

IAN ROSS ROBERTSON

Political Realignment in Pre-Confederation Prince Edward Island, 1863-1870

IMPORTANT POLITICAL CHANGES OCCURRED in Prince Edward Island between 1863 and 1870. Historians have usually been attracted to Island history in these years by the theme of colonial union, and perhaps as a consequence have tended to underestimate the significance of issues predominantly local in character. But to understand the period and what followed, it is necessary to redirect the focus of analysis away from the question of Confederation. The details of the story are not tidy, but Island politics were not a tidy affair in these years.¹

The political realignment of this period took place in two stages, and the Confederation question was decisive at neither. Following the split in the Conservative leadership over Confederation in 1864-65, the most potent factors causing political change were the land question and sectarianism. The land question separated the Conservatives from their grassroots supporters in rural Queens County and determined the Liberal election victory of 1867. Sectarianism, embodied in the issue of denominational grants, separated virtually all Roman Catholic legislators from the Protestant leadership of the Liberal party following the election of 1870, thus providing the opportunity for a coalition government to be formed under the leadership of Conservative James Colledge Pope. The alliance of convenience between Conservatives and Roman Catholics developed into a political juggernaut which ruled for 17 of the next 21 years and brought the Island into Confederation in 1873. Thus close examination of the political impact of the land question, which scattered Conservative forces in 1867, and sectarianism, which scattered Liberal forces three years later, is essential for understanding the configuration of political factions after 1870 and for a realistic comprehension of the genesis of Confederation on the Island. It was in these years, and in a local context conditioned by strife over the land question and sectarianism, that the political vehicle for Confederation was assembled.

Over the decades of the 1840s and 1850s, in response to the issues of responsible government and land reform, partisan divisions on the Island had developed largely on the basis of ideology and class interest. The Liberals, under George

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1 See F.W.P. Bolger, *Prince Edward Island and Confederation 1863-1873* (Charlottetown, 1964), F.W.P. Bolger, ed., *Canada's Smallest Province: A History of P.E.I.* (Charlottetown, 1973), Chs. 6-9, Harry Baglole and David Weale, *The Island and Confederation: The End of an Era* (Summerside, 1973).

Coles, were the party of progressive reform and made a point of appealing to the tenantry. After the achievement of responsible government in 1851 they placed particular emphasis upon widening the franchise, ensuring universal access to non-denominational education, and enabling as many tenants as possible to become freeholders, while bettering the lot of those whose landlords refused to sell. The Liberals encountered considerable frustration over the land question: only one major landlord could be persuaded to sell during their years in office, and ameliorative legislation they passed, such as that designed to indemnify evicted tenants, was diluted or disallowed by the Colonial Office.² The inescapable conclusion was that the Liberal programme of moderate reform had failed, and indeed the census of 1861 revealed that only 40.4 per cent of the occupiers of land were freeholders.³ Yet the land question was not an issue which could bring the Conservative party back to office, for many of its leaders were landlords or land agents or both, and the party was intimately linked in the public mind with the proprietary system. Instead, the Conservatives won the elections of 1859 and 1863 by mobilizing the Protestant majority against perceived threats to their interests from the Roman Catholics, who constituted approximately 45 per cent of the population. After both elections the Conservatives formed all-Protestant governments, and by 1863 Protestant constituencies were returning only Conservatives and Roman Catholic constituencies only Liberals.⁴

Confederation generated little public support on the Island, but provoked a major split in the Conservative leadership. Premier John Hamilton Gray and the powerful colonial secretary, William Henry Pope, supported the Confederation movement. The attorney general, Edward Palmer, a former premier who had led the Conservatives to victory in 1859 and 1863, opposed it vehemently, taking a central role in rallying public opinion against it. As a consequence first Gray, in December 1864, and then Palmer, in January 1865, resigned from the cabinet.⁵ Despite Palmer's departure, he had the satisfaction of knowing that a divided Conservative party could not lead the colony into Confederation. The new premier, James Pope (William's younger brother), remained discreetly ambiguous about his views on the issue, but in 1866, under pressure of public opinion, he presented to the House of Assembly the "no terms" resolution, which denied the possibility of *ever* achieving satisfactory terms of union.⁶ In

2 See Ian Ross Robertson, "George Coles", *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, X (Toronto, 1972), p. 185.

3 Calculation based on Andrew Hill Clark, *Three Centuries and the Island: A Historical Geography of Settlement and Agriculture in Prince Edward Island, Canada* (Toronto, 1959), p. 95, Table III.

4 See Ian Ross Robertson, "The Bible Question in Prince Edward Island from 1856 to 1860", *Acadiensis*, V, 2 (Spring 1976), pp. 3-25, and "Party Politics and Religious Controversialism in Prince Edward Island from 1860 to 1863", *Acadiensis*, VII, 2 (Spring 1978), pp. 29-59.

5 Prince Edward Island, Executive Council Minutes, 20, 22 December 1864, 6, 7 January 1865, microfilm, Public Archives of Prince Edward Island [PAPEI].

6 See Prince Edward Island, House of Assembly, *Debates and Proceedings, 1866*, pp. 52, 54.

effect, there was such a strong anti-Confederate consensus that the question became more or less dormant, with opposition to Confederation being a virtual test of political orthodoxy. To campaign for public office as an advocate of Confederation in these years was to invite defeat, as Edward Whelan, the only prominent pro-Confederate Liberal, discovered in 1867. William Pope, who remained strongly in favour of union of the colonies, resigned from the cabinet in 1866 and contested no more elections. Confederation became a non-issue, and the dynamics of political change on the Island were elsewhere.

Shaken at the top by the Confederation issue, the Conservative party was shaken at the base by the events surrounding the history of the Tenant League. For a generation Island tenants and squatters had heard various solutions to their problems proposed by radical Escheators, more moderate Liberals, and Conservatives. The Escheators, who flourished in the 1830s and early 1840s, had advocated dispossession of proprietors for failure to fulfill the granting terms of 1767. Given the elapse of time and the Escheators' disregard for property rights, the British government considered their proposals utterly beyond the pale of serious discussion. Their leader, William Cooper, although representing a majority in the assembly, was refused an audience when he went to London in 1839.⁷ As the party in power in the 1850s the Liberals had relied heavily on their Land Purchase Act of 1853, which authorized government purchase of proprietary estates, with the consent of their owners, for resale to the occupiers of land. But many proprietors, including some of the largest, refused to sell, and the British government would not contemplate compulsory legislation. As a consequence, in the early 1860s the majority of Island farmers were still tenants or squatters. After extensive public hearings in 1860, a report by a land commission, and a delegation to England, the only measure the Conservatives were able to implement by 1864 was the so-called 15 Years Purchase Bill. This legislation gave certain tenants the right to buy the land they occupied at a rate most Island tenants considered exorbitant. Over the next four years only 45 tenants availed themselves of the act, and hence only 2,911 — or 0.82 per cent — of the 353,537 acres to which it applied were converted from leasehold to freehold under its provisions.⁸ In the wake of these disappointing experiences with political parties a new tenants' movement took shape.

A brief account of the origins, strategy, tactics, and repression of the Tenant League is necessary in order to explain its political impact in 1867. Founded formally at a convention in Charlottetown on 19 May 1864, the League put its faith in direct action, with no government serving as intermediary between landlord and tenant. Each township was to have a local committee, which would decide upon "a fair and reasonable price" to be offered to the proprietors for their lands. Any difficulties in this process were to be referred to the ten-man

7 See Harry Baglole, "William Cooper", *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, IX (Toronto, 1976), pp. 156-8.

8 *Statutes of Prince Edward Island*, 27 Vic., c. 2; "Statistics respecting Land Tenure", in Colonial Office [CO] 226/104, p. 311, microfilm, Public Archives of Canada [PAC].

Central Committee of the League. The programme of the Tenant League differed in principle from that of the earlier Escheat movement in that the new organization did not advocate expropriation without compensation. The convention even resolved that "any tenant who shall refuse to make a fair offer ...shall forfeit the sympathy and all the advantages of this Union". But the convention also left no doubt about its determination to bring the leasehold system to an end, by publishing a "Tenant's Pledge", to be taken by its members. Those subscribing to the pledge were "to withhold the further liquidation of rent and arrears of rent; and...to resist the distraint, coercion, ejection, seizure, and sale for rent and arrears of rent".⁹ In other words, no further rent was to be paid, and, if necessary, members were to resist the processes of law in order to exert pressure on landlords to sell.

George F. Adams, a tavernkeeper from eastern Queens County who had also, according to his own account, purchased leasehold rights from proprietors more than once, emerged from the founding convention as the most visible single member of the Tenant League. He explicitly rejected the view that the movement should wait for the next election (which would normally be held in 1867) and make its weight felt at the polls; rather, he argued that the issue could be settled before then through united direct action. The exclusion of assemblymen and legislative councillors from the convention emphasized the leaguers' lack of faith in parliamentary means of land reform. Indeed Adams, an Englishman who would soon be described privately by Lieutenant Governor George Dundas as "a wild Chartist",¹⁰ cited examples from British history in which reforms were won "by the *people themselves* demanding them, and in many instances, shedding their *blood* for *them*, and that *too without a murmur*". Stating that the League had no desire for political power, but aimed solely to resolve the land question, he appealed to all sympathizers to lay aside political and religious differences "until this all important grievance is redressed".¹¹ The Tenant League was clearly a movement beyond the control of the established political élite of Prince Edward Island.

By the early months of 1865 the movement began to present a direct challenge to authorities. On 10 March 1865 James Curtis, under-sheriff for Queens County, made a trip to Fort Augustus and the Monaghan Settlement, ten or 12 miles east of Charlottetown. His purpose was to serve writs on several tenants, including James Callaghan, an early militant in the movement for a tenant league, at the suit of the landlord, Father John McDonald. Curtis encountered various obstructions, and one of Callaghan's sons, whom he met on the road, even made a threat upon his life. Callaghan's son was carrying a tin trumpet,

9 *Ross's Weekly* (Charlottetown), 26 May 1864. The name actually adopted at the convention was "The Tenant Union of Prince Edward Island", but the organization was commonly referred to as the "Tenant League".

10 Dundas to Arthur Blackwood, 6 June 1864, private, in CO 226/100, p. 230. Also see *Ross's Weekly*, 26 May 1864, *Examiner* (Charlottetown), 23 May 1864, 19 June 1865.

11 *Ross's Weekly*, 26 May 1864.

which was the trademark of the League and which had a dual function: it was the means by which supporters passed on the warning that a suspicious person or group was approaching, and the clamour created by dozens of horns could intimidate such persons and make their horses difficult to control. Eventually Curtis turned back, for the community was arming itself with sticks and other weapons against him, and "the trumpets were blowing in every direction". He concluded, and his superior agreed, that it would be "useless" to undertake such missions in that area in future, "without being backed up with a strong force".¹² One week later the Tenant League held a public procession in Charlottetown, headed by a band and displaying flags, some with such inscriptions as "Vox Populi", "Tenant Rights", and "Free Land for All". Even critics of the League conceded that the demonstration was orderly. But a breach of the peace occurred when Curtis attempted to arrest Samuel Fletcher, a rank and file Tenant Leaguer against whom he had a writ for refusing to pay rent. With the assistance of others, Fletcher escaped, tin trumpet in hand, and instantly became an enduring symbol of successful popular resistance to authority.¹³

In the late spring and the summer of 1865 matters assumed a more menacing aspect. On the night of 27 May a fire broke out on the estate of John Archibald McDonald (a nephew of Father John), an unpopular landlord in eastern Queens known for short leases, high rents, and ruthlessness in the use of distraint and eviction. A barn and stable, valued at £150, were destroyed. Although no direct connection with the Tenant League was ever proved, the fire was apparently the work of incendiaries angered by a series of writs for rent served on known Tenant Leaguers by the sheriff's bailiff and McDonald earlier in the day.¹⁴ On 18 July Curtis was assaulted and injured some six miles west of the capital while returning from an expedition with writs issued for non-payment of rent. In the course of the affray a group of Tenant Leaguers rescued a horse and wagon which had been seized, but Curtis and his three assistants managed nonetheless to capture "the ring-leader", Charles Dickieson, a farmer for whose arrest a warrant had already been issued.¹⁵ When Dickieson, who was charged in connection with the incident, was to be brought before a justice of the peace in Charlottetown, the authorities feared that sympathetic demonstrators might set him free. Hence about 25 special constables were armed to escort him between the jail and City Hall. They succeeded, although they were pelted with stones by a crowd numbering in the hundreds in from the countryside.¹⁶ These events raised

12 Curtis to John Morris, 14 March 1865, in Accession 2514/10, PAPEI; also see Morris to J.C. Pope, 15 March 1865, in *ibid*.

13 See Theophilus DesBrisay to Morris, 18 March 1865, and Morris to J.C. Pope, 18 March 1865, in *ibid.*; *Islander* (Charlottetown), 24 March 1865; *Examiner*, 10 April 1865; Robert Hodgson to Edward Cardwell, 2 August 1865, in Prince Edward Island, *Assembly Journal, 1866*, appendix G.

14 See *Examiner*, 5 June 1865; *Royal Gazette* (Charlottetown), 7 June 1865.

15 See affidavits of Curtis and Jonathan Collings, 19 July 1865, in *Assembly Journal, 1866*, app. G; *Islander*, 21 July 1865.

16 See Thomas W. Dodd to W.H. Pope, 26 July 1865, and W.H. Pope to Dodd, 26 July 1865 in

the question of possible means of aid to the civil power, for it was evident that in Queens County the sheriff was finding it increasingly difficult to discharge his duties without the assistance of an armed force. On 1 August the administrator of the colony, Robert Hodgson, with the full support of the government led by James Pope, took the fateful step of requesting that soldiers be sent to the Island from Halifax. Five days later two companies, totalling 134 men, arrived in Charlottetown.¹⁷

The idea of rent being collected “at the point of a bayonet” — a local metaphor referring to any active involvement of soldiers in the enforcement of leasehold obligations — was anathema in the political universe of Prince Edward Island. Hodgson and Pope were gambling that the mere presence of regular troops in Charlottetown would have a stabilizing effect on the Island as a whole. The all-Protestant Conservative government faced an awkward political dilemma, for the League had displayed particular strength in areas which had voted Conservative in recent elections. The first signs of formation of a new tenant organization had appeared in Protestant districts. Around the beginning of 1864, tenants at a meeting in southern Kings County had passed resolutions pledging resistance to distraint proceedings and expressing determination to prevent occupation of farms seized for rent, and had appended a declaration that “we are, or the majority of us, supporters of the present Government”.¹⁸ Whelan had greeted this with undisguised amusement, if not glee, and had republished the report of the meeting under the heading “Government Supporters in Arms Against the Government”.¹⁹

The Conservatives doubtless felt acutely uncomfortable at the prospect of having to use the military in districts which had voted Conservative, but by October of 1865, with resistance to the officers of the Queens County sheriff continuing, they had little alternative. On 3 October James H. Peters, assistant judge of the Supreme Court, complained to Hodgson that on the previous day when travelling west to hold court in Prince County he had had to pass through a “tumultuous assembly” of some 200 persons, equipped with tin trumpets, near Hunter River, in Queens County, apparently gathered “to prevent the Sheriff serving writs from the Supreme Court”. A former land agent who had established a formidable Island-wide reputation in the ten years before his appointment to the bench in 1848, Peters urged the administrator to take prompt action, lest “the lawless spirit which appears at present confined to certain districts, will soon extend through the whole country, then only to be suppressed by a loss of life which one shudders to contemplate”.²⁰ Within days Hodgson and the Pope government sent 27 soldiers with the Queens County sheriff on the first

Accession 2514/10, PAPEI; Hodgson to Cardwell, 2 August 1865, in *Assembly Journal*, 1866, app. G.

17 See Hodgson to Sir R.G. McDonnell, 1 August 1865, in *ibid.*; *Examiner*, 7, 14 August 1865.

18 *Ross's Weekly*, 28 January 1864.

19 *Examiner*, 1 February 1864.

20 Peters to Hodgson, 3 October 1865, in CO 226/101, p. 482.

of two expeditions to four townships in the western half of the county.²¹

Although capable of intimidating or repelling small bodies of civilian law enforcement officers, the Tenant Leaguers had no intention of challenging regular soldiers. The sheriff's party encountered no resistance in western Queens, and in November the sheriff, accompanied by 43 soldiers, made a ten-day visit to the five adjacent townships of eastern Queens where the League appeared to be strongest and where its leadership was concentrated. In serving writs they met some passive hostility, including the destruction of three small wooden bridges. But Hodgson felt able to report to London that "I am inclined to believe that this and the previous demonstration [in October] have had a good effect; and that although the animosity of the tenantry on the rent question has not subsided, the dread of incurring heavy costs has induced many to come forward and endeavor to effect a settlement of their arrears".²² Rent had been collected "at the point of a bayonet".

Furthermore, the Tory government launched several prosecutions, including one against the publisher of the pro-Tenant League *Ross's Weekly* newspaper for libel because of references to the Supreme Court judges, the sheriff, and the bailiff in an article entitled "The Tenant Union and the Courts of Law".²³ The government also undertook to purge the ranks of magistrates, other minor officials, and district school teachers of League supporters.²⁴ Under these pressures the Tenant League organization and leadership appear to have disintegrated. The local government felt sufficiently in command of the situation to release its Tenant League prisoners, including Dickieson, in August of 1866, and the imperial government withdrew its troops on 27 June 1867.²⁵

Thus repression had effectively destroyed the Tenant League as an organization capable of defying the law. Indeed its existence as an organization of any sort was problematic by the autumn of 1866.²⁶ Yet no one claimed that pro-League sentiment was dead, and close examination of the electoral results of 26 February 1867 suggests that events surrounding the history of the League played

21 See Hodgson to Cardwell, 11, 25 October 1865, *Assembly Journal, 1866*, app. G.

22 Hodgson to Cardwell, 22 November 1865, *ibid.*

23 See Executive Council Minutes, 7 October, 13 November, 12, 19 December 1865; Prince Edward Island Supreme Court Minutes, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 24 January 1866, PAPEI; "The Queen v John Ross", Indictment for Libel, Prince Edward Island, Supreme Court Case Papers, PAPEI; *Herald* (Charlottetown), 24 January 1866, reprinted from *Patriot* (Charlottetown), 20 January 1866; *Royal Gazette*, 20 September 1865; *Islander*, 3 November 1865. The article, which appeared in *Ross's Weekly*, 16 March 1865, does not appear to survive.

24 See Hodgson to Cardwell, 25 September 1865 (with enclosure), in CO 226/101, pp. 430-7; Extract from Minutes of the Board of Education, 27 July 1865, in Accession 2514/9, PAPEI; John McNeill to Clerk of Executive Council, 5 October 1865, in *ibid.*; Executive Council Minutes, 1, 14 August, 19 September, 7 October 1865.

25 See *Herald*, 8 August 1866; *Islander*, 28 June 1867.

26 Reports of meetings of the League's Central Committee in August and September of 1866 appeared in *Herald*, 22 August, 19 September 1866, but no hard evidence of subsequent activity as an organization survives.

a decisive role in the outcome. Six newly-elected assemblymen, five of them from rural Queens County, the focal point of League support during its heyday, were believed to be sympathetic to the movement. Each of the six replaced a Conservative, and these reversals were sufficient to determine which party won the election. Without them, the Liberals would have lost, 17 to 13, instead of winning, 19 to 11.

A more detailed analysis, focusing on the available results for individual polls, supports the hypothesis that suppression of the League engendered hard feelings which caused a decisive shift in the assembly election of 1867. For example, in the western half of Queens, comprising the 1st and 2nd Districts, all four successful Liberal candidates were considered to be pro-Tenant League, and they all won by wide margins. In the 1st District, Peter Sinclair and Donald Cameron, the pro-Tenant League candidates, took more than 90 per cent of the votes at the Lot 22 poll. Lot 22 was the first township to which troops had been despatched in October of 1865, following two major incidents of Tenant League defiance of the sheriff's officers in the area, one of which resulted in the indictment of 16 persons. In the 2nd District, the New Glasgow and Wheatley River polls, located in the home districts of the most prominent Tenant League prisoners, provided the margin of victory for Henry J. Callbeck and William S. McNeill. Finally, Benjamin Davies, the pro-Tenant League candidate elected in eastern Queens, gained his margin of victory through overwhelming support at the polls on Lots 49 and 50, the home townships of several Tenant League leaders, including Adams; troops had been sent to both in November of 1865.²⁷ The returns from these polls in 1st, 2nd, and 4th Queens confirm Palmer's analysis of the election in a letter to his anti-Confederate ally in Nova Scotia, Joseph Howe. The government's loss, he stated, "proceeded more from the effects of the Tenant League, than from the confederation differences within our Conservative party".²⁸ Rural Queens County had delivered six of eight seats to the Tories in 1863, but four years later only one Tory survived in rural Queens.

Further scrutiny of voting trends on the Island in the aftermath of the Tenant League disturbances reinforces the conclusion that Queens County, the most prosperous, the most populous, the most Protestant, and at recent elections the

27 Calculations based on *Examiner*, 11 March 1867.

28 Palmer to Howe, 8 March 1867 (draft), Item 256, Palmer Family Papers, PAPEI. It may be worth noting that all five townships in 4th Prince, where Alexander Laird Jr., who was believed to be a League sympathizer, replaced James Pope, bordered on western Queens. It is also possible that this reversal was related to Pope's behaviour as a landlord. The constituency included Lot 27, approximately 7,500 acres of which belonged to Pope. In 1868 Dundas reported to London that during the preceding five years Pope's average *actual* rental had been exceeding his *nominal* rental. This meant that he had been collecting arrears during the mid-1860s, when it was very controversial to do so. His political support on Lot 27 appears to have been weak from the beginning of his political career, for in 1857, when first elected at a byelection, 606 to 507, he lost the Lot 27 poll, 134 to 87; thus he won only 39.4 percent of the votes cast at that poll, while winning 58.2 percent of the votes in the remainder of the electoral district. See Dundas to the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, 3 June 1868, CO 226/104, pp. 333-4; percentage calculations based on electoral data in *Examiner*, 8 June 1857.

most Tory of the three Island counties, had suddenly become hostile territory for the Conservatives, and that their repressive measures against the League explained the change. Evidence in the papers of John McEachern, a self-described "moderate Conservative"²⁹ residing in a disturbed township of western Queens, provides additional corroboration. Although there is no reason to believe that McEachern, a tenant farmer, was ever actively involved with the Tenant League, he appears to have been in arrears to his landlord on Lot 65, Colonel B.H. Cumberland. In a diary entry for Thursday, 19 October 1865, he wrote that the sheriff had passed through his district that day, accompanied by soldiers. There was a gale on the following day, but on Saturday, when the weather had cleared to some extent, he went to Charlottetown "to settle with Chas. Wright",³⁰ the agent of Cumberland. McEachern was thus apparently conforming to the pattern subsequently noted by Hodgson, whereby tenants in arrears, anticipating visits from the sheriff supported by soldiers, acted before this happened to them. In a retrospective entry dated 1 January 1866, McEachern stated that in the autumn of 1865 landlords had "distrained upon tenants [*sic*] that never attended Union meetings, which causes much dissatisfaction among many of the former supporters of the present Government".³¹ At the Legislative Council election of 19 December 1866 the Conservatives lost both Queens County seats at stake, though they had won both at the first election for the upper house, in 1863. One Charlottetown newspaper attributed the results to "the stop-at-home disease"³² among Conservative voters, and McEachern, in recording the tally at his local poll, Nine Mile Creek, reported that "many remained home". Indeed the decline in the number of voters at Nine Mile Creek between 1863 and 1866 — from 91 to 51 — was so dramatic as to require a special explanation.³³

Even more significant were the identities of the two victors in Queens, and the majorities by which they won. John Balderston, a delegate to the founding convention of the Tenant League, who had been dismissed as a commissioner of small debts in September 1865 for his connection with the movement, won 62.7 per cent of the votes in the western half of the county. Robert P. Haythorne, a former estate owner who had disposed of his lands according to the League's prescription, won 58.9 per cent of the votes in defeating the incumbent Conservative member for eastern Queens.³⁴ Many years later, Haythorne would

29 Fragments of Family History of John McEachern, Diary, undated entry at the commencement of 1870, microfilm, PAPEI. Concerning McEachern, see David Weale, "The Emigrant", *The Island Magazine*, 16 (Fall-Winter 1984) and 17 (Summer 1985).

30 McEachern Diary, 19, 20, 21 October 1865. Although the part of the collection entitled "Sundry Accounts" gives no figures for the 1860s, between 1844 and 1851 McEachern, who had arrived in 1830, had been as much as 11.8 years in arrears.

31 McEachern Diary, 1 January 1866.

32 *Herald*, 9 January 1867.

33 McEachern Diary, 19 December 1866; also see 11 February 1863.

34 Calculations based on data in *Islander*, 4 January 1867. Concerning Balderston's dismissal, see

state publicly that “I was returned...[in 1866] in great measure through the influence of that body [the Tenant League]”.³⁵ Thus there can be no doubt that rural Queens County was in the process of shifting its political allegiance in a fundamental way, and that this shift was intimately related to the brief but spectacular career of the Tenant League.

This was the last time the land question played a major divisive role in local politics. In 1866 the largest estate on the Island, comprising more than 15 per cent of its land mass, was sold to the local government by the Cunard family.³⁶ The sale was a decisive turning-point in the struggle against leasehold tenure, for afterwards the terms of the debate within Prince Edward Island were never quite the same. It was as though many supporters and beneficiaries of the old order knew that its days were numbered. There was at least one significant land purchase by the government in every succeeding year through 1871, as several proprietors, particularly resident ones with political connections, sold out; the sellers included James Pope, T. Heath Haviland Jr., and the Palmer family.³⁷ In 1871 Haviland declared in the Legislative Council that “it is altogether contrary to the spirit of the people to remain any longer under the proprietary system. I do not think any party would have the boldness, at the present time, to rise up in the Legislature, or in any public place and say that it should be perpetuated. The hand writing is on the wall and it must go down”.³⁸ Die-hard proprietors remained, but they had little or no political support on the Island. There were virtually no defenders of leasehold tenure left in the legislature, and when unpopular landlords were criticized, no one rose to explain away their actions. The necessity of resolving the land question had become part of the political consensus, and at least some of the credit belonged to the Tenant Leaguers, for their agitation and resistance had helped to persuade the Tories that the cost of maintaining and defending the system was too great — both politically and in terms of the divisive impact of disorders and repression in the countryside. Issues other than the land question would be the prime determinants of Island political groupings after 1867.

One of the first major tasks the new Liberal government undertook was educational reform. Coles acted rapidly to restore “free education”, the system his party had established in 1852, by which the colonial treasury paid the entire salaries of school teachers.³⁹ In 1863 the Tories had reduced the salary paid to

Executive Council Minutes, 1 August, 19 September 1865, and Balderston to Charles DesBrisay, 17 August 1865, in Accession 2514/10, PAPEI.

35 Prince Edward Island, Legislative Council, *Debates and Proceedings, 1874*, p. 166. Given that the Tenant League appears to have ceased functioning as an organization prior to the Legislative Council election of December 1866, it is probable that what Haythorne really meant was that he had been returned in large part through the influence of individuals whom he knew *had been* active in the League.

36 Calculation based on Clark, *Three Centuries and the Island*, pp. 46, 52.

37 See *Assembly Journal, 1875*, app. E.

38 *Legislative Council Debates, 1871*, p. 21.

39 See Resolution number one in *Assembly Journal, 1867*, p. 48.

each teacher by £15, expecting that each district would provide the final £15 of the teacher's salary through local assessment. The change had not been a success, as the provisions for ensuring the desired result were inadequate, and simply led to litigation and ill will. In fact, by 1867 the Tories realized that the experiment had failed, for they did not oppose the restoration of "free education". Now led in the assembly by Haviland, they asked that it not be treated as a partisan matter. One even stated that "I believe it was the intention of the majority of the Conservative party, had the government remained in their hands, to amend the law in this particular".⁴⁰

In 1868 the Liberal government carried out a major consolidation and amendment of the existing laws relating to education. The primary objectives were to clarify the principles and to increase the efficiency of the Island's educational system, and in these respects the statute of 1868 was successful.⁴¹ But it was not so effective in matters upon which religious denominations differed. It was a compromise, and the Liberals gave all they thought politically feasible to the strong-willed and increasingly ultramontane Roman Catholic bishop of Charlottetown, Peter McIntyre. The public and non-denominational Normal School would no longer be compulsory for the candidates for teaching licences. The statute enlarged the Board of Education to 11 members, and when appointed, they included five Roman Catholics. Furthermore, Father Angus McDonald, rector of the Catholic St. Dunstan's College, was one of the members who were named "examiners" of teaching candidates. For the Acadian areas the Liberals re-enacted certain concessions made in 1864, and attempted to address a chronic problem, namely, the shortage of French-speaking teachers, which had been worsened by the abolition of the special category of "French Acadian" schools in 1863. As many as 20 extra salary grants of £5 each would be paid to teachers instructing ten or more children in the French language, on condition that local trustees raised a like sum by voluntary subscription.⁴² The new act also increased the number of school visitors from two to three, and the Liberals appointed a Roman Catholic to one of the visitorships.

But this was not enough for the bishop. On 3 March McIntyre had sent a memorial to the government, in which he recalled the public support given to St. Andrew's College during its brief existence, between 1831 and the mid-1840s. He pointed out that through St. Dunstan's and three female schools his church was educating close to 500 pupils at no cost to the treasury. Hence, it was "a grievance that he [the bishop] gets no aid from the Public School Fund of the Colony, not even as much for the number of children taught free, as should be paid for them if they attended District Schools".⁴³ On 18 March the executive

40 See Colin MacLennan in *Assembly Debates, 1867*, p. 32.

41 *Statutes*, 31 Vic., c. 6.

42 See Georges Arsenault, *L'Éducation chez les Acadiens de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard 1720-1980 ou La survivance acadienne à l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard* (Summerside, 1982), pp. 34, 55, 58-9.

43 *Assembly Journal, 1868*, app. FF. For a modern history of St. Dunstan's, see G. Edward MacDonald, "'And Christ Dwelt in the Heart of His House': A History of St. Dunstan's Univer-

council resolved not to submit the proposed grant to the legislature, and this refusal of the bishop's request was consistent with the principles of the new Education Act, which had cut off all aid to schools in which sectarian religion was taught.⁴⁴ But the government's decision did not close the issue. The Conservative Opposition saw the opportunity to embarrass the religiously composite Liberal administration, and had the memorial tabled for discussion.⁴⁵ Their leader, Haviland, questioned "whether...an education that is not founded upon the principles of religion...is a healthy system...for a mere secular education, unless founded upon religious instruction, is utterly futile".⁴⁶ Frederick Brecken asked Coles, who in 1860 had supported a motion favouring equal endowments for St. Dunstan's and the publicly-established and secular Prince of Wales College, why he now refused the bishop's memorial. Brecken also asserted that McIntyre held the power to overthrow the government, and went on to say that George Howlan, the leading Roman Catholic assemblyman, disagreed with the premier on educational policy.⁴⁷

The Conservatives succeeded in provoking quite diverse statements of position from the government side of the house. Coles replied that although he had voted for a grant of £75 to St. Dunstan's in 1858, and for equal endowments in 1860, "the Government do not at present feel themselves in a position to give a grant to the College. Yet in my own individual opinion, the Bishop is entitled to a grant. But...individual opinion is entirely a different thing from political duty".⁴⁸ The attorney general, Joseph Hensley, stated, however, that "you cannot depart from...secular education unless you break up the whole system of the present common school education altogether".⁴⁹ Howlan advocated a system of separate schools for the colony. "But", he asked, "where can I go for redress?"⁵⁰ Two other Roman Catholic Liberal members expressed their agreement with Howlan as to the necessity of mixing religious and secular training.⁵¹ Hensley replied that

city 1855-1955", Ph.D. thesis, Queen's University, 1984; pp. 124-33 concern the controversies between 1868 and 1870 surrounding a proposed grant of public money to St. Dunstan's and follow the account in Ian Ross Robertson, "Religion, Politics, and Education in Prince Edward Island from 1856 to 1877", M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1968, ch. 7. *Assembly Journal, 1845*, p. 43 records a grant of £75 to St. Andrew's College, but MacDonald, p. 52 gives the year of closure as 1844, without citing a source.

44 Two such schools which had formerly been aided were given a year of grace to meet the requirements of the Education Act. See *Assembly Journal, 1868*, p. 76, Joseph Hensley and Coles in *Assembly Debates, 1868*, pp. 152, 153, *Executive Council Minutes*, 18 March 1868.

45 *Assembly Debates, 1868*, p. 130.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 155.

47 *Ibid.*, pp. 160-1. Concerning the motion in 1860, see Robertson, "Party Politics and Religious Controversialism in Prince Edward Island from 1860 to 1863", pp. 30-2.

48 *Assembly Debates, 1868*, p. 176. Concerning the grant to St. Dunstan's in 1858, see Robertson, "The Bible Question in Prince Edward Island from 1856 to 1860", pp. 16-7.

49 *Assembly Debates, 1868*, p. 45.

50 *Ibid.*, pp. 162, 164.

51 See *ibid.*, pp. 169, 171.

if such a programme were practicable, he would favour it, and said that the Tories were merely trying to divide the Liberal Catholics and Protestants, for the Opposition had committed themselves to nothing.⁵² Another executive councillor, Davies, claimed that, given the provisions of the Free School Act, the bishop's schools were unnecessary, adding that "a sectarian system of education is a wrong one".⁵³

In part this range of viewpoints could be attributed to the very co-existence of Protestants and Roman Catholics in the same government at a time when the local bishop was becoming more assertive in his requests for public support. But another factor accounted for the way in which these contradictory opinions were allowed to run riot in public: the weakened state of the Liberal leadership. James Warburton, a veteran Prince County Protestant Liberal possessing a long history of good relations with Island Catholics (including the Acadians, whose language he probably spoke, given that he had spent two years at a Jesuit college in France), had more or less retired from active politics. Whelan, who had had political responsibility for Kings, the most Catholic of the three counties, had died in December 1867, and his death had deprived the Liberals of a tremendously influential Catholic layman strongly committed to the non-denominational system of education.⁵⁴ Perhaps most important of all, Coles' mind had begun to deteriorate. In August 1868 Coles requested and received six months' leave of absence; in the session of 1869 he rarely spoke; and by 1870 he was unable to take his seat in the assembly.⁵⁵ His political career had come to an end. Thus, in a year and one-half — between December of 1866 and the summer of 1868 — the Liberals had lost their three most prominent leaders of the post-responsible government period, all of whom had worked successfully across sectarian lines in the past.

Moreover, these losses had come at a time when the government was facing increasing pressure from several directions. In February 1868 the Free-Secession Presbytery had expressed "their strong condemnation of state grants in aid of any sectarian institution...[and pledged to] use all their lawful endeavours to prevent such endowments".⁵⁶ The Protestant Liberals were clearly in a delicate situation. Under conflicting external pressures, two solid blocs were forming among the executive councillors: Howlan and Andrew A. McDonald, the only Roman Catholics, against Davies, Callbeck, Alexander Laird Jr., and W.W. Lord. It is likely that Coles and Hensley sided with the Davies group, and Hay-

52 See *ibid.*, p. 172.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 180. Davies had been an MHA in 1852, when the Free Education Act was passed.

54 On this point, see Ian Ross Robertson, "Edward Whelan", *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, IX, p. 833; also see Warburton in *Assembly Debates, 1857*, p. 54.

55 See Executive Council Minutes, 20 August 1868, and resolution of sympathy to Mrs. Coles and family, in *Assembly Journal, 1870*, p. 96.

56 Minutes of the United Presbytery of Prince Edward Island, 26 February 1868, Archives of Pine Hill Divinity Hall, Halifax [APH]. Access to the collections at Pine Hill was granted by the archivist, the Rev. E. Arthur Betts.

thorne with Howlan. The position of the Protestant bloc worsened as Coles slipped into mental impotence. In the Education Act and the subsequent appointments, they had made all the concessions they could afford to give to McIntyre. Hensley had emerged as the *de facto* leader of the government, but whether he could keep the Liberal party together was an open question. Although he lacked the charisma of a Coles or Whelan, Hensley nonetheless combined qualities of moderation, good sense, and firmness, all of which were important in the circumstances.

The Protestant Liberals could derive no comfort from the course which the *Islander* and the *Examiner*, traditionally the leaders of public opinion in the colony, were taking. In the early months of 1868 William Pope, editor of the Conservative *Islander*, outlined his new position regarding Roman Catholics and education. It was a policy of limited concessions to the Roman Catholic Church. Pope had perceived the vulnerability of the Coles-Hensley government, and in February he came out in favour of a grant to St. Dunstan's College, without mentioning any conditions to be met. He went on to say that "we believe that all who profess and call themselves Christians should be anxious that *religious* education should be imparted to children, in fact that it should underlie all other education". In so doing, the former colonial secretary, reputedly a free-thinker, warned of the tendency of the age to infidelity, and in an apparent change of heart since the early 1860s, when he had abused Roman Catholic beliefs mercilessly, recommended that Catholics "force" the school question upon the government.⁵⁷ Throughout early 1868 he kept continual pressure on the Liberals, eventually publishing a draft bill embodying his desired amendments to the Education Act.⁵⁸

If the about-face on the part of the *Islander* surprised the Liberal leaders, that of the *Examiner*, which had been Whelan's paper, shocked them. Soon after Whelan died it came out in support of the St. Dunstan's endowment,⁵⁹ and then began to move to an increasingly pro-clerical position. In April the *Examiner* asserted that "the first duty of a State is to make due provision for the religious and moral training and the necessary or useful secular instruction of its youth". Anyone who disagreed with this truism was guilty of "open and unabashed bigotry and audacious uncharitableness".⁶⁰ Walter C. Grant became editor in the middle of April, and under his guidance the *Examiner* grew less friendly to the party which had given it birth; it seemed only a matter of time before a complete break would be made.

57 *Islander*, 21 February 1868. The endowment was to bear the same proportion to the Prince of Wales College grant as did the Roman Catholic population of the Island to the Protestant population.

58 See *Islander*, 29 May 1868. A Roman Catholic and Liberal editor wrote that "we [Roman Catholics] hardly know how to express our gratitude....What a generous, tolerant, large-minded soul W.H. Pope is in adversity!"; *Herald*, 5 February 1868. Nonetheless, he endorsed Pope's draft bill: see *Herald*, 3 June 1868.

59 See *Examiner*, 17 February 1868.

60 *Examiner*, 6 April 1868.

On 8 July 1868 Gray, the pro-Confederate former premier, who had lost his nomination in 1867, followed the example of William Pope. At the public examination of St. Dunstan's College he expressed the hope that "the day was not far distant, when the Institution would be acknowledged, both publicly and privately". If he had a son, "he would, without hesitation, send him to St. Dunstan's".⁶¹ When an assembly seat for Summerside fell vacant in late 1868, James Pope, who had not contested the general election of the previous year, announced his candidacy and published an electoral card promising aid to all "efficient schools" open to government inspection, regardless of who controlled them; in the same card he claimed to be "opposed to the endowment of any Sectarian institution".⁶² This "Summerside card" did not restrict the number of schools which would be eligible for grants from the treasury, perhaps because deciding upon such a limitation involved practical political difficulties. If Pope were to limit support to schools already in existence in October 1868, he would be liable to the charge of giving exclusive privileges to Roman Catholics, for no other denomination at that time supported private schools of significance. On the other hand his open-ended plan left the way clear for McIntyre to establish an unlimited number of Catholic schools, and receive public money for each. The Pope brothers evaded these questions by having William maintain that the new provisions would apply only to institutions established in towns and villages,⁶³ while James was never explicit on the point.

It was a hard-fought campaign. On the one side were the *Islander*, the Popes, Haviland,⁶⁴ and McIntyre.⁶⁵ They relentlessly claimed "common justice". On the other side were a Protestant-oriented and anti-Confederate Conservative Charlottetown newspaper, the *Patriot*, the two Summerside newspapers, the Presbyteries,⁶⁶ the Liberal party, and the Liberal candidate, Angus McMillan.⁶⁷

61 Reported in *Examiner*, 13 July 1868. Gray had also attended the public examination of St. Dunstan's in 1867, and had stated then that he "felt proud" of the college: *Examiner*, 15 July 1867. In the late 1850s Gray had been founding president of an ultra-Protestant group, the "Protestant Combination", which had been formed to defend against "the encroachments of the Romanists"; see Robertson, "The Bible Question in Prince Edward Island from 1856 to 1860", pp. 11, 15.

62 *Islander*, 16 October 1868.

63 See his draft bill in *Islander*, 29 May 1868. William held to this position throughout the campaign.

64 See editorial in *Islander*, 27 November 1868, and letter of Haviland to the editor of the *Islander*, dated 24 November 1868.

65 See *Patriot*, 21 November 1868; *Islander*, 29 January 1869, 17 June 1870; *Progress* (Summerside), 23 November 1868, 8 March 1869.

66 See Minutes of the Kirk Presbytery of Prince Edward Island, 5 November 1868, APH; Minutes of the United Presbytery of Prince Edward Island, 9 November 1868, APH. Both Presbytery resolutions were published in *Patriot*, 12 November 1868.

67 McMillan avoided comment on the school question, on the ground that a general election was the only time when such discussion would be meaningful. This was consistent with Premier Hensley's view that "the whole house were returned at the last Election on the tacit understanding as I thought that for this House at least the question of separate Grants was to slumber". See

The *Examiner* and another Roman Catholic newspaper, the *Herald*, stood aside, the former because of its long-time allegiance to the Liberal party, and the latter because its publisher was queen's printer. On 19 November McMillan scored a decisive victory for the Liberals, as he took 58 per cent of the Roman Catholic votes and 59 per cent of the Protestant votes.⁶⁸ Why did so capable and so influential a man as James Pope lose so badly in his home town to a political novice? Among Roman Catholics there appear to have been two poles of opinion: some believed that he did not go far enough, and others that he went too far.⁶⁹ But aside from the merits of the position taken by Pope, there is the fact that he was attempting, in the course of one byelection campaign, to effect a major change in Island political alignments.

The traditional loyalty of Roman Catholics to the Liberal party was probably at least as important as their devotion to the non-sectarian Free Education Act. The Liberal party, especially in the recent past, had been the political home of the Catholics' friends among the Protestant majority on the Island; conversely, residual antipathy towards William Pope for his polemics against Catholic beliefs earlier in the decade was damaging to his brother James, although the latter had never associated himself with these attacks. Finally, the role of the bishop seems to have been controversial among Island Catholics. In a private letter to one of McMillan's campaign organizers on 28 October, Premier Hensley wrote that, in the Charlottetown area at least, "a large number" of Catholics were "very indignant at the pressure brought to bear upon them so suddenly".⁷⁰ Among the Protestants, David Laird, editor of the *Patriot*, pointed out that McIntyre, despite the failure of his memorial, was founding new educational institutions. Since March he had established convents in Summerside and Tignish, and he was planning a boys' school in Charlottetown. Sooner or later he would presumably request public support for them, as well as the ones existing in March. Now was clearly the time to draw the line.⁷¹ Laird also caught the logical dilemma in William Pope's "towns and villages" plan:

Poor sinners, say we, those people in the country, who will have to pay for and retain 'mixed schools' — schools which are hurrying their children headlong into infidelity — and yet have to assist the 'rich and wealthy and wealthy and rich' people of Charlottetown, Summerside, and Georgetown to support *additional* schools to those now in operation.⁷²

The Summerside byelection pried the *Examiner* loose, once and for all, from

Examiner, 26 October 1868; electoral card of McMillan, dated 29 October 1868, in *Progress*, 2 November 1868; Hensley to Richard Hunt, 28 October 1868, Item 306, Hunt Papers, PAPEI.

68 Calculations based on data in *Islander*, 27 November 1868.

69 See George W. DeBlois in *Assembly Debates*, 1877, pp. 25, 53-4.

70 Hensley to Hunt, 28 October 1868, Item 306, Hunt Papers, PAPEI.

71 See *Patriot*, 31 October 1868.

72 *Patriot*, 7 November 1868; "rich and wealthy and wealthy and rich" was a description which

the Liberal camp. Four days after Pope's defeat, Whelan's old paper declared that the Liberal party "has deceived its supporters" and "is no longer worthy of their confidence".⁷³ On 30 November the *Examiner* specifically named Coles, Hensley, Davies, and Alexander Laird Jr., and accused them of "concealed enmity" to Roman Catholicism, citing in particular grievances with regard to the distribution of public offices. Concerning education, Grant took the same position as James and William Pope, with the "towns and villages" rider.⁷⁴ In succeeding weeks the editor lost all restraint, and embarked upon a virulent campaign of bombast against the Protestant Liberals: their "ruling idea seems to be hatred and injustice to Catholics...one [government] more intensely stupid and bigoted than the present never swayed the destinies of this Colony".⁷⁵

Notwithstanding the *Examiner's* conversion, the defeat of James Pope caused the school question to recede rapidly from view. The loss undermined the arguing position of the Popes, Haviland, and the Roman Catholic leaders. Whatever explanations were advanced, it was indisputable that 58 per cent of the Roman Catholic electors polled on 19 November had not felt strongly enough about the question of denominational grants to vote against the Liberal party. The Popes realized this, and decided to let the matter stand for the present. Their attempt to inaugurate a new party system on the basis of an alliance between the pro-Confederate Conservatives⁷⁶ and the Roman Catholic Liberals had been premature. Hence the school question caused little public stir in 1869; only one or two assemblymen mentioned it at all during the session.⁷⁷ But the Liberal party was still racked by internal differences of opinion. Apparently Hensley attempted in March to effect a compromise by supporting in caucus a grant of £300 to St. Dunstan's. This failed to gain acceptance, and Howlan was rumoured to have tendered his resignation. If he did, he also withdrew it when he realized that it would not force any concession.⁷⁸

Hensley's decision in June to retire from politics and become a member of the Supreme Court was more serious. His resignation created a genuine leadership crisis for the Liberals. On the day after Hensley was appointed to the bench, David Laird, whose brother Alexander Jr. was a member of the Executive Council, wrote that "what is left of a government may as well begin to dig their political graves".⁷⁹ The Liberal party had been decapitated: Coles, Whelan,

James Pope had applied recently to the people of Summerside.

73 *Examiner*, 23 November 1868.

74 *Examiner*, 30 November 1868.

75 *Examiner*, 7 December 1868.

76 Haviland and William Pope were openly-declared pro-Confederates; concerning James Pope's position on the Island's entry into Confederation, see Ian Ross Robertson, "James Colledge Pope", *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, XI (Toronto, 1982), pp. 700, 704.

77 See Samuel Prowse and Kenneth Henderson in *Assembly Debates, 1869*, p. 66.

78 See *Patriot*, 6, 27 March, 24 June 1869; *Examiner*, 29 March, 5 April 1869; *Journal and Western Pioneer* (Summerside), 1 April 1869.

79 *Patriot*, 19 June 1869.

Warburton, and Hensley were all gone from active politics. To choose the aggressive Davies or the blustering Howlan would be an invitation to a quick rupture. The only alternative seemed to be Haythorne, the Government Leader in the upper house. Although timid and a most inexperienced and unskilful politician, he was the only remaining prestigious Liberal who was not identified with one of the two hostile camps within the party. A man of considerable education and intelligence, Haythorne recognized the weakness of his government and attempted to persuade two Conservative legislative councillors, including Palmer, to join his cabinet.⁸⁰ He failed, but nevertheless the government survived the session of 1870 intact. Howlan seemed appeased by being named Government Leader in the assembly,⁸¹ and the Roman Catholic members generally ignored the jibes of Haviland and Brecken.⁸²

The Liberal government soon had to face an election, as the assembly had sat for four years. Fearing the silence of the Roman Catholic Liberal members, the Presbyteries held a joint conference on 19 May.⁸³ They then appointed an eight-man committee, chaired by Gray, to take what action they deemed necessary concerning the school question. Gray's committee responded by issuing on 1 June an open letter "To the Presbyterians of Prince Edward Island", reminding them that it was their duty to "give their suffrages only to men, whose established principles will be a sure pledge that, by no partial or unjust measures, any denomination of Christians shall receive educational advantages or support at the expense of their fellow-subjects".⁸⁴ In other words, there must be no change in the non-denominational character of the educational system. The Wesleyans were equally vigilant, and at their annual District Meeting they warned against giving public money to denominational institutions under any circumstances.⁸⁵ The effect of these vigorous actions on the part of the Presbyterians and Wesleyans was to choke off serious discussion of the school question during the campaign.

Haythorne won the election on 18 July 1870 by a margin of 17 to 13, largely on the strength of his own and his party's anti-Confederate record. The Tory leadership was badly divided. Palmer and James Pope were again candidates for the assembly, and Haviland lost his nomination in Georgetown, owing to his unpopular stands on Confederation and the school question. The Liberals won at least as much on the Tories' weakness as on their own strength. But the election decided who would control the Conservative party: Palmer and David Laird lost and James Pope won. On 22 July the *Islander* was jubilant at the defeat of the

80 At the time, the overtures were an open secret. See *Islander*, 25 June, 2 July 1869; *Patriot*, 29 June 1869; *Examiner*, 28 June 1869. In 1870 Haythorne confirmed their existence; see his letter to the editor of the *Islander*, dated 5 October 1870, *Islander*, 7 October 1870.

81 See *Assembly Debates*, 1870, p. 70.

82 See *Assembly Debates*, 1870, pp. 10, 52-3.

83 See Minutes of the Kirk Presbytery of Prince Edward Island, 19 May 1870, APH.

84 See *Islander*, 10 June 1870.

85 See the report of the meeting on 10 June in *Islander*, 17 June 1870.

anti-Confederate leaders within the party, and did not even mention the triumph of the government. The former colonial secretary devoted his columns to gloating: "Mr. Palmer was, in the language of the turf, *nowhere*".⁸⁶

For the Liberals, victory soon proved a sobering experience. Haythorne precipitated a crisis by speaking out on the school question on Declaration Day, 29 July. The *Islander* reported:

That the Premier designated the Prince of Wales College a Protestant institution which had been established for the benefit of Protestants and asserted 'That he was prepared to propose a grant from the public funds in aid of St. Dunstan's College. That should he find himself unable to carry a grant for St. Dunstan's College he would propose the disendowment of the Prince of Wales College. That should he be unable to carry a grant for St. Dunstan's College, or to procure the disendowment of the Prince of Wales College, he would resign'.⁸⁷

This of course brought on a confrontation between the Howlan and Davies factions. It was an unauthorized policy statement, and came with virtually no warning, for Haythorne, a legislative councillor, had not had to publish a card embodying his political platform during the campaign for the assembly.⁸⁸ Decapitated by Hensley's resignation in the previous year, the government now disintegrated. Feelings were already high in the Liberal party, for at the late election Howlan's group had eliminated two of Davies' allies. Protestants representing Roman Catholic constituencies, they had expressed opposition in the assembly to denominational grants; two Catholics replaced them.⁸⁹

The storm broke on 18 and 19 August when the Liberal caucus met in Charlottetown. Seventeen assemblymen and seven legislative councillors attended, of whom 14 were Protestants and ten were Catholics. Led by Howlan, the Catholics were adamant: the St. Dunstan's grant was a *sine qua non* of continued support for the government. Haythorne and three other Protestants agreed; the rest were immovable.⁹⁰ On the second day, Davies and Sinclair pre-

⁸⁶ *Islander*, 22 July 1870.

⁸⁷ *Islander*, 5 August 1870.

⁸⁸ Haythorne later claimed that on at least four public occasions prior to the election he had expressed his support for a grant to St. Dunstan's. He also said that he had made it clear he was opposed to denominational grants in general: "I considered St. Dunstan's a special case". Yet he voted for McDonald's caucus resolution of 19 August 1870, which certainly was not confined to St. Dunstan's. See letters of Haythorne to the editor of the *Patriot*, dated 1, 15 December 1870, in *Patriot*, 3, 17 December 1870. From these letters, he does not appear to have thought out his position very carefully. In any event, the Liberal Protestants of the Davies group did not consider Haythorne's views on the school question to be agreed-upon Liberal party policy.

⁸⁹ See *Patriot*, 21 July 1870; letter of Haythorne to the editor of the *Patriot*, dated 1 December 1870, in *Patriot*, 3 December 1870; letter of W.W. Sullivan "To George Howlan", dated 29 November 1871, in *Examiner*, 4 December 1871.

⁹⁰ See *Patriot*, 20 August 1870; Howlan, Sinclair, McMillan in *Assembly Debates, 1871*, pp. 45, 45-6, 57.

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sented a resolution expressing general satisfaction with the existing Education Act.⁹¹ This met no opposition;⁹² but McDonald submitted an amendment, to the effect that

When any school shall have been opened by any sect or denomination it shall be placed under the Board of Education and be subject to the rules and regulations thereof. Save and except that nothing herein contained shall prevent the parents and guardians from selecting their own text-books, and choosing their own teachers.⁹³

The amendment was carried, with the support of Haythorne's Protestants.⁹⁴ The Roman Catholics then attempted to lessen the deleterious effects of their victory by adding a slightly ambiguous "conscience clause", which would supposedly limit religious instruction to before or after the regular hours.⁹⁵ But this provision meant little, for citizens were already permitted to use the local schoolhouse for whatever purpose they desired, following the hours of secular instruction⁹⁶ The point to the Catholic programme lay in McDonald's first amendment. On the executive council matters were equally grim; Davies and Sinclair prevailed by a margin of four to three.⁹⁷ As David Laird remarked, "it was plainly seen that the breach was irreparable and that to carry out their policy, each of the parties must seek new political associates".⁹⁸

The Roman Catholics succeeded in finding new allies, but not in enforcing their views on the school question. The Conservative pro-Confederates had been looking on with interest, and waiting for the split to occur. When this happened, James Pope joined with Howlan and his followers to form a coalition government. In the meantime William Pope had prepared the way for his brother to refuse to meet the demands of Howlan and McDonald. No Protestant Conservative had submitted the question of denominational grants to his con-

91 See *Patriot*, 20 August 1870.

92 See letter of Howlan to the editor of the *Patriot*, dated 22 August 1870, in *Patriot*, 25 August 1870.

93 See Howlan in *Assembly Debates, 1872* (2nd Session), p. 237; editorial in *Patriot*, 20 August 1870.

94 See letter of Haythorne to the editor of the *Patriot*, dated 15 December 1870, in *Patriot*, 17 December 1870. The *Patriot* editorial, 20 August 1870 appears to be mistaken on this point, as it asserts that Haythorne opposed McDonald's amendment.

95 For the text of the second proposed amendment to the Davies-Sinclair resolution, see Howlan in *Assembly Debates, 1872* (2nd Session), p. 237.

96 See *Statutes*, 24 Vic., c. 36, s. 23. This was pointed out by Sinclair in *Assembly Debates, 1871*, p. 46.

97 See Hodgson to the Earl of Kimberley, 6 September 1870, CO 226/106, pp. 225-7. The division was as follows: Davies, Sinclair, Callbeck, and Lord against Haythorne, Howlan, and McDonald. Coles was incapacitated and Alexander Laird Jr. was absent, as he had been defeated by James Pope.

98 *Patriot*, 20 August 1870.

stituents at the last election, and nothing, William said, could be done without a mandate from the people.⁹⁹ In maintaining this, he also undermined Haythorne's position with the Protestant population. Furthermore, the premier's plan to disendow Prince of Wales College was "the most objectionable". William reasoned that "If the denying Catholics a grant for their schools constitutes injustice, the injustice is in no degree lessened by spoiling the Public College, and thereby doing injustice to the public generally".¹⁰⁰

On 10 September James Pope formed a new government, with the Roman Catholics receiving three seats on the executive council.¹⁰¹ The leading Tories in the government were Pope, Haviland (who was elected to the Legislative Council for Charlottetown in October), and Brecken. The basis of the alliance, in terms of public policy, was a mutual self-denying pledge: nothing would be done on the Confederation or school questions until they were submitted to the people at the polls.¹⁰² Thus, without repudiating the "Summerside card" in principle, the Tories had avoided wading in the troubled waters of the school question. They had also won over the Roman Catholic members and returned to power. Manipulation of the "religion and education" issue had brought the Popes and Haviland effective control of the government, and they responded by burying the issue. As for the Catholics who were party to the coalition, editor and assemblyman Edward Reilly stated their point of view succinctly: "If it be said that the school question is to be kept in abeyance for a period, it should be remembered that Mr. Pope's four years are greatly preferable to Mr. Sinclair's eternity".¹⁰³ They could see no advantage in sitting by while Davies and Pope formed a new all-Protestant government, after the pattern of the Conservative administrations from 1859 to 1867.

In analyzing the realignment in Prince Edward Island politics between 1863

99 He first used this argument in the *Islander*, 5 August 1870. Also see report of speech by James Pope on 11 October 1870 in *Islander*, 21 October 1870. The only Roman Catholic Conservative elected in 1870 was Emanuel McEachen.

100 *Islander*, 5 August 1870. The Baptist Association of Prince Edward Island made Haythorne's position even more uncomfortable by announcing its unequivocal opposition to all denominational grants; see letter of the Rev. John Davis to "*Mr. Islander*", dated 19 August 1870, in *Islander*, 19 August 1870.

101 Executive Council Minutes, 10 September 1870. Haythorne remained with the other Protestant Liberals, while all Liberal Roman Catholics but James R. McLean followed Howlan. McLean had supported Howlan and McDonald in August, but apparently saw no point in joining the Conservative Confederates when no concessions were being offered. He also objected to committing himself in writing to the coalition: *Assembly Debates, 1875*, p. 359.

102 See *Islander*, 9 September 1870; electoral cards of Brecken (who faced a byelection because of his acceptance of the office of attorney general), dated 13 September 1870, and Haviland, dated 16 September 1870, in *Islander*, 23 September 1870; Brecken in *Assembly Debates, 1872* (1st Session), pp. 45-6; James Pope in *ibid.* (2nd session), p. 230, and *ibid.*, 1875, p. 349; McEachen in *ibid.*, p. 358. At the request of Dr. James Robertson, the agreement between the two factions was embodied in a written pledge, the text of which does not appear to have survived.

103 From the *Herald*, cited without a precise date, in *Patriot*, 29 September 1870. This number of the *Herald* does not survive.

and 1870, which had major long-term implications for the Island, it is necessary to recognize the leading roles of the land question and sectarianism, both of which had been important sources of internal conflict for many years. No account which fails to examine these two issues can explain adequately contemporary political changes or what happened after 1870.¹⁰⁴ The bad feelings generated by repression of the Tenant League alienated from the Conservative party the Protestant voters of rural Queens County. This important segment of the party's electoral base shifted to the Liberals.¹⁰⁵ Sectarianism, which had been dormant as a force in Island politics, resurfaced in the issue of denominational grants. The ambitious policies of the Roman Catholic bishop, who in the course of the 1860s broadened the scope of his request for public aid from a single institution to an expanding system of denominational education, presented the Liberal leadership, which had been weakened by attrition, with a challenge they proved ultimately unable to contain. Defining a space somewhere between the polarizing camps of the Catholic politicians apparently directed by the bishop, and the Protestant Liberals adhering to the policies Coles and Whelan had defended in the 1850s, the Pope brothers and Haviland found a means of regaining power. That was no small accomplishment, for William Pope, still widely regarded as the political mastermind of the faction to which he belonged, was strongly identified with the Confederation project, which remained intensely unpopular on the Island.

The coalition formed in 1870 was essentially one of opportunism. The land question, for generations the staple of Island politics, was receding in importance. The sense that the demise of the leasehold system was inevitable left little room for partisan advantage, and, among other things, this consensus had the effect of removing the land question as the possible source of a decisive lure for entry into Confederation. Those uncommitted to union of the colonies seemed to believe that they could resolve the problem on their own, without the Dominion of Canada, sooner or later. With the land question now a source of political consensus rather than conflict, and with the issues of denominational grants and Confederation too dangerous to raise, the initial unifying principle of the Pope-Howlan alliance appeared to be the simple maxim that it was better to be

104 J.M. Bumsted has recently drawn attention to the general lack of study by Island historians of "racial, religious, and social tensions" in the colonial period, and, more specifically, to the failure to examine seriously the possible relationship of "popular conflict such as that resulting from the Tenant League agitation" to the Confederation question on the Island. See "'The Only Island There Is': The Writing of Prince Edward Island History", in Verner Smitheram *et al.*, eds., *The Garden Transformed: Prince Edward Island, 1945-1980* (Charlottetown, 1982), pp. 19, 29.

105 The five pro-Tenant League assemblymen from Queens County were re-elected in 1870. As an example of the bitterness remaining after the events of 1865, relations between James Pope and McNeill, the most vocally pro-Tenant League assemblyman, were strained for many years. In 1872 McNeill would refer to Pope's "attempt to rule the Island by the bayonet, the handcuffs, and the jail"; later in the same session Pope called McNeill "the Communist General" and "a man whom he believed might be guilty of committing crimes similar to those perpetrated by the communists of France": *Assembly Debates, 1872* (2nd Session), pp. 117, 167, 169.

in office than in opposition. Yet the coalition arrangement represented a great strategic coup for the pro-Confederate minority centering on William Pope, whose objective of splitting the Liberals and gaining Roman Catholic support had become evident in 1868, with the Summerside byelection. William was not in public office, but he remained closely linked to his brother, who was premier; and as of 21 October the colonial treasurer was their father, Joseph, a forceful man who was known to be a strong Confederate.

Within months of assuming office, the coalition found a programme: construction of a railway, which fitted in well with contemporary notions of "progress" and "development". Although James Pope could not claim to have an electoral mandate for the project, it was nonetheless entirely consistent with his personal record as a vigorous and progressive entrepreneur. He was a businessman with interests in virtually all sectors of the Island economy, and had long been involved in promoting improvements in transportation and communications. His brother William had been advocating a railway for several years, and perhaps by coincidence, perhaps not, building the Prince Edward Island Railway would prove to be an indirect means towards William's goal of Confederation. A mere eight days after his brother returned to the premier's office, William had written a "private and confidential" letter to the prime minister of Canada, Sir John A. Macdonald. In William's view, it was time for the Colonial Office to "put on the screws". Islanders must be told that if they did not re-open negotiations with Ottawa, "Her Majesty's ministers will be compelled to take matters in hand and settle the terms for them". But all this must be done "without any communication being had upon the subject with our Executive *or any member of it*", for "it is important that our friends in the Executive could have it in their power to say that they have not had any intercourse with Canada on the subject".¹⁰⁶ It is impossible to state definitively whether James Pope had any knowledge of his brother's letter to Macdonald, for William was not explicit on this point. If James was not aware of it, then William's caution to Macdonald would serve to keep both his own brother and the Canadian prime minister in the dark as to the actual role he was playing.¹⁰⁷

Whatever the motives of the Popes in 1870, it is clear that the influence of the Tenant League and the issue of denominational grants both weakened traditional party allegiances during the course of the 1860s. These changes in political alignment prepared the way for the Tory pro-Confederates to return to power. In the process of capitalizing upon the tensions within the Liberal party, the Popes created a political machine which would dominate local government for two decades and bring the Island into Confederation. The Island's road to Confederation was not a direct one. Islanders believed they had put Confedera-

106 Pope to Macdonald, private and confidential, 18 September 1870, vol. 119, pp. 48221-6, Sir John A. Macdonald Papers, Public Archives of Canada.

107 It is by no means certain that the Pope brothers were in precise agreement on the Confederation question in 1870, for they had had public differences over the issue in the past; see Ian Ross Robertson, "William Henry Pope", *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, X, p. 596.

tion behind them after the commotion in 1864-65 among the Conservative leaders. In order to follow the real road to Confederation, more prosaic matters of immediate concern to the people of the time must be examined, for they explain how the Popes and Haviland, who would lead Islanders into the Dominion of Canada, gained the power to do so. No longer isolated after 1870, the pro-Confederate minority was in a position to determine the political agenda of Prince Edward Island.