E.I.
It's our homeland; it's our heritage

And we want to make it free.
 No! No! Don't sell P.E.I.
 It's a gift of the Almighty
 Made for sharing equally.

When the Micmacs walked our Island
 Back in those days of yore;
 they loved and they respected
 Every hill and field and shore.
 They preserved it for this day of ours
 for their children and for us.
 The land was only to be used,
 And handed on "in trust".

When Acadians came and lived here
 They tilled and cropped the soil
 It gave food and clothing, shelter
 And rewarded all their toil.
 But the British came and drove them out,
 And sent them far away.
 Ils sont exiles de l'Ile St. Jean
 Bannis de ses foyers.

When the British lotteried P.E.I.
 To landlords far from here;
 Tenant farmers raged against their plight
 For full 100 years.
 It was only a determined fight
 That got the Island Back.
 Shall we return to serfdom now
 Or halt the invading pack?

Just think! When the King of Glory comes,
 On that dire and fateful day,
 He'd be told the Island's Irving-owned,
 And if he wants it, he must pay!
 But the earth would be so mined-out,
 That it's just a pile of sand,
 And the Lord himself couldn't grow a thing
 If he could buy back the land!

So, let the legislators make the laws
 To stop this present threat

Of corporate speculators,
Buying all the land they get.
Let the Premier and his ministers,
Not have to take the rap
For allowing themselves to fall into
A multinational trap!¹⁶⁴

The committee of MLAs recommended that limits be set on a farm size of 1000 acres for individuals and 3,000 acres for corporations. The legislature passed the 1982 sitting of the P.E.I. Legislature with unanimous support from all parties. Most of the powers to enforce the Act were left in the hands of the Minister of Justice. He had the authority to investigate the books and internal dealings of any company suspected of exceeding the limits. Before proceeding with the legislation, the government requested full agreement from the opposition party and the NFU to the legislation and any changes requested.

The legislation was challenged on a number of occasions by the Irving owned company; Cavendish Farms. In 1984, they applied for a permit under the Corporate ten acre limit, for approval to acquire more land. Information obtained showed they had in excess of 4,000 acres in owned and leased holdings. The Company was notified that it would have to roll back its holdings or apply for a special permit. The company applied for the permit, but after a hearing by the Land Use Commission, it was denied by the government.¹⁶⁵

In 1986, Irving challenged the province's legal interpretation of leases in the courts. The Court ruled in their favour in July of 1987. This interpretation by the Courts leaves the established limits open to abuse.

'Put The Culture Back in Agriculture'

Cooper Institute organized a three day 'Land Festival and Popular Hearings', in August, 1987 at the Farmers Bank of Rustico, with the stated objectives:

- * To empower Islanders through knowledge and cultural enjoyment to reclaim our land as an economic and cultural resource.
- * To heighten awareness about the history, present conditions and future alternatives for the land as a precious resource.
- * To create a celebration atmosphere in order to strengthen commitment to work for restructuring of land ownership and use.
- * To situate the P.E.I. land crisis in the context of international business interests.
- * To raise awareness that structures of land ownership and use serve the same interests here as do comparable structures in Third World countries.¹⁶⁶

The hearings included presentations by individuals and groups, followed by dialogue and sharing of views in small groups. Cultural expressions were interspersed in the form of music, poetry, song and dance. Many of the participants wrote songs and poetry for the event. One song composed by the group was Put The Culture Back In Agriculture:

Chorus

We'll put the culture back in agriculture
And that means you and me

This is your fight
 This is my fight
 In Solidarity
 Together we'll take a stand
 Together we'll keep this land
 And we'll live together in dignity.

We are the culture in agriculture
 And you ain't gonna make us go bust
 Not a damn politician among you
 Not a one a farmer can trust
 Farming was FEUDAL
 Now it is just FUTILE
 Trying to survive on the land
 The Banks get the fleece, Irvings get to lease
 And the government won't take a stand.

Trying to grow food that's fit for eating
 Is getting harder to do
 had to put in an extra crop
 Because the bank loans are overdue
 The Banks won't pay, if we don't spray
 No loans are chemical free.
 We've had no choice, but we're finding our voice
 We'll turn this around you'll see.

Our families for generations
 have farmed this rich red soil
 Family farms are disappearing
 No evidence of our toil
 Along with the hedgerows
 We've watched our kids go
 Looking for jobs that pay
 I'm sixteen and I want to farm
 Who's going to show me the way.

From Rustico to El Salvador
 From South Africa to our North Shore
 The struggle is much the same the whole world round
 We know who profits and we know we've paid
 The lines are drawn, the choice is made
 We're going to turn this thing around.

Throughout all of history
 Women have been farming constantly
 But the work of women still needs to be recognized
 They've kept the farm from bankruptcy
 By taking a job with a salary
 They're taught all day, then put in the hay
 Made the meals, kept the house and oh - by the way
 Raised the family.¹⁶⁷

In 1987, the Provincial Government established a Royal Commission on the Land, with a wide mandate to look at all matters related to land ownership and use. The Commission reported in the fall of 1990. It recommended stricter enforcement of the land ownership limits and called for province wide land zoning, among other recommendations. The Commission was critical of past governments' commitments to the land issue.

There is, in reality, no consistent, coherent set of land policies in place in the Province, no vision for the future at the provincial level and no sense of direction in land issues on the part of the government. The structure now in place has been subject to so much inconsistency, to such lack of commitment, to an unwillingness to grapple with tough issues, to 'knee jerk' and impulsive reactions to deal with crisis and individual circumstances that we can find nothing that would clearly define policy in regard to land.¹⁶⁸

One example, which gave rise to such criticism, was the acquisition by a farm corporation of 2,000 acres of farmland, in addition to the 1,000 acres owned by two of its shareholders, the granddaughter of K.C. Irving and her husband. The government, after considerable outcry and public pressure, eventually asked Mary Jean Irving to sell the land held over the limits. In doing so, however, the public, had to compensate her and her numerous lawyers. Not wanting to be involved in such public controversy without a clear

land policy again, the government transferred decision-making authority to a newly formed body known as I.R.A.C., the Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission.¹⁶⁹

Not one to be daunted by such efforts, Mary Jean Irving made an application to I.R.A.C. for a permit to purchase 6,000 acres of farmland in 1992. In this endeavour, she had the support of the Minister of Industry and the Premier. A large public meeting was held in Morell on the issue, with the very strong opinion that no such permit should be approved. Premier Ghiz changed his stand on the issue, and set up a legislative committee to carry out a review of the Lands Protection Act. An amendment was introduced to abolish special permits, stop applications currently under review, and transfer decision-making back to the executive council.

The legislative committee received many submissions in favour of land controls, with nearly all the farm organizations calling for a strengthening of the Land Protection Act. The only group who showed any major opposition was Cavendish Farms. The most recent move by government, in response to pressures from the public to establish a clear land policy, was the establishment of a Round Table on the Land due to report back in 1997.

Tourism and Land Issue in the 1980s and the 1990s

The most controversial tourist development in the late 1970s and '80s was known locally as the Greenwich Development, and encompassed a unique sand dune in the area of Cable Head. The developers from British Columbia and the United States proposed to build a lavish hotel and cabin resort complete with airstrip, golf course, marina and shopping mall. Local politicians promoted it as a big employment boon in an area with high unemployment.

The Island Nature Trust led the fight against the proposed project on the basis that it included one of the most unique sand dunes ever found. They wanted these dunes kept as a special protected area. Mussel fishermen were concerned about the effect of the proposed marina on the many mussel leases and buoys located in St. Peters Bay.¹⁷⁰ The National Farmers Union Local approached the Land Use Commission about the proposed use of identified agricultural land bought by the Land Development Corporation. They issued public statements against its use in the proposed development to the editors of local papers.¹⁷¹ Concern was also expressed for the type of employment it would bring to the area, as well as the social impact such a large project catering to the very rich, would have on the local community.

In the summer of 1982, the Provincial Cabinet overruled the Land Use Commission's involvement, and approved the project on the basis that a land swap be made; the protected point of the sand dune land for agricultural land owned by the Land

Development Corporation. Also, the mussel leases were to be limited to the eastern side of the Bay.¹⁷² The Island Nature Trust publicly agreed to this land swap and limitation of mussel leases. The development, however, never went ahead. Some years later, a local land speculator, with close connections to the P.E.I. Cabinet, attempted to flip this property along with others like Boughton Island, to wealthy American speculators.¹⁷³ The fall of 1981 listing by Land Auction Agency Ltd. of New York, Boston and Plattsburgh brings attention to Boughton Island with its ad:

Attention Corporate Executives... there is no more spectacular Island property available than this... Boughton Island... 565 acres with the remains of an old village (including the skeleton of an old church)... there is an old causeway to the Island which could be easily repaired... Ideal for a corporate retreat... this property is currently being offered in Europe for its appraised value of 1.5 million.¹⁷⁴

At the same time as the approval of the Greenwich development, Cabinet also approved other proposed smaller developments such as the twenty-four parcel subdivision at Pinette Point. near Belfast. The Island Legislature at this time had a number of M.L.A.s with real estate licenses. Premier Jim Lee had been the owner of Island Real Estate, a company whose logo was a map of P.E.I. with the words 'Island for Sale' below it. The Pinette development was prevented from going ahead by the concern and hard work of local residents.¹⁷⁵

The Lee government also attempted to bring a large American arms manufacturer, Litton Industries, to P.E.I. but ran into considerable opposition from local people. This type of industry offended the senses of many Islanders about the type of developer they wanted

on P.E.I. An extended exchange of letters in the local paper, with rallies and demonstrations by those opposed, had its effect. An election was in the offing and the Island New Democrats as well as some Liberal candidates, were known to be opposed to the location of Litton on P.E.I. The new Liberal government elected, cancelled the proposed funds and contract with Litton.

The Cousins Shore Development issue in 1991 brought the public's attention to the lack of an effective land use and protection policy by the P.E.I. Government. There was an approved cottage lot subdivision for Cousins Shore, an area often used in P.E.I Tourism Promotional Literature. A picture of Cousins Shore full of cottages will not make the tourist brochures of the future. Mark Gallant, a local Artist, was successful in getting a picture of Cousins Shore on a commemorative coin issued by a committee of government of which he was a part. The public pressure and the coin embarrassment resulted in the government announcement of an 18 month moratorium on shoreline residential construction.¹⁷⁶

Between 1987 and 1991, 23 miles of Island coast line were purchased by non-residents.¹⁷⁷ In the year preceding the Cousins Shore development, 221 applications for purchase were filed and all but two were approved. By 1992, 143,000 acres on P.E.I. were owned by non-residents.¹⁷⁸

The Fixed Link and 'Free Trade'

The latest major development impacting upon tourist development and the land issue on P.E.I. is the present construction of the Fixed Link. Groups promoting the fixed link, such as Islanders For a Better Tomorrow, were united in promising growth in the Island economy if the mega-project went ahead. But where this increased growth was to come from was not answered to everyone's satisfaction. There may indeed be short term growth that will benefit certain areas of the Island economy, such as the construction industry, in the years during which the bridge is under construction. Their predictions of continued growth after the construction stage, however, will depend very much upon the restructuring associated with free trade; and as such, could have little to do with the construction of the fixed link. It is important to understand, however, that the private forces associated with the fixed link will powerfully influence the extent and speed of change, particularly in the tourism industry. What kind of growth this will be, and what impact free trade and the fixed link will have on our vital resource industries are questions that need to be answered.

For fishers, the answer is clear. There is no possibility of short-term growth in the fishery, due to the severe depletion of resources. As for agriculture, the free trade deal, and the privatization and deregulation moves leading up to it, have already had a detrimental effect. A closer examination of agriculture, which is closely tied to issues of control of the land is in order.

Free trade has left all the agricultural eggs in the potato basket, so to speak. P.E.I. has earned a reputation in the marketplace for high yielding quality potatoes. This, along with our ability to hold a greater portion of the high value seed market, has put us in a supposedly competitive position (if such a thing can really exist in a manipulated global market). Because we are an island, we have been able to monitor diseases and insure a high quality seed. In the past few years, there has been a large increase in potato production. In fact, production was so high this year, that it created problems. There was not enough storage room, and because potatoes are considered a back haul to imported consumer goods, there were not enough trucks in the P.E.I. system to move the quantity of potatoes to market in an orderly fashion. And if the Island were to produce a volume of potatoes greater than the volume of consumer goods, the cost of transporting the extra volume would more than double. While a fixed link would reduce the cost associated with transport time, it would never come close to meeting the doubled costs for extra volume. The problems associated with the fixed link, in combination with the results of free trade, become inseparable and insidious.

With the free trade induced devastation of the hog industry and the threat to the supply-management system in the dairy industry, farmers in these two areas, have turned to the only remaining agricultural sector, potato farming. The increased production of potatoes will have a devastating effect on the land base of P.E.I. The soils of the Island are particularly susceptible to deterioration with the use of a lot of chemicals. The quantity of organic matter in the soil will drop rapidly, causing the soil to lose the fibre and texture

that hold it together. Dairy farming, the stable force in P.E.I. agriculture for years, grow the forages and provide the manures which build up the organic matter in our soils. Because the quality and yield of their crop will be much better on dairy and livestock land, potato growers actively search out this land to grow potato crops.

It is clear that the highly capitalized industrial model has depleted the fisheries and is eroding our agricultural base. Tourism is the one area left to take up the slack economically. The number of people visiting the Island has remained stable over the past few years, and in most Islanders' minds, has reached the optimal level. A greater number of tourists could lead to disruption of Islanders' lives, particularly for those who make a living in ways other than tourism, and could have a detrimental effect on the environment, land and culture.

This is precisely the point where decisions about the fixed link become vitally important. Allowing a private consortium to own the fixed link, could drastically change the way an economic activity, particularly the tourism activity, is practised on P.E.I. The landlords of the Strait will have a strong vested interest in moving as many vehicles as possible over the link. Once the break-even point is reached (with the help of federal subsidies) the bridge becomes a money-making machine. Every car that can be enticed to travel over the link represents profit, quite an incentive for the landlords to team up with the P.E.I. Real Estate and Tourism Associations and literally sell P.E.I.!

If the present trends in agriculture prevail, financially distressed farmers, whose soils, exploited by monoculture farming practices and unable to sustain the increasing production required of them, will have very few choices and be more vulnerable to exploitation.

In a brief to the Environmental Assessment Panel (EAP), in March 1990, the P.E.I. Real Estate Association says:

We anticipate greater investment opportunities will open up and, yes, there will likely be an increase in property values as well as a greater demand for new land developments, new housing and recreational properties. Everyone on P.E.I., either directly or indirectly, will benefit from this project.¹⁷⁹

The 'everyone' mentioned in this brief is certainly an overstatement. It is worth noting that the last time tourism was promoted in such terms was with the Development Plan of the early 1970's.

Increasingly, Islanders are on guard against some of the more 'colonial' aspects of tourism, which threaten the culture and dignity of people who work in the traditional resource and service economy. Some capital-intensive projects and proposed land swaps, like the Greenwich Development mentioned earlier, were halted. Others have gone ahead due to the lack of willingness on the part of government to implement an effective land policy. Great energy is required to deal with mega-project proposals as they arise, one by one. The inability of successive governments on P.E.I. to develop a working land policy,

has limited the ability of Islanders to effectively plan for the types of resource development we would like to see.

If free trade remains in place, it will become increasingly difficult to enact legislation and plan for the type of province in which we would like to live. The enactment of the so-called "private property rights", for example, will severely limit us. Our present legislation has been challenged by non-residents in the courts. If we are shackled from having the right to protect our resources and culture, and if private global concerns control the vital transportation link, we will, indeed, be working against heavy odds. The landlords of the Strait will be in a powerful position to influence government and control the growth and direction of the tourism industry. If they decide to take the fast growing, hyper-commercial Coney Island route, it could be disastrous for agriculture and the Island 'way of life'.

Tourists who buy land on P.E.I. (at prices above what farmers are capable of paying) for retirement homes, weekend retreats, summer cottages or hobby farms are attracted by the picturesque scenery and the diverse, resource-based, rural economies of farming and fishing. Ironically, the more people who do this, arriving with highly urban backgrounds and excess wealth, the more they end up destroying what attracted them in the first place. We do have options, and alternatives to the proposed development scenarios outlined above. They are based on lived experiences, and informed by a strong sense of

maintaining and using available resources. The next chapter will explore some of these options.

Small Farm Programs & Sustainable Agriculture

The public sentiment for small farms was strong in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The MacLean government of the day introduced what it called a 'Small Farms Program', the main aspects being to hire fieldworkers to work with smaller farmers, and invite experts in to speak on organic agriculture.¹⁸⁰ There were a lot of small acreage farms in this period, with many people holding onto their land while working in other areas. The 1981 Census revealed that a very small number of farms accounted for most of the acreage in production. Five percent of the potato farms, representing 52 farms, accounted for 38.2% of the potato acreage of 63,878 acres.¹⁸¹ Most of these were large family farm corporations who received the real backing and support of the Departments of Agriculture and Industry. The Small Farms Program never moved beyond hiring a few part time people who were later phased out. The attitude of most in the department seemed to be hostile and condescending to those attempting to change to more organic methods in their farm operations.

Many farmers were interested and some were active in making changes to a more ecological approach to farming. A committee of the National Farmers Union sponsored many workshops with a high level of interest, many of them becoming involved in on-

farm experiments. The Union's involvement gave some creditability and the necessary support network needed for a sustained effort in this direction. Maritime-wide workshops were held with considerable interest shown. Two hundred and twenty people participated in a three day ecological farmer/scientist workshop in November, 1988 in Fredericton, New Brunswick.¹⁸² In March, 1989 over 200 participated in a sustainable development conference in St. Josephs, New Brunswick. The interest far exceeded the organizers' expectations, and many could not be accommodated.¹⁸³

The newly elected Ghiz government, promised to make sustainability the number one long term priority of the Department of Agriculture. Sustainability was defined as:

a balancing of total inputs and outputs (people, money, physical requirements, practices, etc.) so as to permit the agricultural sector, the rural community and the environment of the province to prosper and endure.

There is a need to consider an applied research effort concentrating on: (a) the development of more ecological production systems emphasizing reduced off-farm inputs and restored soil fertility, and (b) the role and importance of having a minimum number of farms in rural communities, as a means of supporting critical population levels available for community maintenance and development.¹⁸⁴

This was an encouraging indication of a possible change in direction from the federal agriculture strategy. Sustainability was very broadly defined, however, and the Deputy Minister of Agriculture at the time, Dale Dewar, took advantage of that when speaking to the annual meeting of P.E.I. Cattleman's Association, by saying that, "sustainable agriculture does not mean the end of using pesticides and herbicides... nor the end of

progressive farming".¹⁸⁵ In response, Chris Mermuys had this to say in his column in the

Island Farmer:

It would be great if the farmers and government could work together toward a system of sustainable agriculture but, for that to happen, government would have to cut its ties with the giant agri-business interests and virtually all the employees of the Department of Agriculture would have to be deprogrammed and re-educated.¹⁸⁶

The program proved to be more rhetoric than substance. A short time later, the department assisted McCains and Irvings in a major expansion of the processing industry. Both companies, having built large plants to process potatoes, had their acreage increased to over 110,000 acres.

PVYN and 'What's Wrong in Becoming a Processing Province'

In 1990, scientists in the Department of Agriculture diagnosed a potato plant disease as PVYN, a very serious virus. They informed the U.S. agricultural officials of this with severe repercussions for the P.E.I. potato industry. The U.S. Government immediately declared a trade embargo on P.E.I. potatoes; and both the Canadian and P.E.I.

Governments agreed to ban all shipments of seed potatoes from P.E.I., and authorized the spraying of all potatoes leaving P.E.I. with a chemical sprout nip. This not only had the effect of closing the seed market but the organic market as well. Organic potatoes would be automatically de-certified because of the chemical sprout-nip treatment. Seed and organic markets developed over a period of years ended with devastating loss of income for those concerned. Seed potato growers tended to be smaller growers, who concentrated

on roguing out disease plants on a smaller run of potatoes for other growers to plant the next year. The seed markets were developed over a period of years in Ontario, the United States and Off Shore, and amounted to about seven to ten percent of the Island production. The Organic Market was in Nova Scotia, Quebec and the United States and was less than one percent of the Island production.¹⁸⁷

The Federal Government was hesitant in accepting blame for the damage done, and a court action was initiated by Island potato growers for compensation. The way the Federal and Provincial Governments handled the compensation package greatly increased the division among farmers, a division that had been growing for a number of years. The money was allocated evenly on an acreage basis, about \$180.00 per acre, with no consideration given for those most adversely affected. Most of the money went to processing and larger growers who were least affected. They used the money to further their land holdings to grow more processing potatoes. The competition for land became vicious. Dairy farmers and other small producers lost land they had been renting and farming for years. The price for rented land went so high that smaller producers were in no position to compete with larger concerns being back by processors.

‘What's wrong in becoming a Processing Province?’ This is the question Federal Minister of Agriculture asked P.E.I. farmers when he was confronted about the damage done to the P.E.I. seed industry. The Governments of Canada and P.E.I. did not allow the case for the compensation package to go before the courts, and contributed large sums of

money to the lawyer and accounting firms representing the farmers' interest. Over \$800,000. was deposited for them before a settlement was offered to growers.¹⁸⁸ A number of seed and organic growers wanted to be exempt from accepting the offer, but the Federal Government informed P.E.I. Potato Promotions, a group formed to represent P.E.I. potato growers, that unless all farmers agreed not to take them to court, no settlement would be offered. By agreeing to this, P.E.I. Potato Promotions seriously divided farmers and the membership of the National Farmers Union.

The NFU was seriously weakened earlier by the introduction of free trade and the resulting denial of any national marketing ability to intervene in the market place. The former National President of the NFU joined the Federal Government as an MP and was involved in the negotiations to obtain the extra money for the accountants and lawyers to deliver the compensation package.¹⁸⁹ Two long time NFU officers were directors of a three member Potato Promotions board, one resigned and refused to go along with the proposals while the other remained as spokesperson to sell the Federal Government's compensation package. The coercion and force used became extreme, resulting in death threats in two cases.¹⁹⁰

The National Farmers Union, which once played a dominant role in challenging the Development Plan and the industrialization of agriculture, has this past year signed an agreement for members to buy fertilizer and chemicals from the vertically integrated Irving Company. A portion of the sales from this goes to support the activities of the

District Executive. The National Farmers Union in the 1970s and '80s represented the cultural hegemony enjoyed by farmers. This no longer exists. This past summer, many people have become very annoyed at potato farmers for the chemical pollution of air and water. Fish ponds of trout were killed for the second year in a row from potato spray runoff. Cars were getting stuck on highways in the siltation runoff from potato fields. People were getting sick from the effects of sprays drifting into their homes. Farm Workers were suffering from chemical poisons.

The Environmental Coalition of P.E.I. passed out a pamphlet asking 'If P.E.I. was a toxic playground' .P.E.I. Agriculture Minister; Walter Bradley responded by saying: "This kind of unsubstantiated fearmongering and finger pointing could have serious repercussions for both tourism and the agricultural industry".¹⁹¹ There was no mention or concern made for the health of people or the land. The local daily newspaper, The Guardian, got more letters to the editor about this issue than any other in years. It seems the Department of Agriculture is more interested in prosecuting organic farmers for working on a blight free potato, than in helping to support the work of developing disease resistant varieties which would reduce the use of chemicals.¹⁹² The community council of Kensington, in the heart of potato country, called for the reduction and banning of certain agriculture chemicals.¹⁹³ The town of Stratford moved to control land use and spraying within its borders.¹⁹⁴ To bring attention to the problems of chemical use on farms, Tony Reddin wrote the song, The Golden Egg, recorded below.

Folksongs: A Powerful Statement of the People

Monologue - Well, the wife & I have farmed this land most of our lives but we're starting to slow down now - just a few cattle and some chickens - something to get us up in the morning you know. And the kids don't want to farm but I couldn't see leaving the land idle so...

Well, somehow that big potato company found out I was willing to rent some...

The Golden Egg

They came last year with rent in hand
And said that they'd take care of the land
But they left that field not worth a damn
And I wonder: is that farming?

Now we've heard about the golden egg
The potato crop looks great today
But they've drugged the goose and cut its legs
And I wonder: Is that farming?

Bridge

I admit I wasn't half as good at making money
as at growing food
But at least I left the land intact and a little care
might bring it back.

Our family's place for generations
We've shared the labour, shared the celebrations
Now all we share are these accusations
And we wonder "is that farming?"

Our neighbours wish they'd stayed in town
When they see the spray come drifting down
Across the fields into their yards and homes
And they wonder "Is that farming?"

Bridge

I used to brag about our water
Now I buy it off a shelf

I can blame the government, blame the times
But I wish I couldn't blame myself.

So they can come next year with rent in hand
And say that they'll take care of the land
But they left that field not worth a damn
And I don't call that farming

Bridge¹⁹⁵

As earlier noted, folksongs can be a powerful statement of people. Lenny Gallant, a well know Island folksinger and writer, does a wonderful job in capturing the feeling and love of land and place and concern for what is happening to the Island in his song 'Island Clay'. The following is an introduction by him at the Lunenburg Folk Festival:

You know, you hear a lot about farmers out West in trouble these days Big farms! Making big headlines! but over the last few decades in Prince Edward Island a whole way of life has been changing as a lot of small farms have silently been going down one by one, and even though you don't hear a lot about it in the papers, it is something that sooner or later every Islander feels. This is a song I wrote about one.¹⁹⁶

Island Clay

This old house,
Once stood proud on a hill,
Of pine & cedar from the land
Cut by my father's hand
And hauled up from the mill

Now she stares,
At her life spread on the lawn
At strangers picking through her bones,
They take them for their own
And haul them far away.

And the auctioneer,
Sings his songs,

And the people pay
 Old voices echo from this house
 Now dark and grey, and cold as Island clay.

This old farm,
 Eighty acres of a life
 Sweat, and iron reddened soil
 Paid little for my toil
 But saw us through all right

Til the company came
 And bought land up all around
 And soon the market prices fell
 I took another loan
 And plowed it underground.

But tomorrow morning
 They will come & have their way
 Though their hands touched not the soil
 And never will pay,
 The price of Island clay.

These old hands
 Turn the sod and tossed the sea
 These hands worked hard, and they were strong
 But they couldn't hold a printed paper deed
 And from the moment that they signed this land away
 These old hands are getting colder every day,
 As cold as Island clay.¹⁹⁷

Another song Lenny sang the same night, for which he received a standing ovation, was about the proposed causeway and the impact of tourism.

A couple of weeks ago, I was over in P.E.I. visiting folks, and I was asleep late one night about 2:30 in the morning. A sudden chill came into the room and woke me up. I got up in my bed and there, lo and behold! standing at the foot of my bed, were none other than the ghostly forms of Larry Gorman and Lawrence Doyle! And let me tell you, I was frightened! For those of you who don't know who Lawrence Doyle and Larry Gorman were, they were two of the most prolific songwriters of Prince Edward Island during the 1800's. They wrote scores of songs that were known all around the Maritimes. They were quick to write a song if they should find

something amiss on P.E.I. in the way decisions were made. And here they were, their ghostly forms, and they said to me, 'Lennie, something is amiss on P.E.I. and we have come from beyond the grave to collectively write a song and give it to you to pass on to the people'. 'Well! Why me?', I shouted. 'Because Haywire won't do it!', they said. Well, what could I say. So we sat up all night, and they taught me this song.¹⁹⁸

The Causeway Song

Oh, come all ye sons and daughters of this Island in the sea
I'll tell you of a blunder in the Island's history.
They say it is a link so we can come and go at ease
I say it is a noose, and we can use it if we please.

Dam the bridge, Screw the tunnel, if you love the Island
Dam the bridge and screw the tunnel, keep it set apart
Dam the bridge and screw the tunnel, don't sell out the Isle
Don't turn the land you love into a peninsula park.

Oh, there is a band within this land who dream of owning yachts
Turn an eighty acre farm into 160 lots
Turn a farmer to an innkeeper - a fisherman to a guide
Turn a buck at any cost - Turn your back upon your pride

(chorus)

Oh, an Islander can travel all the world over, right here at home
There's no need for him to wander, there's no need for him to roam
He can visit Tut and Common, he can tour the London Tower
Visit castles that are haunted, go to Nashville for an hour
Go to Russia with Rasputin, visit temples in Peru
Australia, with Bogal, he can visit Santa too
Go to Ireland with Anna, go to Memphis with the King
He can get on the space shuttle, and escape the whole dam thing.

(chorus)

Now, if you think you're disabled, just because you're set apart
Oh, don't you see it's the very thing that makes you what you are
You can't put into words what makes the Island way of life
But the link will slowly kill it, just as surely as a knife
Now, look into the future, and tell me what you see

The cost of land is high above the likes of you and me
 Now, watch your sons and daughters take the bridge away from shore
 They'll use it just the once, for they'll be coming back no more.¹⁹⁹

This song gives a very strong and insightful look at what happens with the heavy commercialisation of tourism. The commercial forces abuse our culture and use it to their own narrow advantage. They seem quite willing to 'sell out the Isle'. The fixed link will make this trend inevitable, and 'turn the land you love into a peninsula park'. Our culture, existence and way of life is intricately tied up in what is happening, 'Ah don't you see it's the very thing that makes you what you are'. It is a powerful expression about the impact of tourism on the Island, and a call to actively fight it, 'Dam the bridge, screw the tunnel'.

Lenny gives us a wonderful introduction to Lawrence Doyle and Larry Gorman. He illustrates how strong the link is with them. They came from a proud cultural tradition with the confidence and ability to change things that were 'amiss'.

In the last chapter, I will examine more closely this connection with the past that Lenny talks about. I will examine the role that oral history and popular cultural expression has played in influencing the perspective of the land conflict; and how 'official' culture has excluded this perspective from schools, media and other avenues of cultural expression. I will also examine the relationship between the two periods discussed in chapters two and three, how earlier history has stayed alive, and informs our present attitudes and perceptions of development.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PAST AND PRESENT

Folksongs: Connections to the Past and Expressions of Culture

In the preceding chapter, we saw how Lennie Gallant very aptly demonstrated the connection with the past, through the influences of Larry Gorman and Lawrence Doyle. He pointed out that Gorman & Doyle "...were quick to write a song if they should find something amiss on P.E.I. in the way decisions were made."²⁰⁰ Lennie and many other popular artists have continued this tradition. There are many factors that helped foster this strong tradition of music and folksongs in Prince Edward Island.

It is important to look closely at the society that produced these folksongs. The relationship between literature and society is essentially close in an oral tradition (the folk group and the lore of the group). It becomes obvious that the position of the singer within this tradition is of utmost importance. The character of the group will condition the character of the lore. Dave Buchan in his book The Ballad and the Folk, emphasizes the need to understand social context. In Great Britain, the richest tradition he sees is in the Northeast of Scotland. It is a homogeneous society with political and social tension along a border region. He says:

It was an agricultural society but more important, it was a particular kind of agricultural society. The methods of land management and cultivation and the concomitant settlement type all point to a form of social organization that was communal in spirit and co-operative in its activities. This particular kind of

agricultural society provided conditions in labour and living where an oral culture would naturally thrive.²⁰¹

In the preceding chapters of this thesis, we talked of the strength of character and cooperation that was effectively built in rural P.E.I. This Island society created the conditions in which an oral culture could naturally thrive and grow. Folksongs, as part of this oral culture, become the statement of a people. Into these songs go their hopes, angers, fears, wants and aspirations. Statements such as these cannot be easily ignored or destroyed. They are a reflection of people's thinking, and are affected by time, circumstance, cultural development and changing environment.

There is not the same folk community today as there was in the past. With the different influences of radio, television and newspapers, it has today become more of a popular culture. This transition, while changing the folk and their lore, by no means eliminates them. As pointed out earlier, there is an increasing interest in folk music and folk festivals. Those who can sing the old songs and compose a new one when something is 'amiss' are greatly appreciated. It should be pointed out however, that not all popular culture necessarily becomes folklore.

Country music today, has its roots in folk music. The large out-migration from rural areas contributed to the increasing commercialization of music. In the 1920s and '30s, it was called hillbilly, succeeded by country and western from the 1940s to the 1960s. Since 1970, it has been called country.²⁰² The commercial push to broaden market appeal in

order to increase the sale of recordings has always walked a thin line between what is accepted in message and style and what is considered selling out to commercial innovation, referred to as 'softening the message so as to widen the sales'. The contradictions tend to work themselves out as many artists attempt to become professionals.

Neil Rosenberg, a folklorist at Memorial University, Newfoundland, in studying this dilemma, worked out a model based on country musicians and their markets. He says: "...Performers manipulate their repertoire to advance their career while at the same time presenting songs which are ideologically and stylistically acceptable to their audiences."²⁰³ He sees a mix of favoured artists, songs and styles used in a meaningful way regionally with local material that is solidly built on familiar foundations and traditions.

There are many examples of the tensions between the demands of the industry and the priorities of artists and audience. Many performers become disillusioned by the demands of agents, promoters, and recording industry. Jock MacKay in his doctoral thesis on folklore described the process as: "...somewhat like the experience of those rural and working class adherents of populist movements who find their raw sense of outrage over injustice usurped by an opportunist urban petite-bourgeoisie."²⁰⁴ Speaking of the tensions between both attitudes he says:

Many examples of their co-existence are revealed only during times of extreme societal tension, wherein the possibility of successful resistance becomes a catalyst for the expression of deeply held resentments which normally lie below the surface. Until an avenue for effective resistance is apparent, the psychologically (safer) route is one which accepts large abstract forces as given, and accommodates them with a pragmatic attitude that borders on fatalism.²⁰⁵

This fatalism is evident in many country songs.

Many of the folk artists referred to, in this thesis, handle their own distribution of records, often with great success. The commercial vehicles of music, the record companies, D.J.'s of radio and television, and the promotional literature, take for granted that 'market dynamics' are the only important determinants of culture. This view is usually very conventional and narrow in taste, and indifferent to local cultural and aesthetic values. The music we hear, via the media, is normally decided in some far away place, according to their market charts. There is very little local input. The CBC does some programming at particular times, but for the most part plays the same role as commercial stations. People, like Nancy White an Island born songwriter, who continues to pack concerts across the country, and gets some limited play with topical news songs on CBC's Sunday Morning, are largely ignored by the industry.

Tom Connors, an Island songwriter, who was immensely popular and attracted a wide country audience had a difficult time getting recorded. The response was 'you don't sound like they do in Nashville and you don't write songs like they do in the United States'.²⁰⁶ Dominion Records did publish Bud the Spud, from the land of the Bright Red Mud, and a

year later, it became a gold record. Tom has since quit the industry in disgust and returned his seven Juno awards. In doing so, he said:

All through my life, I have met people with a lot more talent than I have, but because of lack of encouragement in a land of no opportunity, they see their road to success become a dark tunnel...It's a shame that, because of this, stubbornness rather than talent has become the number one requirement to succeed. You find a lot more talent in factories, mines, and fishing boats than you do in the Canadian Music Industry.²⁰⁷

The following song reflects his view of the role of songs and singers:

The Singers Of Canada

You hear every day how they're going away
I guess they just don't understand
The SINGER is the voice of the people
And his song is the soul of our land
So SINGER please stay and don't go away
With so many words to be said
For a land without song can't stand very long
when the voice of the people is dead.

Oh SINGER, you must search for your place on the earth
While the same for your nation is true
So lift up the soul of your country
And a place will be found here for you
But don't go and run till you song has been sung
And the words of your soul can't stand very long
When the voice of its people is dead.

You may pile up your gold but the pride of your soul
Is the small bit of hope you bestow
On the children who come this way tomorrow
In search of the right way to go
So SINGER, sing on like the first ray of dawn
With your promise of day just ahead
For the land without song can't stand very long
When the voice of its people is dead.²⁰⁸

I think there is evidence that the 'voice' has stayed alive in P.E.I. against heavy odds. I agree with Tom that songs have played a vital role in people's ability to define and achieve their goals. A sense of identity allows people to interpret and give meaning to their world through their participation. Culture, as the representation of lived experiences, is part of this identity. It takes a strong support system in society to sustain this. The domination of the commercial media where power, technology, and ideology come together to produce forms of social relations and knowledge, can function to effectively silence people. It then becomes easy to internalize and participate in one's own oppression. In this terrain of struggle and contradictions, there is no one culture in the homogeneous sense but different cultures, some more dominant than others, expressing different interests and operating from an unequal and different arena of power. Regardless of our backgrounds, we all function as intellectuals by constantly interpreting and giving meaning to words. Through this, we can help transform the world and at the same time be transformed by it.

The participation and impression of culture from the Island has been remarkable and well reflected in folk songs that have grown from a tradition that has a strong love of land and place. As Milton Acorn says in his poem, The Island, "In the coves of the land all things are discussed"²⁰⁹ If something is 'amiss', we can be assured there will be a folksong like No! No! Don't Sell P.E.I. or Put the Culture Back in Agriculture, both of which were referred to earlier in this thesis.

Conclusion

The tractor demonstration, described at the beginning of chapter three, gives us an understanding of how views were shaped by rural Islanders' struggle for the land in the nineteenth century. The pamphlet passed out to motorists proudly mentioned the earlier struggle. Ray Gill, one of the demonstrators in 1970, describes this connection well with an article in the Broad-Axe:

THE TENANT LEAGUE

In 1860 the farmers of P.E.I. then called tenants, formed a society called the Tenants League, and refused to pay rent to absentee landlords because they could not get a deed to the land they had cleared.

At Avondale the tax collector was beaten off his horse by members of the Tenants League who refused to pay the rent demanded of them.

The Governor then sent out the army to break up the Tenants League. They came as far as Vernon River, and were scared off by a make-believe cannon erected by the tenants.

The farmers were then granted squatter titles to the land they had settled.

History usually repeats itself, so, when the government of P.E.I. today has forced all the small farmers off the land, they too may find themselves granting squatters rights to farmers in order to keep the agricultural economy going.

Probably the time is right for some of our present-day government officials to be taken off their high horse in a similar manner and brought down to earth.

Under the present Government Agricultural Policy (if they have one), no farmer can exist when every product he sells returns him less than the cost of production. What alternative is there for the farmers of P.E.I.?

TAKE UP THE CLUBS OF TENANTS OF 100 YEARS AGO, OR GO ON WELFARE.....Ray Gill²¹⁰

His understanding of the earlier period was crucial to his view of the period he was talking about, and the way he saw the possibility of change taking place. He called for tactics similar to the ones his ancestors used to achieve their goals. The places we often turn for alternatives are the historical places where nurturing and caring for the land and human relationships were paramount. I think we have amply shown that the rural society of earlier P.E.I. was one of these places. We saw the sense of belonging and interdependence that are essential to any consideration for reorganizing and restructuring the modern industrial society with which we are presently faced.

This study suggests that the new directions and bases that need to be established must draw on the positive values that were an integral part of traditional rural society. These values are embedded in the makeup of many rural Islanders today. The aim of this work was threefold: to rediscover some of these enduring values, to analyse this tradition in order to dispel the myth upon which modern society is built, and to help lay a foundation for the future.

The Mi'Kmaq community has been influential in helping to lay this foundation. They have been part of many workshops in Atlantic Canada sharing their rediscovery of native spirituality and concern for the land. Many young environmental groups greatly appreciate the native influence and some, like the group at Montague Regional High School, call themselves 'The children of Seattle'. The Mi'Kmaqs do not view the land as something to be bought and sold but as a resource to be cared for, lived with and shared.

There is the sense of belonging to a living, changing, social whole as an extension of one's self. This living holistic view is gaining wider appreciation today as signs of environmental degradation grow more ominous. This holistic view and influence was also a part of many earlier European settlements. The Island Acadians for many years lived very closely with the Mi'Kmaq communities. Most of the European settlers after the Acadians came from a strong Celtic influence, which was considerably different from British and European cultures, because it escaped the influence of the Renaissance Period. In many ways their culture was closer to Oriental and Arabic than European, and shared many of the same views as the Mi'Kmaq culture.

In earlier chapters, we examined how the regions' many small farmers were the ones who were intimately involved with the predominant cultural attitudes to the land. We saw how strong this influence was at the mid point of this century, making it much more difficult for industrial capitalist values to become as dominant in P.E.I. as they had in other rural areas. It took considerable federal resources in the P.E.I. Comprehensive Development Plan to bring the Island into the 'so called' modern industrial era of farming. This change, as seen in chapter three, did not go unchallenged. By the end of his second term in office, even Premier Campbell was having second thoughts about this industrial modernization. His successor, Premier MacLean, came into office with a promise to bring in legislation to protect the land, and even introduced a small farmers program. By their second term in power, however, the Conservative government became a strong proponent of industrial capitalist development. The succeeding Liberal government of Joe Ghiz promised to

make sustainability the number one long term priority, but once in office reverted to being supporters of the large agro-industrial companies of McCains and Irvings.

P.E.I. is quickly becoming a monoculture potato processing province. The recently elected Conservative government of Premier Pat Binns came to power with promises to halt this rapid trend and to keep small rural schools open. In response to NFU Local 104, the new government agreed to restrict vertically integrated companies from owning, renting or leasing more than 50 acres, to enact land zoning and to place a moratorium on clear cutting of trees.²¹¹ However, governments have a history of getting elected on P.E.I. with promises of rural renaissance and a sustainable way of life, and once in office, they quickly forget these promises. This is where a social movement committed to change has a big role to play.

The successes of the social movement are seen in changes like the Land Protection Act and the growing interest in ecological agriculture. Just recently, over one hundred farmers participated in a workshop with an organic farmer from the United States. After a summer of polarized debate between large potato farmers and people from the environment movement, this turn out of farmers is encouraging. As well, a number of organic farmers have established a line of frozen vegetables and fruits and are working together cooperatively to market their produce.

There are also encouraging signs of change in other places. The countries of the European Common Market have introduced time limits on the reduction of chemical inputs into agriculture. This has resulted in a dramatic change in the attitude of farmers there. Many are now working with organic growers and learning from the system of third party certification and infrastructure that they have set up. Canadian farmers and shippers are also taking notice, because any products they may hope to ship to Europe will need to meet the same standards. Other countries, like Japan, are introducing a colour coded system for food safety. P.E.I. farmers have clearly seen the benefits of the Lands Protection Act in preventing the wholesale take over by the agro-business firms. A strengthening of this legislation could result in an improvement in soil structure and better rotations of crops.

The signs are clear that the present system of industrial farming is unsustainable and cannot continue. We do have options and alternatives to this development scenario. They are based on lived experiences, and informed by a strong sense of maintaining and using renewable resources. P.E.I. at one time grew over 46,000 acres of potatoes organically.²¹² To reestablish rural society as it once existed in P.E.I. is neither possible nor desirable. We can, however, learn from these experiences and build communities that have the strong sense of confidence and ability to bring about change that was highlighted in this thesis.

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Introduction

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