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Indians and Islanders: The Micmacs in Colonial Prince Edward Island

The Indians of the Maritime provinces were in a sense the poor relations of the Canadian Indians. Their title to land was not acknowledged by the whites and they received no payments from government for their past services. While Canadian Indians enjoyed sizeable reservations, income from land sales and an annual grant from the imperial government, those in the Maritimes were left entirely at the mercy of the colonial legislators.¹ And the poor relations among the Maritime Indians were those in Prince Edward Island. Only some three hundred individuals were involved, but the pauperisation of their lives was none the less real on that account. Since no government accepted responsibility for them, their record lies in the activities of a few individuals: an amateur philologist, a Baptist minister and an unpaid official.

The first Europeans to contact the Micmacs of the Island were the French, who converted them to Christianity and valued them as part of the forces deployed to protect the eastern approaches to Canada. A few Acadians had settled on Ile St. Jean but they were primarily interested in the fisheries and so did not interfere with the seasonal migrations of the Indians.² For a few years after the British conquest the Micmacs' life continued in its usual course. By 1782, however, the pressures of English settlement were beginning to have their usual effects: the Indians' freedom of movement was restricted by farmers, his game was disappearing as the forests were cleared and his access to the river and coastal fisheries challenged by the newcomers. Lieutenant Governor Edmund Fanning received numerous appeals from the Indians for lands of their own with access to the water. But where could the land be found? The government had none.

In 1767 the whole surface of the colony, 1.4 m acres, had been divided into sixty six lots and raffled off to a group of absentee British proprietors. The only portions of the island not allocated were three sites for county towns with

1 This essay should be read in conjunction with the author's "Indian Affairs in Colonial New Brunswick," *Acadiensis*, III (Spring, 1974), pp. 6-26, and "Indian Policy in Colonial Nova Scotia 1783-1871," *ibid.*, V (Autumn, 1975), pp. 3-31.

2 For the French period, see D. C. Harvey, *The French Regime in Prince Edward Island* (New Haven, 1926), pp. 212-232; John H. Maloney, "And in the Beginning . . ." in Francis W. P. Bolger, ed., *Canada's Smallest Province* (Charlottetown, 1973), pp. 1-10.

attached “royalties” or food growing areas, and Lot 66, 5800 acres of landlocked left-over ground about one quarter the size of the average proprietary.³ Until Confederation, the principal concern of the residents was to get rid of the proprietors; and of the proprietors, supported by successive British administrations, to hold on to their lands. The colony was thus unique, and its government uniquely handicapped, for the land had been transferred to private ownership at one stroke. In all other colonies the bulk of the land remained in the possession of the Crown, enabling colonial governments to exercise some control over settlement, raise revenue from its growth and, if necessary, find some few acres for an Indian reservation.

A small offshore island would be ideal for such a reservation. Its isolation would prevent the Indians from annoying white farmers, protect them from the evils of liquor and enable them to live in something approximating their accustomed way. The most remote, and hence the most attractive spot was Lennox Island off the northwest coast, 1400 acres in extent. This island had been overlooked in the original partition, for only in 1772 was it attached to Lot 12 and granted to Sir James Montgomery. Fanning wrote Montgomery, who gave his permission for the Indians to reside there, and offered to sell his island for £300.⁴ By the year 1800 several Micmac families were established on Lennox Island. They received regular visits from a missionary, the Abbé de Calonne, who began the lengthy task of persuading them to clear land and plant crops. He had them build a chapel to St. Anne, and Lennox Island became the meeting place for the whole tribe every July 26 on the Saint’s day. In 1806 the Abbé petitioned the British government to buy the island for the Indians, “as being the aboriginal owners they had a right at least to have some portion” of their ancestral homeland. Manual labour was now their only hope, Calonne argued, and it would take at least a generation to convert them to farming; the process was hard enough without the knowledge that the improvements they were making were on someone else’s private property.⁵ Nothing came of this initiative.

A few Indians maintained permanent residence on Lennox Island, and by 1841 there were twenty five acres cleared, mostly for potatoes. It was not the most attractive place for potential farmers. The trees were mainly fir and spruce, and the soil light, sandy and of inferior quality. Between five and six hundred acres were barrens and swamp; the most attractive feature was the

3 Andrew H. Clark, *Three Centuries and the Island* (Toronto, 1959), pp. 261, 269.

4 Certificate of Edmund Fanning, 14 July 1806, CO 226/21, f. 196, Public Records Office, London; abstract of title to Lennox Is., 1 October 1772, CO 226/94, f. 30; Clark, *Island*, p. 233, n. 19.

5 Calonne to Fanning [?], 16 July [1806]; memorial to Secretary of State William Windham, n.d. [1806], CO 226/21, ff. 192-195; A. B. Warburton, *A History of Prince Edward Island* (Saint John, 1923), pp. 231-232.

adjoining marsh, which yielded hay for those who had livestock.⁶ The Indians had none. The hay and timber proved to be an irresistible attraction to nearby whites who took what they wanted for fodder and fuel despite the protests of the Indians. One of the neighbours, James Yeo, tried to legitimise his position by offering to buy the island from Montgomery in 1827 for £400, but the resistance of the Indians caused the plan to collapse. Yeo neither forgave nor forgot; he continued to make his presence felt on the island, and as he progressed through the Assembly to the Council of the colony did the Indians considerable harm by posing as a spokesman for their true interests against the quirks of fanatical reformers.⁷

Lennox Island, apart from its chapel, was of little importance to the majority of Indians who continued their accustomed way of life as best they could. Only two or three families, principally the Francis family, lived there, while the rest continued to move around, hunting and fishing with diminishing success. Because of the small size of Prince Edward Island and the need to range ever wider in the hunt, it is impossible to say how many resident Micmacs there were. Families made frequent crossings of the Northumberland Straits, keeping in close touch with the Indians of northern New Brunswick and Cape Breton. A petition of 1838 stated that the tribe had been reduced "to a skeleton of five hundred individuals" within the colony, but Lieutenant Governor Fitzroy thought that their numbers did not exceed two hundred, all in as depraved a condition as it was possible for humans to be. Those who were visible spent the summer months, as did Micmacs in the other colonies, visiting white households to sell baskets, birch bark toys and similar handicrafts. They were also conspicuous as beggars on the streets of Charlottetown.⁸ But the situation did not disturb whites unduly. As one visitor explained, the Micmacs "inherit less of the energy, but not less of the independent spirit, of their ancestors, than the Indians of the tribes better known in Canada. All that need be here added concerning them is, that they form no obstacle to the progress of the settlers, before the effects of whose industry, they are perceptibly dwindling away."⁹

The first approach to the Assembly on behalf of the Indians came in April, 1831, in a petition from an Irish immigrant, Thomas Irwin. He deplored the gradual decline of the tribe towards extinction, urged that the benefits of

6 Report of Survey, 1841, *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island* [hereafter *JLA*], 1841, App. K, p.35.

7 *Royal Gazette* (Charlottetown), 21 February 1832, 28 March 1843; 12 April 1841, *JLA*, 1841, p. 119; Stewart to Prendergast, 2 December 1835, Letter Books of Robert Stewart, II, pp. 348-352, Public Archives of Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown [hereafter *PAPEI*].

8 Petition of Oliver Thomas Le Bone, May 1838; Sir C. A. Fitzroy to Lord Glenelg, 8 October 1838, *JLA*, 1840, App. N, pp. 111-113.

9 [S. Hill], *A Short Account of Prince Edward Island* (London, 1829), pp. 54-55.

education be extended to them and a grant of land made “as a means of fostering a taste for agricultural pursuits amongst them.” A committee was struck to consider the best way of ameliorating the Indians’ condition.¹⁰ There the matter rested until the next session when Louis Francis Alguimou and four other Chiefs presented a petition: “Fathers, — Before the white men crossed the great waters — our Woods offered us food and clothes in plenty — the waters gave us fish — and the woods game — our fathers were hardy, brave and free — we knew no want — we were the only owners of the Land.” It was not the most tactful of appeals, for it contrasted the benevolence of the French with the callous disregard shown by the British, and reminded the legislators that the Micmacs once “took up the tomahawk against your fathers” only to put it down on being offered protection. “They promised to leave us some of our land — but they did not — they drove us from place to place like wild beasts — that was not just.” Now, books were needed for education, and “part of that land once our fathers’ — whereon we may raise our wigwams without disturbance — and plough and sow.” The other branches of the Micmac people had as much, be they in Nova Scotia, Canada, New Brunswick or Cape Breton.¹¹

The day before the presentation of this petition, the committee of the previous year began to make enquiries about the possibility of buying a small island somewhere: they considered the Boughton Bay area, the Murray Islands, Governor’s Island in Hillsborough Bay and St. Peter’s Island. None was available. They wrote the agent of Sir James Montgomery only to learn that Lennox Island had just been sold for £400 to David Stewart of London. The report was premature, for the sale was not completed until 1839. Stewart had visited the colony in 1831 and later claimed to have bought Lennox Island out of compassion for “the poor harmless Indians [who] were much harassed and annoyed” by trespassers.¹² The island was only one of the tracts of land he acquired as the future home of settlers he would send out from Wexford and Kilkenny counties. Despite his professions of benevolence, Stewart was hesitant about the Indians at first, hoping to pay for Lennox Island “only in proportion to what could be recovered” from them. But he did change his mind, declaring he would defend them and allow them as much land as they wanted on the easiest terms. He suggested marketing some of their handicrafts in London, and assured Chief Peter Francis of support against white trespassers, Yeo in particular. When Bishop McEachen enquired if the island was for sale in 1834 Stewart boldly answered that he had

10 8, 9 April 1831, *JLA*, 1831, pp. 20-22.

11 7 January 1832, *ibid.*, 1832, pp. 11-12.

12 *Royal Gazette*, 21 February 1832; D. Stewart to Lord Normanby, 2 August 1839, *JLA*, 1840, App. N, p. 114.

made the purchase for the express purpose “of protecting the Indians and to prevent their being annoyed and driven about.”¹³

The imperial government became involved in the future of Lennox Island when a petition from Chief Oliver Thomas Le Bone found its way directly to the Colonial Office in August, 1838. Le Bone was careful to avoid making invidious comparisons between French and British attitudes in the past, and diplomatically stressed that with the loss of their hunting grounds his people were ready to turn to farming. They needed land “on which we may reside and cultivate without fear of removal or molestation.” Forwarding the petition, the Colonial Secretary called on Lieutenant Governor Fitzroy for his recommendations; he suggested buying Lennox Island. The Colonial Office wrote David Stewart in December, 1838 and he eventually replied that if the government thought they could “better provide for the security and comfort of the Indians” he would not stand in their way. His business agents would name the price: they demanded £1500. The Colonial Secretary thought the amount too high, but as the Treasury had no intention of putting up the money the Assembly would have to decide.¹⁴ Fitzroy, fully aware that Stewart had just bought the island for £400, thought that £600 would be quite enough. The Assembly ordered a survey, decided that the land was not worth more than £200, and resolved not to vote any money for it.¹⁵

Before the Lennox Island negotiations the Assembly had shown no interest in the Indians. Thereafter there was a minimal concern. A gesture was made towards obtaining some land for them when £50 was voted in 1843 for the purchase of one of the Murray Islands, without result. The same year saw a distribution of presents to the Indians, just over £25 worth, but this did not become an annual practice.¹⁶ Some public money was voted for the education of a handful of Indian children: £4.10.0 in 1843 for three students for six months; £2.10.0 to the Ladies Benevolent Society in 1846 towards educating “two aborigines”; £2 for the education of Millicent Mitchell at St. Peter’s in 1848. The grants reflected no set policy, only the whims of individual members of the Assembly.¹⁷

13 The negotiations for the sale were carried out by David’s brother, Robert Stewart. Stewart to John Lawson, 30 December 1833, 6 August 1834, Letter Books, I, pp. 337-343, 413-415; Stewart to John Prendergast, 4 February, 1 July 1835, 12 November 1834, *ibid.*, II, pp. 109-113, 217-221, 35-42.

14 The petition and ensuing correspondence are in JLA, 1840, App. N.

15 Fitzroy to Russell, 5 May, 25 November 1840, CO 226/60, ff. 240-241, 383-384, also 475-476; same to same, 11 May 1841, CO 226/61, f. 211. 10, 14, 15, 20 April 1840, JLA, 1840, pp. 110, 124, 135, 136; 12 April 1841, *ibid.*, 1841, p. 119, App. K.

16 20 January, 6 April 1843, *ibid.*, 1843, pp. 69, 121.

17 20 January 1843, *ibid.*, 1843, p. 68; 2 April 1846, *ibid.*, 1846, p. 87; 25 April 1848, *ibid.*, 1848, p. 151.

The only man with any coherent ideas for improving the condition of the Indians was Thomas Irwin of Rollo Bay. His interest stemmed from a fascination with the Micmac language which sometimes distracted him from more immediate concerns. It was a time of considerable philological enthusiasm in North America, but Irwin was unfortunately in the wrong place to receive the recognition due him.¹⁸ He appears to have acquired a manuscript of Father Maillard's Micmac grammar dating back to 1741.¹⁹ He sent a copy of his own studies to the editor of the *Halifax Free Press* and in 1830 published further extracts in Haszard's *Prince Edward Island Register*: "Sketches of the Manners, Customs, Language, &c of the Mickmac Indians." Determined to vindicate them from their traducers, he rebutted the standard white arguments about their faithlessness, cruelty and resistance to civilization. The major proof of their ability lay in the "transcendent beauties" of their "copious language" with its "almost infinite variety of expression." These people had developed a language whose precision and subtlety far exceeded that of English, and minds that demanded such sophistication of speech had to be of a superior cast: "the conjugation of one single Verb," he enthused, "would fill a moderate sized volume!"²⁰ Irwin began a crusade that lasted until his death: the preservation of the Micmac language. Irwin gave full credit to the eighteenth-century French missionaries who had reduced Christian texts to hieroglyphs, although he considered this form of writing "incommodious." It was his ambition to publish a Micmac grammar in the Roman alphabet for philologists and a book of elementary instruction for the Micmacs themselves. Some of the difficulties he would encounter in transcription alone were indicated by the fact that he identified no less than nineteen different vowel sounds.²¹ But these were not the obstacles that defeated him.

- 18 A short Micmac vocabulary, compiled from the work of the Abbé Maillard and of Walter Bromley of Nova Scotia, was published in 1836. A. Gallatin, "A Synopsis of the Indian Tribes of North America," *American Antiquarian Society Transactions* (Cambridge, Mass.), II, pp. 228 - 232.
- 19 Irwin described it as consisting of 140 closely written pages of foolscap, dated 1741. Irwin to Editor, 21 March 1843, *The Colonial Herald* (Charlottetown), 1 April 1843; Irwin to Joseph Howe, 20 March 1843, R. G. 1, vol. 432, pp. 194-196, Public Archives of Nova Scotia [PANS]. The Anglican missionary, the Rev. Thomas Wood, had come into possession of Maillard's manuscript of the Micmac language in 1764; General Meeting of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 12 December 1764, M. G. 11, Nova Scotia Transcripts, A 75, pp. 47-52, Public Archives of Canada [hereafter PAC]. Wood sent "An Essay towards Bringing the Savage Indian Mickmacks Language to be Learnt Gramatically [sic]" to King George III, 4 June 1776. This work has been identified as a copy of Maillard's grammar, J. C. Webster Collection, Packets 8, 10, New Brunswick Museum, Saint John.
- 20 *Prince Edward Island Register* (Charlottetown), 2 February 1830; five instalments of sketches are in the issues for 8, 29 June, 13, 27 July, 8 August 1830. With the issue of 24 August, the *Register* became the *Royal Gazette*, but the first volume of that newspaper does not appear to have survived.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 2 February, 27 July 1830.

The petition Irwin presented the Assembly in April, 1831 had called both for a grant of land to the Indians and funds to publish a book in Micmac.²² £50 was granted the Board of Education to provide books of elementary instruction; Irwin protested that the sum was too small, only to be brushed aside.²³ As part of his continuing campaign he undoubtedly inspired the petition of Louis Francis Alguimou and other Chiefs who linked land and books together as remedies promised them for their plight: "give us books to shew our children good things . . . we cannot now live by the chase, and we wish our children to learn." In vain: the Board of Education, studiously ignoring Irwin's own work, announced that it could find no books of instruction in the Micmac tongue. One member dissented, stating that such books were to be found "superior to any that can be translated into the Indian language by any individual at present in these Colonies"; but he did not say where.²⁴

The unspoken difficulty lay not with the grammar, for which Irwin expected no subsidy, but with the elementary school book. He intended it to be based on Murray's Spelling Book, a standard text of the English-speaking world at the time, but it would also contain some of the devotional texts that had been rendered into Micmac by the Roman Catholic missionaries of the previous century. Irwin was himself a Catholic and although he was anxious to support a non-sectarian approach to the Indians he could not avoid the reefs of denominational rivalry so much more dangerous in Prince Edward Island than in the other Maritime provinces. If the Micmacs learned to read in their own language their long standing connection with Rome might be reinforced; if they had to learn English they could start anew and be converted to Protestant ideas. So ran the thinking of numerous ministers of the gospel in the 1830s, and Irwin accused them of opposing his efforts because "I preferred the beautiful and classic productions of the pious who converted the Savages, to the rhapsodies issued by the London tract society!"²⁵ Rand would run into the same criticism, but from a somewhat different quarter

Rebuffed at home, Irwin turned to Joseph Howe's *Nova Scotian* to publish a series of letters on the Micmacs. He restrained his philological enthusiasms and propounded a comprehensive plan to organise public support for the Indians. Again he rebutted the stereotypes. If they were proud and unyielding

22 8 April 1831, *JLA*, 1831, p. 20.

23 J. P. Collins to Irwin, 26 January 1832, Letter Books of the Lieutenant Governor, 1832-1836, LG 2-1, pp. 7-9, PAPEI.

24 Petition, 7 January 1832, *JLA*, 1832, pp. 11-12; *ibid.*, pp. 44, 55, 65. Irwin could safely be ignored: when he stood for election at Georgetown in 1831 he received 6 of the 560 votes cast; *ibid.*, p. 7.

25 Irwin to Howe, 20 March, 2, 15 May 1834, R. G. 1, vol. 432, pp. 194-196, 212-213, 226-230, PANS.

it was because they had every right to despise those who had usurped their lands. Indians looked upon relief as their due compensation for what had been stolen from them, and, having been so often deceived, were justifiably suspicious of any white attempts at improving their condition. Their refusal to ape English ways was a laudable mark of respect for the way of life of their forefathers. On the other hand, Irwin considered that the Indians were in fact better off than they had been when dependent solely on the spear and fishline. Once their confidence was gained, then they could be persuaded to adopt European manners and cultivate the soil. "Philo-Indian Societies" should be formed throughout the Maritime provinces. Committees should examine treaties made with the Indians to see if the terms were honoured. Members would assist in choosing land for the Indians, helping them to settle and providing them with basic education — for which Irwin volunteered his book. The movement would be greatly helped if it received non-sectarian support from the pulpit, with clergymen of all faiths impressing on their congregations the need to relieve the distress of the "forlorn Indians."²⁶ For Irwin the plan was just another initiative that fell flat. For others it was a blueprint. Silas Rand formed the Micmac Missionary Society along these lines in 1849, with branches throughout the Maritimes; Theophilus Stewart established the Micmac Society at Charlottetown in 1862 for the benefit of the Prince Edward Island Indians.

Irwin made another series of attempts to win legislative support while the question of purchasing Lennox Island was being discussed. In February, 1840 he petitioned to have the £50 once granted the Board of Education used to pay the expense of publishing his book of elementary instruction. Once again he was treated shabbily. An Assembly committee expressed grave doubts about the accuracy of his manuscript simply because there was no person qualified to examine it; and, for good measure, repeated the old lie that similar books were available elsewhere. The £50 was split: £20 towards completing the chapel at Lennox Island, and £30 to provide schoolmasters with *per capita* grants for each Indian they taught in their schools.²⁷ In 1843 Irwin tried for the last time: he offered to donate twelve months of his time to the instruction of Micmacs in their own tongue; he presented Bishop B. D. Macdonald's opinion that his book would "instruct and convey sound and moral education"; all he needed was £100 to have it printed. Debating the petition, the majority of members agreed that the Indians should be instructed, if at all, in English, and there was no point in preserving their "barren language" from its inevitable extinction. The Indians he had talked to, said James Yeo, knew nothing about the petition "and it must be solely for the purpose of benefitting the petitioner." Mr. Macaulay entertained the house

26 *Nova Scotian* (Halifax), 29 August, 5 September 1832.

27 Petition received 19 February 1840, *JLA*, 1840, p. 31; *ibid.*, pp. 91, 108, 109.

with an anecdote about an Indian who had approached a friend of his: “What you do this country? You keep ‘em store?” “Yes” “You write ‘em book?” “Yes” “Dat all same dirt!” Philanthropists had been rebuffed in every attempt to help the Indians, argued Mr. Rae: the red men “had served the purpose or design of their creation, and now . . . are going off the stage, to make room for others.” The house decided that since there were more Micmacs in Nova Scotia they would pay Irwin’s expenses to go peddle his book in Halifax.²⁸

Obediently, Thomas Irwin began a correspondence with Joseph Howe, Indian Commissioner of Nova Scotia. But he could not contain his anger, and published a furious blast against the Assembly in the *Colonial Herald*. “This country is the rightful inheritance of the Indians; it has been wrested from them by the hand of power, and no equivalent has been given them.” Now, even their language was to be destroyed in “that spirit of English domination that pervades even the sickly suckers of the domineering Saxons to every nation that ever had the misfortune to fall under their sway.” They had murdered the Welsh, plundered the Scots, and were currently trying to obliterate the French Canadians. “In my own country — unfortunate Ireland . . . many a stripe the despotic English dominie inflicted on my own shoulders, for breathing my wants in my native tongue, lest it should interfere with the jargon of the conqueror.” Never, if he could help it, would the melifluous language of the Micmacs be supplanted by the “mongrel medley” of the Saxon.²⁹

When Irwin wrote Howe, anguish was more nearly matched with indignation. Deriding the “rabble” of legislators in his own province, he pleaded for recognition in Nova Scotia. He had worked for thirteen years on both his grammar and his school-book: would your Assembly be willing to help share in the cost of publication? Howe was polite but unhelpful, for he too considered the Micmacs should learn English, and he doubted whether any Assembly would vote money for a book while the Indians were every day destitute. The grammar, Howe suggested, was a work of such philological importance that Irwin should consider having it published by subscription “to afford our posterity better testimony of the real character of the Aborigines.” Irwin, tired and despairing, replied with one last long rambling letter expatiating on the “beauties of this charming language”, its “precision of expression”, its “transcendent” quality.³⁰ This was his last testament to the Micmacs, and his successor was at hand.

28 Petition of 20 March 1843, *ibid.*, 1843, pp. 79-80. Debates reported in *Royal Gazette*, 28 March 1843, *The Colonial Herald*, 25 March, 1 April 1843.

29 *Ibid.*, 1 April 1843.

30 Irwin to Howe, 20 March, 5, 15 May, 23 June 1843; Howe to Irwin, 27 May 1843, R.G. 1, vol. 432, pp. 194-196, 212-213, 226-230, 256-260, 231-232, PANS.

The Rev. Silas Rand arrived in Charlottetown in the summer of 1846 to conduct a Baptist mission. A self-taught man who had already mastered French, Latin, Greek and Hebrew, he had learned his first words of Micmac on his journey from Nova Scotia. Immediately, he determined to study the language in depth and compile a dictionary. He was seized with the kind of enthusiasm that Irwin had cherished over the years. He found Irwin's published grammar in the back files at Haszard's newspaper office: "Meagre as this Grammar was, it was of incalculable service . . . I recal[sic] to mind how eagerly I transcribed it, lest the precious boon slip out of my hands." He learned that Irwin had manuscripts and expressed his desire to see them; but Irwin died a short time later and there is no indication that Rand ever met him or read his works.³¹ Rand began to visit the Micmacs to learn at first hand. "I fell in with an English speaking man — a Frenchman — who lived among the Indians." This man, Joe Brookes, introduced him to Susan, who related the adventures of Kitpooseagunow while Brookes translated. Rand took a step further and wrote the story down in Micmac, using the Roman alphabet phonetically.³² This was the first of the many stories he was to collect over the years. In the winter of 1846/47 he spent much of his time learning the language from the Indians camped in the woods across the North River opposite Charlottetown. By March he was proposing to translate the whole Bible direct from Hebrew into Micmac. His philological interests were being rapidly harnessed to his missionary vocation. He wanted all the information he could find about the Maritime Indians; what, he asked rhetorically, had ever been done to improve their life, what Protestant missionary had ever worked amongst them?³³

The Baptist mission in Charlottetown did not prosper and came to a halt when the funds ran out; Rand's job disappeared. He tried, and failed, to convince the Baptist church to support a mission to the Micmacs.³⁴ He then began to think in terms of an interdenominational approach. As soon as his interest in the Micmacs had become known he had received both moral and financial support from a group of "naval gentlemen," Anglicans all. These were the officers of HMS *Gulnare*, engaged on an extended survey of the

31 Silas T. Rand, *Short Statement of Facts Relating to the . . . Micmac Tribe of Indians in Nova-Scotia and P.E. Island* (Halifax, 1850), p. 36; Rand to William Chipman, 3 May 1848, Rand Papers, Atlantic Baptist Historical Collection, Acadia University, Wolfville, N.S. [hereafter Rand Papers]; Rand to Professor I. L. Chipman, 28 July 1846, *Christian Messenger* (Halifax), 7 August 1846; for Rand see Judith Fingard, "Silas Rand", forthcoming in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. XI.

32 Rand to Brother Selden, n.d., *Christian Messenger*, 26 October 1870.

33 Report of Sixteenth Annual Meeting of Micmac Mission, *ibid.*, 8 February 1865; Rand to Editors, 23 February 1846, *ibid.*, 26 March 1847.

34 C. Tupper, "Mission to Prince Edward Island," *ibid.*, 13 November 1846; Rand to Editor, 15 August 1851, *ibid.*, 22 August 1851.

province's coastline. They were anxious to do something to relieve the wretchedness of the Indians they frequently met in the course of their work. Rand particularly valued the support of Captain John Orlebar, RN, who was to be prominent in every good cause in Charlottetown for nearly two decades.³⁵ But although Anglicans and others who would not normally support a Baptist were forthcoming with their help, there were ready made enemies too. For one thing, many of the Indians resented Rand's intrusions into their camps, and in his eagerness to present himself as their champion he overreached himself. He floated a rumour that over thirty Indians had been poisoned by whites on the Miramichi: the story was indignantly denied by some of the Indians concerned "as a gross calumny on our white brethren."³⁶ Rand looked back on his early years in Charlottetown as a perilous time, recalling that on his visits to the Indians at Rosebank he "experienced more opposition than at any other place" and frequently went in fear of his life.³⁷

The Indians were not the only ones to resent Rand's interest in them; the Roman Catholic establishment felt threatened by the activities of this self-styled missionary. The priests told their flock that he was the devil incarnate, a cheat and a liar; his mission a mere excuse for taking the Indians' money. He replied that the Micmacs had been held in bondage by the priests and denied the education that would have given them the chance to improve both their spiritual and material condition. The priests were outraged that they should be thus attacked by one of those who had never lifted a finger to help the Indians.³⁸ An unrelenting battle line was drawn. Rand's stated intention of translating the Bible was in itself an open challenge to the priests, for the hieroglyphs which had so far served as the only form of written Micmac had been designed to prevent the Indians reading anything but the few devotional pieces selected by their missionaries.³⁹ If Rand were to distribute his translations the Micmacs would be able to read first, the sacred literature he chose for them, and, when they had mastered the Roman alphabet, whatever profane literature they chose for themselves. "Education without religion," snapped the missionary to Lennox Island, "makes man more powerful for

35 Rand, *Short Statement*, p. 36; Rand to William Chipman, 3 May 1848, Rand Papers.

36 Letter of Rand, 24 July 1849, Haszard's *Royal Gazette*, 24 July 1849; Letter of Barnaby Julien, Nicholas Julien, Newel Brehau, Etienne Gonishe, 3 August 1849, *ibid.*, 4 September 1849.

37 Report of Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the Micmac Mission, *Christian Messenger*, 8 February 1865.

38 Letter of the Rev. James McDonald, 2 November 1852, Haszard's *Royal Gazette*, 9 November 1853. McDonald was the missionary who served the Indians of Lennox Island.

39 The missionary who perfected the hieroglyphs, Abbe Maillard, had been quite definite on this point: [H. Casgrain, ed.], "Lettre du M. L'Abbé Maillard," *Les Soirées Canadiennes* (Quebec, 1863), at p. 358.

evil." Further, Rand and his supporters saw temporal and spiritual amelioration going hand in hand. This emphasis on material well-being could only serve to undermine the Micmac's faith: he had been taught, as the Rev. James McDonald explained, "that his poverty will not exclude him from the kingdom of heaven."⁴⁰

Possibly because of the controversy within Prince Edward Island, Rand chose to launch his Micmac Mission at Halifax. He spoke at length on the history and customs of the Micmacs, whose lands had been taken by the whites in return for liquor and disease. He rhapsodised on the beauties of the Micmac language with an enthusiasm that would have made Irwin proud.⁴¹ In the following month, December, 1849, Rand was back in Charlottetown to launch his Mission there. He repeated his address which, the *Royal Gazette* observed, "though of some length, was listened to with marked attention and interest." An association was formed to collaborate with the Halifax group and collect funds for missionary work from all the Protestant congregations in the colony.⁴² Rand continued to live in Charlottetown for another four years, although he was continually on the move among the Micmacs throughout the Maritime provinces. He reported regularly on the progress of his work and the extent of his translations of the Gospels. He brought encouraging stories of awakening interest among the Indians: one had bought a bible, another had made a donation to the cause, their hostility to him was diminishing. He retold again and again the evil deeds of those who had dispossessed the Indians, and urged the granting of adequate reserves to remedy these wrongs.⁴³ The Christian mission remained firmly in the context of material improvement, and this fact was epitomised in his foundation of an Indian school and "industrial establishment" at Hantsport, Nova Scotia: Halifax merchants had already contracted to buy the manufactures so that the Indians there would be self-sufficient.

Rand himself moved to Hantsport and bid farewell to Charlottetown at a meeting of the Micmac Mission chaired by John Orlebar in October, 1853. It was an occasion for reviewing four years of work against adversity; of stimulating a desire to read the word of God, to accept education and steady employment; of petitioning for justice in the ownership of land.⁴⁴ Thereafter Rand's connection with the Island was limited to an annual visit as part of his circuit through the Maritimes. He continued to report on the progress of the

40 Letters of Rev. James McDonald, 9, 28 November 1853, Hazard's *Royal Gazette*, 9 November, 3 December 1853.

41 Published as *Short Statement*.

42 Hazard's *Royal Gazette*, 18 December 1849.

43 For example, meeting of 17 January 1853, chaired by Captain Orlebar, *ibid.*, 18 January 1853.

44 Meeting of 24 October 1853, *ibid.*, 29 October 1853.

Mission. His Micmac assistant, Ben Christmas, also visited Charlottetown occasionally, speaking in 1858 to "an immense audience" about his people and their degradation by the whites.⁴⁵ The Mission remained alive until the late 1860s as a reminder to a heedless community that the Indians existed. Rand's persistence in the general cause eventually produced an entirely home-grown Island society to ameliorate the condition of the local Micmacs.

A gradual change in the climate of opinion was demonstrated by the passage of a law in 1856 that accorded the Indians legislative recognition for the first time. Reluctantly following the lead of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, the provincial government received authorisation to appoint commissioners to supervise and manage "any lands belonging to [the Indians] or which may hereafter be granted or given to them." The commissioners were to report on any sales of these lands and prosecute trespassers; they were to encourage the resident Indians to settle, assist them in the purchase of farm seed and implements, and parcel out holdings on the reserves to each family. Since there were no reserves in the colony, it is difficult to say what precisely was expected of the commissioners: their job would be very much what they made of it. But, as one of them observed, the law was at least "a step in the right direction, by giving the Indians a *status* in the land of their birth, and so far placing them on a footing with their brethren in the neighbouring provinces."⁴⁶

The law made no mention of providing relief for the Indians although this item now became a more or less regular charge on the public revenues until Confederation. After 1856 the Assembly voted sums ranging from £10 to £100 a year either for Indian relief in general, for the aged and sick in particular, or simply for the Indians without any qualification. A few individual petitions by or on behalf of Indians were received and answered through these annual grants.⁴⁷ The Indian Commissioners, Theophilus Stewart and Henry Palmer, quickly found themselves at odds with each other over relief. Palmer insisted that "the more you attempt to support the Indians by furnishing either provisions or clothing, the worse they are."⁴⁸ Stewart, on the other

45 *The Nova Scotian*, 20 September 1858.

46 19 Vic., c. 10, "An Act relating to the Indians of Prince Edward Island", passed 4 April 1856, *Revised Statutes of Prince Edward Island* (Charlottetown, 1862), pp. 164-165; Lieutenant Governor Dominic Daly sent the law on to the Colonial Office without comment, 14 June 1856, CO 226/87, ff. 123-125; [Theophilus Stewart], "The Micmacs of Prince Edward Island," *The Aborigines' Friend and Colonial Intelligencer* (London, 1865), pp. 508-510.

47 *JLA*, passim. The sums voted, by year, were: 1857, £85.16.2; 1858, £94.16.0; 1860, £25; 1861, £37.14.8; 1862, £30; 1864, £10; 1865, £50; 1867, £100; 1868, £100; 1869, £100; 1870, £100; 1871, £150; 1872, \$485; 1873, \$485.

48 Palmer to Cornelius Howat, 7 April 1862, *JLA*, 1862, App. Y, n.p.

hand, overspent his allocation every year, mostly on direct relief. The published accounts show that he distributed the money in numerous small sums to individual named Indians for such things as flour, bread, sugar, tea, coffee, molasses, pork, beef, mutton, potatoes, leather, flannel, socks, blankets, mitts; and for medicines and medical services. The Indians, he explained, still wandered across the colony trying to sell their baskets and other handicrafts on a market glutted by goods imported cheaply due to free trade. When the Indians were unable to make a sale, whole families faced immediate starvation. If the government were to create an industrial establishment similar to Rand's at Hantsport, the Indians would get better prices for their products and so become self-supporting.⁴⁹

The only alternative to basket-making was settlement on the lands so freely mentioned in the Indian Act. Yet where were those lands? The Commissioners regarded Lennox Island as being in the possession of the Micmacs, although title to it was still held by a proprietor. Only three or four families lived there year round; several more spent the spring and summer on the island; and the whole tribe still congregated there for about three weeks at the time of the St. Anne's Day festivities each July. As had been true twenty years earlier, the island remained the obvious location for any concerted attempt at introducing the Indians to agriculture. The nucleus of a settlement was there: a chapel, a cemetery, several houses and barns and a few cleared patches of ground. However, the right to cut hay in the nearby marshes was rented out to local whites, and as long as that practice continued there would be no fodder for Indian livestock. When Stewart applied to the Assembly for funds to buy two yoke of oxen and a plough for the Indians he was turned down.⁵⁰

The alternative to concentrating the Indians on Lennox Island was to provide them with scattered areas throughout the province located near their accustomed campsites. Henry Palmer made a start in this direction when he arranged with the Board of Ordinance for the loan of ten acres which had long been visited by Indians on the east side of Charlottetown harbor. The Surveyor General laid off small lots and eleven branches of the Louis and Mitchell families went to work. The neighbouring white farmer refused them permission to cross his land, so they first had to build their own access road, then clear and fence the area. The first crop of potatoes, in 1857, yielded almost 600 bushels; Palmer had never seen a finer crop. Cultivation continued for a few years, and then the government built a fever hospital on the site.⁵¹

49 For an example of Stewart's accounts, *ibid.*, 1860, App. L; Stewart, "Micmacs," *loc. cit.*

50 Report of Theophilus Stewart, 4 March 1861, *JLA*, 1861, App. S; 10 February 1862, *ibid.*, 1862, App. Y.

51 Reports of Stewart, 22 February, and Palmer, 11 March 1858, *ibid.*, 1858, App. R; petition of James Louis and others, 7 May 1866, *ibid.*, 1866, p. 86.

Another piece of land that the Indians might have been able to use lay in the proprietary of Charles Worrell, who had divided 204 of his acres amongst half a dozen Indian families. After they had made some improvements, the Indians were bribed and bullied out of their holdings by Irish immigrants. The widow of Augustine Nicholas applied to Stewart for reinstatement in the twenty acres she had occupied; Stewart made two trips to nearby St. Peter's and had the trespasser bound over to keep the peace. Mitchell Nicholas applied to be restored to the eighteen acres he claimed had been filched from him; but by that time the Irish settlers had launched a petition against the Commissioners' activities. Stewart and Palmer countered with a petition of their own, requesting that the Assembly restore the Indians to the lands Worrell had given them, or else provide an equivalent alternative. An exchange was effected, with 204 acres along the Morell River in Lot 39 being transferred to the Commissioners in 1859. The new land was surveyed and pronounced ready for sowing in the following spring; half of the grant proved to be unfit for any practical purpose. The Irish squatters received title to the land they claimed on payment of the regular price to the Crown Lands Office.⁵²

The tiny Morell River settlement was the only successful transfer of lands to the Indians. A few rather poor acres were set aside in the Boughton River area of Lot 55; some better quality land on Lot 15 near Cape Egmont was quickly taken over by whites. In 1861 Mr. Perry of Prince County petitioned on behalf of Peter Francis to allow the Indians to reoccupy Indian Island in Murray Harbour at the other end of the province. This was the island the Assembly had made a gesture towards purchasing in 1843 after refusing to bid on Lennox Island. When they found that the owners wanted £400 the legislators dropped the matter again. To end this story of failure, Stewart himself recommended that the sites in Lots 15 and 55, which the Indians had never used, be sold and the proceeds put to the acquisition of more suitable lands elsewhere. The sale was agreed to, but no more land was bought.⁵³

As the normal procedures of recommendation and report failed to stir the Assembly to any useful action, Theophilus Stewart began to reach beyond them by publicising the plight of the Micmacs. He arranged for a group of Indians to meet the Prince of Wales on his visit to Charlottetown in 1860. Standing on the front lawn of Government House shortly after breakfast,

52 Stewart, Report, 22 February 1858, *ibid.*, 1858, App. R; Petition of Stewart and Palmer, 4 March 1858, *ibid.*, pp. 30-31, 90-91; Stewart, Report, 19 March 1860, *ibid.*, App. L; Stewart, "Micmacs," *loc. cit.*; Stewart to Superintendent of Indian Affairs, 5 January 1875, *Annual Report of the Department of the Interior: year ended 30th June 1874* (Ottawa, 1875), pp. 51-52.

53 Stewart, Report, 19 March 1860, *JLA*, 1860, App. L; petition of Peter Francis, 8 April 1861, *ibid.*, 1861, pp. 109, 143; Wm. & F. Herring to Charles Desbrisay, 6 July 1861, *ibid.*, 1862, App. L, p. 115; Address to His Excellency, 8 May 1866, *ibid.*, 1866, pp. 89-90, 93, 111.

Stewart harangued the Prince on the “depressed and unhappy condition of the resident Indians.” They had no land of their own except for their refuge on Lennox Island, which they had held against every effort to dispossess them. All they needed was assistance from the government to become farmers and so shake off their poverty. After the speech, Mrs. Augustine Nicholas presented His Royal Highness with a miniature canoe and some baskets she had made. The Prince retired and Stewart chatted with members of the retinue. The royal artist, Dr. Ackland, sketched two or three of the Indians. The party then broke up, the Indians making their own way back to their camps. “Well, what did the Prince give you?” Mrs. Nicholas was asked on her return home. “Why, *noting*.” “Did no one give you anything?” “No . . . me no beg. Squaw poor now — Squaw always be poor — me no care.”⁵⁴ The Prince, however, had been sufficiently moved to donate £50 for the benefit of the Indians; the money was used to buy fifty obsolete muskets from army surplus.⁵⁵

The *Examiner* praised the “persevering energy of Mr. Stewart [in] what we hope may be the first of a series of efforts to enlist general sympathy” for the Micmacs. A second opportunity offered itself a few weeks later with the public hearings of the Land Commission appointed in an attempt to resolve the proprietorial claims on Prince Edward Island. Stewart presented the Indians’ case. It was a familiar story: they had received nothing when the colony had been divided up amongst the proprietors; they could no longer hunt or fish and depended on the sale of their artifacts for subsistence; the only place where they could become self-supporting was Lennox Island. They had never recognised the claims of any proprietor there and had been known to eject agents sent to collect rents from them. “There is a want of sympathy for these poor people even on the part of the Government itself; and . . . for the neglect of them a stigma rests both upon our Legislature and our Government of the day; without assistance they must perish.” The Land Commissioners were sympathetic, especially Joseph Howe, who had been brought in from Nova Scotia as one of the members. Even before the findings were published he let it be known that the rights of the Indians to Lennox Island and the adjacent hay marshes would be confirmed, or, in the words of the report itself: that “this very small portion of the wide territory their forefathers formerly owned, should be left in the undisturbed possession of this last remnant of the race”.⁵⁶

54 “The Indians,” *The Examiner* (Charlottetown), 21 August 1860; “Princely Munificence Impeded in its Course,” *ibid.*, 10 December 1860.

55 Lieutenant Governor George Dundas to Duke of Newcastle, 15 October 1860, CO 226/92, ff. 331-332.

56 *The Examiner*, 21 August, 10 September 1860, 26 August 1861; Report of the Land Commissioners, *JLA*, 1862, App. O; petition of John Trenamen, 28 March 1862, *ibid.*, p. 78.

Robert Bruce Stewart, David's heir and the then proprietor of Lennox Island, did not wait for the formal report; he sent off a protest to the Colonial Secretary on the basis of the newspaper stories of Howe's opinion. The island, he stated, was clearly his property and the Land Commissioners' misguided views on Indian claims went quite beyond the scope of their powers; the local Indians were also being misled, particularly by Theophilus Stewart, who had persuaded them to threaten to kill anyone who went to the island on behalf of the proprietor. Even so, R. B. Stewart expressed his willingness to sell the island for £400, the same price as his father had once paid for it. Lieutenant Governor Dundas received the ensuing enquiry from the Colonial Office before he saw the Land Commissioners' report. Of one thing there was no doubt: R. B. Stewart's legal title was unassailable.⁵⁷ There remained one solution to the impasse: find £400.

There was no chance that the Assembly would come forward with such a sum as it was becoming increasingly niggardly in providing for the Indians: only £30 was voted in 1862, nothing in 1863, and a mere £10 "for indigent squaws" in 1864. These trifling sums were to be spent by named individuals, and none of them was Theophilus Stewart.⁵⁸ The Assembly turned aside a petition by both Commissioners urging the punishment of whites who gave or sold liquor to Indians or advanced them credit; a similar appeal from the Micmac, John Mitchell, requesting some restrictions on the sale of alcohol was also refused. Vain attempts were made to have the Indians exempted from ferry charges, which amounted to a considerable sum in the course of their annual migrations. A list of aged and destitute Indians, compiled by Stewart, was referred to the committee on paupers and lunatics where it lay untouched.⁵⁹ After the rejection of his plea for the purchase of oxen and a plough for the Lennox Island Indians, Stewart turned to raising money by private subscription. Collecting some £10, he took £17 from the previous year's grant and bought the equipment anyway.⁶⁰ In return the Assembly made sure he did not touch public money until 1865, when members rediscovered a modicum of faith and generosity. Beginning in 1867, the annual grant of aid was increased to £100; in addition, money was voted for a non-denominational school at Lennox Island. The curriculum covered the basic skills of reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography and dictation. Even

57 Newcastle to Dundas, 2 September 1861, enclosing R. B. Stewart to Newcastle, 27 August 1861, CO 226/94, ff. 26-29; abstract of title, *ibid.*, f. 30.

58 *JLA*, 1862, p. 129; *ibid.*, 1864, p. 114.

59 Petition of Stewart and Palmer, 19 March 1860, *ibid.*, 1860, pp. 56, 79; of John Mitchell, 19 April 1861, *ibid.*, 1861, p. 146; of James Louis and other Micmacs, 20 April 1859, *ibid.*, 1859, p. 66; order of 20 April 1861, *ibid.*, 1861, p. 148.

60 Stewart, Report, 10 February 1862, *ibid.*, 1862, App. Y.

though there were only four families in year round residence in 1868, Stewart pronounced the school an immediate success. Six years later, after more families had settled, he reported that 40 Indian children — 40% of the whole — were in attendance.⁶¹

The Assembly's change of heart was related to the fact that at long last someone was going to resolve the problem of Lennox Island for them. Following his first venture into private philanthropy, Theophilus Stewart determined to see what more could be achieved from this source. In June, 1862, he founded the Micmac Society with the object of assisting "the native Indians in rendering the cultivation of the soil an auxiliary to their ordinary manufacturing pursuits, and in forwarding the education of their rising generation." The Society had a president, two vice-presidents, a treasurer, a secretary and a committee of ten. The president was the invaluable and ubiquitous Captain Orlebar; the secretary, Theophilus Stewart, also had the duty of making collections to aid the cause.⁶² When Silas Rand came on his visit to Charlottetown that year Stewart took him for a trip to Lennox Island. Although they were out six days they were unable to get ashore because of stormy weather. Rand had to content himself with a distant view of the Indians' chapel and houses and farms. "I admire Mr. Stewart's zeal and enthusiasm," he wrote, and expressed his hope that the Indians could be given "quiet and peaceable possession of that beautiful Island." He offered to help with such influence and money as he possessed.⁶³

Charity may begin at home, but that was no reason for it to stay there. Stewart wrote the Aborigines' Protection Society, a London organization founded in 1838 to hold a watching brief for the native peoples of the world. He introduced himself as the local representative of the Micmac Missionary Society, sending Rand's Micmac translation of the Psalms and copies of that Society's reports along with the resolutions of his own society.⁶⁴ The Aborigines' Protection Society had never shown much interest in the Maritime provinces, its published notices over twenty five years being limited to an abridged version of Perley's Report on the New Brunswick Indians and an open letter to Lieutenant Governor Gordon on his going out to that same colony.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, Stewart's description of the distress of the Prince Edward Island Indians found a sympathetic response. He estimated the cost

61 25 March 1868, *ibid.*, 1868, p. 30; *ibid.*, *passim*; Stewart, Report, 25 March 1869, *ibid.*, 1869, App. T; *Annual Report of Department of Interior 1874*, p. 52.

62 Stewart, "Micmacs," *loc. cit.*

63 Letter of S. T. Rand, 13 November 1862, *The Protestant, and Evangelical Witness* (Charlottetown), 15 November 1862.

64 Stewart, "Micmacs," *loc. cit.*

65 Aborigines' Protection Society, *Seventh and Eighth Annual Reports* (London, 1844, 1845), Appendix, pp. 34-57; *Aborigines' Friend*, 1861, pp. 230-232.

of providing the 33 families in the colony with the supplies necessary for spring planting at £47.7.6 a year, and a further £50 was needed to build permanent homes for them. The London Society agreed to send a small sum to help Stewart meet these charges and, more importantly, opened a subscription in 1865 for the purchase of Lennox Island. The president of the Aborigines' Protection Society, R. N. Fowler, headed the list with £100.⁶⁶

Negotiations for the sale of Lennox Island were completed in 1870. All the money was raised in Britain, and the Society decided to hold the island through a board of trustees which included Lord Alfred Spencer Churchill, several Members of Parliament and the secretary, F. W. Chesson. Stewart's Micmac Society was kept fully informed; the draft of the conveyance was submitted for their approval, and they were asked to nominate a local committee to supervise the settlement. They recommended three *ex officio* members, the Lieutenant Governor, the Chief Justice and the Indian Commissioner, and named an additional five persons. Stewart stressed that only Indians native to the province should enjoy the use of Lennox Island, as ample provision had been made for Indians in the other British colonies. All was agreed. The Aborigines' Protection Society passed a resolution commending Stewart for his services; the Micmac Society returned the compliment.⁶⁷

The local committee took over the direction of Lennox Island in 1871. Stewart paid eight visits that year. In his role as Indian Commissioner he dispensed public money to settle the Francis, Bernard, Mitchell, Snake, Dominick, Toney and Labob families. As a member of the local committee he consulted frequently with the surveyors who were laying out settlers' locations and blazing a road through the island. Indians were employed in the survey

66 *Ibid.*, 1865, p. 112.

67 When Stewart returned the conveyance and other documents they were all lost in the wreck of the SS *City of Boston*. Stewart to Richard Smith, 3 March 1870, enclosing duplicates of his letters of 19 and 22 January together with the Minutes of the Micmac Society meeting of January 20; same to same, 5 March 1870, Papers of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery and Aborigines' Protection Societies [hereafter APS Papers], Mss. Br. Emp. S 22, G 83, Rhodes House, Oxford. Stewart to F. W. Chesson, 26 December 1870, S 18, C148, f. 99; Chesson to Lord Kimberley, 19 August 1871, CO 226/108, ff. 330-331; Stewart, Report, 13 April 1870, *JLA*, 1870, App. AA; *The Islander* (Charlottetown), 10 June 1870; *Quebec Mercury*, 7 June 1870.

One benefaction began another. In 1872, Lady Wood of Bath left her estate to be divided amongst the deaf and dumb of Prince Edward Island and the Micmacs. The bequest was widely reported. Ten years later, after the lawyers had finished, there was a little over £2000 left. A provincial committee decided in 1886 to invest the money in the Dominion Government Savings Bank; half of the interest would go annually to the Nova Scotia Deaf and Dumb Institute, half to the Dominion Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Prince Edward Island; folder "Re Estate of Lady Wood," S22, G 83, APS Papers; *Harbour Grace Star* (Newfoundland), 11 June 1872; *Saint John Daily News* (New Brunswick), 1 June 1872.

40 *Acadiensis*

as chainmen and labourers; Peter Francis and Joseph Francis were appointed overseers or wood rangers to prevent whites from taking firewood off the island. The survey showed that the property contained 1320 acres, of which 1100 were optimistically described as excellent for agriculture; in addition, it was estimated that the adjacent marshes under proper management would yield 80 tons of hay a year. By 1874 there were almost ninety acres under cultivation, producing 400 bushels of potatoes, 40 of wheat, 30 of oats and small quantities of turnips, corn, peas, carrots and cucumbers. Martin Francis owned a horse, two cows, a bull and a hog; Peter Francis had two cows and two calves; two yoke of oxen and two cows were held in trust for the use of all. The importance of fishing in the island's economy was shown by the fact that between them the families owned twelve small boats.⁶⁸

Once Lennox Island was under the care of a London society, the interests of the Indians received attention at the highest level. A provincial law was passed in 1871 to regulate the inland fisheries, allowing, *inter alia*, for the sale of exclusive rights to oyster farming in Lennox Channel. A petition in the name of the Indians protested that the law would deprive them "of one of those means or sources graciously provided by a kind and beneficent Providence" and cause them "great discouragement and dismay." Thereupon, the provincial government postponed the sale for three months. Alerted by Stewart, the Aborigines' Protection Society took up the cause. Chesson wrote the Colonial Secretary that the law was very injurious both to the Indians and to the Society. He pointedly reminded Lord Kimberley of the names of the trustees, and advised that the law be disallowed by the imperial government. Kimberley promptly wrote the Lieutenant Governor, who agreed to further postpone any sale until the law had been reviewed in London. The usual reason for the disallowance of a colonial law was that it contained provisions repugnant to the laws of Great Britain. There was nothing of the sort in this law, whose main purpose was to establish closed seasons for oysters and trout; nevertheless, the Assembly repealed that part of it referring to exclusive oyster farming in Lennox Passage to meet the objections. One letter from a London lobby had stirred more action than a hundred years of patient suffering.⁶⁹

68 "Mr. T. Stewart's account of Indian disbursements & c." *JLA*, 1872, App. P; *Annual Report of Department of Interior, 1874*, pp. 51-52.

69 As can be seen from the flurry of correspondence; the basic letters are: Chesson to Kimberley, 19 August 1871, CO 226/108, ff. 330-331 (draft in S18, C149, f. 351, APS Papers); Kimberley to Robinson, 23 August 1871, CO 227/12, f. 77; Robinson to Kimberley, 19 September 1871, CO 226/109, f. 113, 20 September 1872, CO 226/110, ff. 24-25. The APS had earlier been concerned about fishing rights at Lennox Island, Stewart to Smith, 22 January 1870, S 22, G 83, APS Papers.

In 1873 responsibility for the Indians passed to Ottawa as Prince Edward Island entered Confederation. The Department of Indian Affairs had its standard list of questions: on what tenure did the Indians hold the land, where were the lands, what did they contain, which bands held what? How far had the Indians progressed in agriculture and where did the support come from for schools “and other useful objects?” Stewart provided what information he could and, in return, was appointed Visiting Superintendent at \$200 a year with \$100 for travelling expenses. By way of guidance, he was told only to prevent intemperance, make parents send their children to school, and send in quarterly reports.⁷⁰ His first report arrived somewhat tardily in January 1875. The province had handed over to the Dominion 302 Micmacs, of whom 99 were children; 1524 acres of land at Lennox Island and on the Morell River as Indian reserves; ten frame buildings, one dilapidated log house and about fifty six “old fashioned camps” scattered across the countryside. Stewart welcomed the Dominion government to the challenge of improving the condition of those who had always had to live from hand to mouth: “Now that their position has been altered, and that they are to share or participate in the glory of Canadian policy . . . the most ardent aspirations, if not anticipations, may be indulged with reference to the future progress of these people.”⁷¹

The Indians of Prince Edward Island were the most neglected group in a region that had done its best to ignore the native people for a hundred years. The safeguards written into the Proclamation of 1763 were never applied, for neither imperial nor colonial governments considered that the measure had any relevance to the area. The Indians did not exist as a matter of public policy and their cause had to be advocated by individuals conscious of pursuing a lonely struggle to gain the attention of heedless politicians. Men such as George Monk, Walter Bromley and Abraham Gesner in Nova Scotia, Moses Perley and Samuel Fairbanks in New Brunswick, Thomas Irwin and Theophilus Stewart in Prince Edward Island, and Silas Rand throughout the region, pleaded the cause. But the native people were not content to be led by a few self-appointed white chiefs. Those who spoke for them did not speak to them. By their actions, they maintained that Acadia still belonged to them, to be traversed at will according to the seasons as it had been from time immemorial. They resisted the fitful attempts to make them conform to the life of the white farmers, as the existence of over fifty campsites for the 300 Mic-

70 Superintendent General of Indian Affairs to J. C. Aikins, 21 August 1873; E. P. Meredith to Stewart, 22 August 1873, 15 January, 9 May 1874, R. G. 10 Indian Affairs, vol. 4386, pp. 115-116, 134; vol. 4387, pp. 886-888; vol. 4390, pp. 157-158, PAC.

71 *Annual Report of Department of the Interior, 1874*, pp. 51-52.

42 *Acadiensis*

macs of Prince Edward Island clearly demonstrates. If they could no longer hunt, they could move from place to place selling their handicrafts to the whites, who were thus placed in the position of being surrogate wild animals. The Maritime Indians maintained their independence to a degree unknown amongst the reservation Indians of Canada; but at the price of a steadily increasing impoverishment in a time and place where relief to the poor, and particularly to the poorest of the poor, was grudging and sporadic at best. Perhaps the Dominion, with practices based on the comparatively benign policy long pursued in the Canadas, would indeed introduce them to a better life.