

The Modernization of Prince Edward Island under the Government of W.R. Shaw:  
The Case of Educational Reform

by

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## Table of Contents

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| List of Tables .....   | iii        |
| List of Figures .....  | iv         |
| Abstract .....   | v          |
| List of Abbreviations Used .....                                     | vi         |
| Acknowledgements.....  | vii        |
| <b>Chapter One – Introduction .....</b>                              | <b>1</b>   |
| <b>Chapter Two – The Road to Modernization 1945-1959 .....</b>       | <b>27</b>  |
| Portrait of Prince Edward Island 1945-1959 .....                     | 29         |
| Post-War Liberalism and the Atlantic Revolution .....                | 41         |
| The P.E.I. System of Education.....                                  | 46         |
| Conclusion.....  | 52         |
| <b>Chapter Three – A Bold Yet Cautious Beginning 1959-1962 .....</b> | <b>54</b>  |
| Shaw Comes to Power.....   | 57         |
| LaZerte Commission on Educational Financing.....                     | 64         |
| The Government’s Response to LaZerte.....                            | 67         |
| Education and Economic Development .....                             | 75         |
| Conclusion.....  | 84         |
| <b>Chapter Four – A Faltering Finish 1963-1966 .....</b>             | <b>88</b>  |
| Consolidation of Elementary Schools and District Boards .....        | 91         |
| The Future of Post-Secondary Education.....                          | 100        |
| The Declining Emphasis on Adult Education .....                      | 111        |
| Contributing Factors to the Lack of Progress.....                    | 116        |
| Conclusion.....  | 120        |
| <b>Chapter Five – Conclusion.....</b>                                | <b>123</b> |
| <b>Bibliography .....</b>  | <b>135</b> |
| <b>Appendix 1 – Selected Statistics.....</b>                         | <b>143</b> |

## **List of Tables**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Table 2.1 – Farm and Labour Incomes PEI vs Canada (1949-1961).....       | 36 |
| Table 3.1 – Regional High School Establishment in P.E.I .....            | 70 |
| Table 3.2 – Provincial and District Expenditures 1959-1965Abstract ..... | 74 |
| Table 3.3 – Teachers’ Qualifications and Salary Levels 1959-1965 .....   | 75 |
| Table 4.1 – Changes in Administrative Structures, 1966-1971 .....        | 94 |

## List of Figures

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Figure 3.1 – The Premier and His Education Minister .....  | 57  |
| Figure 3.2 – Englewood Regional High School, Crapaud ..... | 73  |
| Figure 4.1 – Participants in the University Debate .....   | 105 |
| Figure 4.2 – Liberal Election Ad, 1966 .....               | 122 |
| Figure 5.1 – Walter R. Shaw and Alex B. Campbell .....     | 128 |

## **Abstract**

Walter Shaw came to power in 1959 on a program to modernize Prince Edward Island, especially its education system. His program of educational reform and economic development targeted rural areas, as a way to change the Island in order to preserve its way of life. Reluctant to use the coercive power of the provincial state, Premier Shaw relied on encouragement and incentives that led to rapid expansion of the regional high school system and vocational education. Shaw's approach was less successful at the elementary level, where voluntary consolidation showed little progress. This thesis argues that civil society provided the impetus for change at the secondary and post-secondary levels, as various organizations pushed the government to provide equal access and improve conditions at both levels. The Shaw era of 1959-1966 served as a crucial transition period from the reactionary administrations of the 1950s to the more active government of Alex Campbell.

## **List of Abbreviations Used**

|      |  |
|------|--|
| CDP  | Comprehensive Development Plan                                 |
| DBS  | Dominion Bureau of Statistics                                  |
| PARO | Provincial Archives and Records Office of Prince Edward Island |
| PWC  | Prince of Wales College  |
| SDU  | Saint Dunstan's University                                     |
| UPEI | University of Prince Edward Island                             |

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Many people deserve my thanks for their help in guiding this project to completion. First, I need to acknowledge the efforts of Valerie Peck and Tina Jones. Without their help, all graduate students would be lost in a maze of deadlines and forms. My professors, Dr. Claire Campbell, Dr. Ruth Bleasdale, Dr. John Munro, Dr. Radhika Natarajan, and Dr. Eric Mills dispensed wisdom and patience as I attempted to learn the craft of an historian. My readers for this thesis, Dr. Shirley Tillotson and Dr. Peter Twohig provided valuable comments and direction for the completion of this project. My colleagues in the graduate history program provided a welcomed sense of community through the last two years.

A special thank you goes to Dr. Ed MacDonald for his commitment to the history of Prince Edward Island and for his advice throughout the course of this project. Dr. Jerry Bannister deserves special mention. As my supervisor, he guided me through this process with solid advice and good humor. He managed to keep me on track with words of encouragement when needed, or with a gentle prod to get on with it when that was in order.

Libraries and archives are invaluable tools for historians but their treasures can only be discovered through capable staff. Luckily, that is what we have at Dalhousie. I also need to thank Simon Lloyd and the staff at the Robertson Library, UPEI who always accommodated my many requests, even setting me up with remote access for some databases. The staff at the Provincial Archives and Records Office in Charlottetown was always helpful and patient in spite of my endless requests for more files.

My many trips to Charlottetown taxed the hospitality of two households. I thank Betty MacFadyen who shouldered the burden for the bulk of the visits, and Chris Brennan and Linda Gaudet who relieved her from time to time. All endured my ramblings about 1960s Island politics with grace.

While my parents are no longer with me, I owe them a debt that can never be fully repaid. Between them, they gave me love and opportunity.

Finally and most significantly, I must give a special acknowledgement to my wife Paulette Melanson for her love, patience and encouragement throughout this project, with never a complaint about the time I devoted to seeing this through to completion.

## Chapter One Introduction

On a hot, late August evening in 1959, Walter R. Shaw addressed a packed hall in the small community of Breadalbane, Prince Edward Island. It was a week before election day and he was working the crowd as only he could, especially this partisan crowd in his home riding of First Queens. At seventy-one and never elected to political office, Shaw was an unlikely saviour for the provincial Progressive Conservatives. After retiring as the Deputy Minister of Agriculture to a series of Liberal Premiers, he ran unsuccessfully in the previous election for the Conservatives, losers for over twenty years. But now billed as the Party for the Causeway and the purveyors of modernization, the Conservatives with Shaw as their leader were poised for victory, and they could feel it that night. After a “most interesting variety program” of singing by the Burke family and the Roberts sisters, step-dancing by Dave McMurrer, and a warm-up speech from Heath Macquarrie, MP for Queens in the recently elected majority government of John Diefenbaker, Shaw addressed a crowd that spilled outside the hall. His first order of business was to criticize the lack of action by the Liberal government and their deception in promising that all would be set right in the next term. But most of his speech focused on two key areas of his platform slated to play a crucial role in providing for a better future for the Island’s citizens – agriculture and education.<sup>1</sup> Shaw continued this theme in his final radio and television speech of August 29 where he highlighted only the education and agriculture planks of his platform, calling them “so important they cannot

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<sup>1</sup> “Overflow Crowd Hears P.C. Leader,” *The Guardian*, 26 August 1959, 2, 5.



be over-emphasized.”<sup>2</sup> When Walter R. Shaw and his party won twenty-two of the thirty seats the night of September 1, he would get that opportunity to implement his ambitious agenda of modernization to the Island as the 1950s came to a close. Ushering in a new government dedicated to bringing Islanders “progress, prosperity and the things that go to make a good life,” Shaw and his government took steps to alter dramatically many aspects of life on the Island, especially in the system of education that had been in place for over one hundred years.<sup>3</sup>

This thesis explores how Shaw used educational reform as a centerpiece of his agenda to respond to the forces of modernization that were sweeping the Island in this period. The rapid changes and new demands of the postwar era had exposed many faults in the Island’s economy and in particular the inadequacies of the Island’s educational system. Shaw and his Minister of Education George Dewar understood that the rural economy was under threat, leaving the Island essentially with two seemingly incompatible options: become a more productive rural society; or prepare for the new economy that would be more urban. The overall strategy to achieve either or both of these goals had similar components: the youth of the province needed access to better academic and vocational training, and that access needed to be more equitable across the province. Shaw and his government set in motion a chain of events that led to a revolutionary change in the entire education system. Guided by two Royal Commission studies (LaZerte and Bonnell) and aided by federal funding, Shaw established a new method of financing education, altered the district system of administration, accelerated the process of school consolidation, established vocational and regional high schools,

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<sup>2</sup> “What Is Best For Prince Edward Island,” *The Guardian*, 1 September 1959. The full text of his address made on 29 August 1959 was published as a newspaper ad on Election Day.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

began programs of adult education, and started the process that led to the establishment of the University of Prince Edward Island. But just as important as the actual changes was the method of implementation. Shaw employed a particular style, that of facilitating change rather than dictating it; however, once the road to change was started, it was impossible to stop. He relied on well-expressed intentions from civil society and local school boards to set the direction. While Shaw and his government may have viewed their changes as simply enabling (e.g., giving local districts the opportunity to consolidate with other districts), the natural evolution of this approach was evident when the subsequent administration of Alex Campbell took a more aggressive and directive stance to complete the process.

The sources for this investigation were predominantly the archival records of the main participants, Walter R. Shaw, Dr. George Dewar, and Alex Matheson supplemented by the records of some lesser players such as J. Walter Jones, Hartwell Daley and Frank MacKinnon, all at the Provincial Archives and Records Office (PARO) in Charlottetown. Official government sources were significant sources as well, especially the annual reports for the various provincial government departments, the Journals of the Legislative Assembly, and census data from the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. Unfortunately, P.E.I. did not have a system to capture all the proceedings of the Assembly except for some audio tapes, so newspaper records of committee meetings and debates proved invaluable. During the period, three daily newspapers served the Island, *The Charlottetown Guardian*, *The Charlottetown Daily Patriot*, and *The Summerside Journal-Pioneer*, available on microfilm at the University of P.E.I. Reports were substantially similar, although *The Journal-Pioneer* tended to provide more coverage from the western part of

the Island. While Dr. Dewar was the only main participant to record his thoughts of this period in his autobiography, *Prescription For a Full Life* and there are no biographies of the premiers of that era, some recent secondary literature provides significant detail and context about the events and the participants.<sup>4</sup> These include Edward MacDonald's *If You're Stronghearted – Prince Edward Island in the Twentieth Century*, a general history of the Island; Leonard Cusack's *A Party For Progress- The P.E.I. Progressive Conservative Party 1770-2000*; Wayne MacKinnon's *Between Two Cultures – The Alex Campbell Years*; H. Wade MacLauchlan's *Alex B. Campbell – The Prince Edward Island Premier Who Rocked the Cradle*; and Marian Bruce's *A Century of Excellence*.<sup>5</sup>

While the above sources are adequate to provide the basic narrative of the modernization of education in P.E.I., determining the motivation for these changes is more difficult. The written record of briefs presented to commissions or standing committees are the outward expression of opinions of the groups making the presentations, but it provides little clue to the range of discussion and differing perspectives of the members that crafted the brief, or how those differences were reconciled. Similarly, letters to the Premier or the Minister of Education provide some insight into the conflict that arose, but there is rarely anything heard from those who welcomed the change and accepted the new order with open arms.

Many would characterize the later Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP)

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<sup>4</sup> L. George Dewar, *Prescription for a Full Life* (Summerside: Williams and Crue, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> Edward MacDonald, *If You're Stronghearted - Prince Edward Island in the Twentieth Century* (Charlottetown: Prince Edward Island Museum and Heritage Foundation, 2000). Leonard Cusack, *A Party for Progress: The P.E.I. Progressive Conservative Party 1770-2000* (Charlottetown: Retromedia Publishing, 2013). Wayne MacKinnon, *Between Two Cultures: The Alex Campbell Years* (Stratford, P.E.I.: Tea Hill Press, 2005). Marian Bruce, *A Century of Excellence: Prince of Wales College 1860-1969* (Charlottetown: Island Studies Press, 2005). H. Wade MacLauchlan, *Alex B. Campbell: The Prince Edward Island Premier Who Rocked The Cradle* (Charlottetown: Prince Edward Island Museum and Heritage Foundation, 2014).

implemented by Campbell in 1969 as the epitome of high modernism in P.E.I., but I will investigate whether the seeds were sown in the earlier period. Premier Shaw, a career bureaucrat prior to entering politics, brought an activist approach to government. In the view of Edward MacDonald in *If You're Stronghearted*, previous Island politicians of the 1950s reacted to the forces of change while governments of the 1960s tried to harness and direct those forces to specific purposes.<sup>6</sup> Shaw served as a bridge between the reactionary attitude of the 1950s and the directionist approach epitomized by Campbell and the CDP. MacDonald provides a vivid description of the many changes through this period, often referred to as “the Break”, accurately labelling it as “a process, both material and cultural.”<sup>7</sup> This postwar period unleashed a host of serious challenges to all North American society - economic, cultural, technological, and demographic - that posed specific issues to Prince Edward Island, a predominantly rural province that lagged considerably behind the rest of Canada in most measures of development. The baby boom heralded rapid population growth with a huge demographic bulge entering their school years in large numbers. Television began to demonstrate its impact with the debut of broadcasting by CFCY in 1956, changing definitions of entertainment and community. Coupled with their increased mobility, Islanders became more aware of the “outside world.” Rural life was no longer the dominant theme in Island society, as economic and technological forces changed agriculture, pushing farms to be larger and more specialized. More people moved towards the urban areas, both on Prince Edward Island

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<sup>6</sup> MacDonald, *If You're Stronghearted*, 263.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 226-263. This chapter outlines the activities through the 1950s. David Weale is closely associated with the use of the term “the Break” described on page 226. Weale’s use of the term denotes the shift from a rural, non-mechanized society to a modern society dependent on vehicles, electric power, and a varied service economy, divorced from the lifestyle of two hundred years past. See David Weale, *Them Times* (Charlottetown: Institute of Island Studies, 1992), 2-4.

and in cities off-Island, seeking employment in non-agricultural sectors of the economy.<sup>8</sup> Although MacDonald places modernization in the context of a general trend throughout all of Canadian society, he clearly considers federal funding as the “one uniform catalyst.”<sup>9</sup> Government activity in managing the economy and providing security for its citizens became acceptable, after the experience of the depression era and the Second World War. Federal dollars generated by the post-war prosperity fueled activities in health care, education, infrastructure, and newly created economic development schemes whether expended by Ottawa or transferred to the provinces. Transfers to persons, through old age pensions, unemployment insurance, family allowances or agricultural support programs to name a few examples, provided cash to many families in the 1950s.<sup>10</sup> In addition to these liberal welfare programs, western governments sought to demonstrate the superiority of the capitalist system by ensuring that all its citizens shared in the material wealth generated by the free market economies, even if that meant an increased amount of state involvement in planning and action. Michael E. Latham presents a broad treatment of this period in *Modernization as Ideology*, examining the role of social sciences in formulating foreign policy related to the process of development during the 1950s and 60s, with the Kennedy era as its high water mark.<sup>11</sup> While his main focus is the use of modernization as a tool of foreign policy during the Cold War, the ideology can be extended to activities on the domestic front where government actions have a similar design as the projects he highlighted – the goal is to improve the citizens’

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<sup>8</sup> MacDonald, *If You're Stronghearted*, 226-263.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

<sup>10</sup> See for example Satadal Dasgupta, “The Island in Transition: A Statistical Overview,” in *The Garden Transformed: Prince Edward Island 1945-1980*, eds. Verner Smitheram, David Milne, and Satadal Dasgupta (Charlottetown: Ragweed Press, 1982), 251. Dasgupta provides a table showing that federal transfers to persons increased to 20% of per capita personal income in 1961 compared to 11.7% 1951.

<sup>11</sup> Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

well-being by moving them from a traditional or backward society into a modern one, the primary driver is government with the accompanying plethora of planners and bureaucrats, and input from the citizens is minimal.

These themes of modernization are addressed in a collection of essays entitled *The Garden Transformed, Prince Edward Island 1945-1980*, which provides a critical examination of the transition of Island society while it struggled “to maintain a distinctive, inherited vision of itself in the face of the homogenizing pressures of modernization.”<sup>12</sup> David Milne in his essay “Politics in a Beleaguered Garden” provides another perspective on the modernization of the Island. He examines what he terms “the garden myth” which defined the Island way of life as an identification of “themselves as independent agricultural people protected from the world in an unspoiled pastoral setting.”<sup>13</sup> Rather than providing an exhaustive review of all aspects of Island life, he concentrates on comparing the reality to three components of the myth: the Island as a garden of independent yeoman farmers; the image of the Island as a neighbourly community; and, the image of the active, participatory nature of Island politics. Milne determines that “the images have powerfully shaped Islanders’ attitudes and rhetoric even if post-war demographic, economic, social, political, and technological change has severely tested their adequacy and usefulness.”<sup>14</sup> Additional essays by Verner Smitheram and Sister Mary Olga McKenna trace the changes in the educational system of the Island with Smitheram investigating the primary and secondary schools and McKenna looking

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<sup>12</sup> Verner Smitheram, David Milne, and Satadal Dasgupta, eds., *The Garden Transformed: Prince Edward Island 1945-1980* (Charlottetown: Ragweed Press, 1982), 7.

<sup>13</sup> David Milne, “Politics in a Beleaguered Garden,” in *The Garden Transformed: Prince Edward Island 1945-1980*, eds. Verner Smitheram, David Milne, and Satadal Dasgupta (Charlottetown: Ragweed Press, 1982), 40.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

at changes at the post-secondary level.<sup>15</sup> While both provide an overview of the historical developments of the school system and the post-secondary system, neither offers much detail on the years of the Shaw administration, instead concentrating on the later changes brought about during the Campbell administration. This flaw of overlooking the impact of the changes wrought by Shaw extends to the other essays in *The Garden Transformed*, so while it stands as a pivotal text on the post-war society of the Island, it is hampered by its concentration on the effect of the CDP without fully exploring the effects of other measures, including the Shaw administration's efforts.

Shaw during his period as Premier accomplished much, as outlined by Leonard Cusack in his recent work on the history of the Progressive Conservative Party of P.E.I., specifically in his chapter on the Shaw administration titled "A Great Step Towards a Modern Society 1959-1966".<sup>16</sup> Shaw continued the delivery of programs begun by the earlier government of Alex Matheson that responded to the demands by the population for modern services— rural electrification, road paving, and better transport links to the mainland. He implemented significant legislation that changed the public service on P.E.I., making it a non-partisan, professional workforce, and relied on studies and consultants, initiating a major study by Acres Consulting of all aspects of P.E.I. life that formed the basis for the CDP. During his tenure, the provincial government became active in promoting industrial development in shipbuilding and food processing, with disastrous results. Shaw tackled social issues as well, responding to societal changes

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<sup>15</sup> Verner Smitheram, "Development and the Debate over School Consolidation" in *The Garden Transformed: Prince Edward Island 1945-1980*, eds. Verner Smitheram, David Milne, and Satadal Dasgupta (Charlottetown: Ragweed Press, 1982), 177-202. Mary Olga McKenna, "Higher Education in Transition 1945-1980" in *The Garden Transformed: Prince Edward Island 1945-1980*, eds. Verner Smitheram, David Milne, and Satadal Dasgupta (Charlottetown: Ragweed Press, 1982), 203-229.

<sup>16</sup> Cusack, *A Party for Progress*, 124-160. Financed by the PC Historical Society, this work, while somewhat uncritical, provides extensive detail on the activities of various Conservative administrations.

with reforms in the electoral system and policies in the area of liquor sales, daylight savings time, and margarine sales that, while seemingly insignificant, were symbolic of the shift to a modern society.<sup>17</sup> In the sphere of education, he fulfilled many of the recommendations of the LaZerte and Bonnell Commissions that changed the face of education at all levels on P.E.I. – primary, secondary, vocational, and university. While the subsequent administration of Alex Campbell went much further than Shaw in implementing change, for example in school consolidation and the establishment of U.P.E.I., Shaw set the stage. His program extended across many aspects of life on the Island, but nowhere was it more pronounced than in the field of education and no other field was as bound by the Island’s history, a history that has not been adequately recorded in many areas.

Historians have given scant attention to the modernization of the educational system in Prince Edward Island during this period; indeed they have given little attention to most issues of Prince Edward Island history in general. Little else besides the land question in the colonial period and the Island’s role in the Confederation process has received critical attention. The defining issue of the colonial period of Island history was the land question and the role of the absentee proprietors, “the bogeymen of Island history.”<sup>18</sup> Much has been written on the question, dominated by the concept of the singular struggle by the exploited tenants of the Island to escape the clutches of the

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* Chapters 7 and 8 provide detail on the election campaigns of 1959 and 1962, as well as the activities of the Shaw administration. The issue of margarine sales was contentious in P.E.I. with its many dairy farmers. Sales of margarine had been outlawed during the time of Premier Walter Jones to protect the dairy industry, but the Act was repealed in 1965, providing an indication of how farm issues no longer dictated Island politics. For a discussion of the adoption of daylight saving time, see Wayne MacKinnon (writing as The Old Timer), “Once a Upon a Standard Time,” *The Island Magazine* 1(Fall/Winter, 1976): 15-18. MacKinnon outlines the battle between rural and urban voters in deciding the issue in 1960 for a trial period.

<sup>18</sup> Harry Baglole and Ron Irving, *The Chappell Diary – A Play of Early Prince Edward Island* (Charlottetown: Ragweed Press, 1977), 5.



absentee owners.<sup>19</sup> This obsession with the land question as the focal point of Island history began with John Stewart's *An Account of Prince Edward Island*, published in 1806.<sup>20</sup> This all-encompassing text set the tone for subsequent histories by establishing the land question as a struggle between absentee landowners and resident settlers, with the underlying thesis that if the land ownership question could be resolved, then development of the Island by resident Islanders "would produce a progressive and prosperous society of independent yeomen farmers, assisted by merchant allies."<sup>21</sup> It was left to J.M. Bumsted to provide a more nuanced view of the Island's early development under the British from 1763. In his milestone study of the origins of the land question, *Land, Settlement, and Politics on Eighteenth Century Prince Edward Island*, and in subsequent articles, he outlines the interconnected elements that contributed to the ongoing disarray. The three elements of land, settlement and politics were designed to work in concert, mutually supporting each other, but through a combination of events the system descended into chaos by the end of the eighteenth century. Any attempt to resolve issues in the landholding system meant concomitant changes in the political system, as the two were so intertwined, thus making solutions difficult if not impossible to implement.<sup>22</sup>

This interconnectedness and the pervasive nature of the land question can be seen in the work of another prominent Island historian, Ian Ross Robertson, particularly the

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<sup>19</sup>J.M. Bumsted, "The Only Island There Is": The Writing of Prince Edward Island History," in Verner Smitheram, David Milne and Satadal Dasgupta, eds., *The Garden Transformed: Prince Edward Island, 1945-1980* (Charlottetown, 1982), 11-38.

<sup>20</sup> John Stewart, *An Account of Prince Edward Island in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, North America* (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, and Yorkshire: S.R. Publishers, 1967). This was an exact reprint of the original edition *An Account of Prince Edward Island, in the Gulph of St. Lawrence, North America* (London: W. Winchester and Son, Strand 1806).

<sup>21</sup> Bumsted, "The Only Island There Is," 19.

<sup>22</sup>J.M. Bumsted, *Land, Settlement, and Politics on Eighteenth Century Prince Edward Island* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), 196-200.

interplay between the education system and religion. His article, “Reform, Literacy, and the Lease: The Prince Edward Island Free Education Act of 1852” makes the link between the reform agenda of George Coles, the leader of the first administration formed under responsible government in P.E.I., and the search for a solution to the land tenure issue.<sup>23</sup> Coles, a manufacturer of beer and spirits, was certainly no fan of the existing land tenure system as it left little or no money in the hands of his potential customers, that is, the general population of the colony. In his view, efforts to reform the education system and improve the capacity of the tenant class were necessary “to redress in part the imbalance in power between the landowners who controlled most of the Island, and the working class.”<sup>24</sup> Given that most land lease relationships were governed by written contracts and the act of “attorning” that acknowledged the landlord’s title by accepting the lease, it was essential that tenants had a certain level of competence to understand the documents presented to them. As Bumsted outlined, the process of settlement was devised to be orderly but in practice it was anything but. As immigration increased after the Napoleonic Wars, usually without assistance from landowners, the system of settlement became increasingly dysfunctional. Many settlers squatted or began improving parcels without any contracts, only to be faced with an attornment decision years after, often with little recognition of the importance of the document. No other colony exhibited such a competence gap between landlord and tenant as in P.E.I. Robertson concludes that Coles and the Reformers viewed free and equal access to a quality education, as promised under the Free Education Act as an integral part of the solution to the land question, and ultimately to the general prosperity of the Island. This

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<sup>23</sup> Ian Ross Robertson, “Reform, Literacy, and the Lease: The Prince Edward Island Free Education Act of 1852,” *Acadiensis* XX 1 (Autumn 1990): 52-71.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

connection between education and prosperity would re-appear in Shaw's government.

While Bumsted and Robertson have contributed greatly to our understanding of the land question and its pervasive effect on the development of the Island, other subjects of Island history have not been as well treated. While Confederation drew attention to Charlottetown and the 1864 conference from mainstream Canadian historians such as Peter Waite, W.L. Morton and D.G. Creighton, it was fleeting at best. With the pre-Confederation era tagged as a "golden age" for the province and the Maritimes in general, the Confederation debate for Islanders revolved around the question of P.E.I.'s place in a larger union, especially its prospects for future development.<sup>25</sup> After it joined Canada in 1873, the impression is that nothing happened given the lack of historical attention. In the introduction to his 1959 work *Three Centuries and the Island*, A.H. Clark notes that the Island is "the one least well-known to geographers and historians," explaining that he found only two modern studies published that were of scholarly interest, these being D.C. Harvey's *The French Regime in Prince Edward Island* and Frank MacKinnon's *The Government of Prince Edward Island*.<sup>26</sup> Clark is quite disparaging of the Island's importance in the world, stating that while many small or sparsely populated places have held center stage either momentarily or for long periods, "this has never been true of Prince Edward Island or its people."<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless he does provide significant detail and analysis on the use of land and its agricultural production up to 1951.

The lack of attention to the twentieth century history of P.E.I. can be illustrated by

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<sup>25</sup> For a further discussion of these ideas, see Bumsted, "The Only Island There Is," 25-30.

<sup>26</sup> A.H. Clark, *Three Centuries and the Island – A Historical Geography of Settlement and Agriculture in Prince Edward Island, Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

two examples. Lorne Callbeck's *The Cradle of Confederation*, published in 1964 covers the period from Jacques Cartier's sighting of P.E.I. in 1534 up to the 1960s. The difficulty is the proportion of attention spent in certain periods. Of the twenty-one chapters, only one is devoted to the post-Confederation era of 1873 to 1960, covering such topics as the fox industry, L.M. Montgomery's writings, the arrival of the automobile and the airplane, and the building of the Confederation Centre of the Arts. Omitted were topics such as the Island's participation in World War One and Two, the effect of the Great Depression, and changes in the rail and ferry connection to the mainland.<sup>28</sup> *Canada's Smallest Province: A History of P.E.I.*, a series of essays edited by F.W.P. Bolger, suffers from the same lack of balance with little attention paid to issues post-Confederation.<sup>29</sup>

Edward MacDonald has addressed this deficit in his superb contribution to Island history, *If You're Stronghearted – Prince Edward Island in the Twentieth Century*, which provides a comprehensive survey of Island history through that century.<sup>30</sup> While MacDonald's work examines the specifics of Island history in the last century, its place within the greater Atlantic and Canadian context has continued to be problematic, a general concern discussed in E.R. Forbes' essay "In Search of a Post-Confederation Maritime Historiography, 1900-1967." Forbes places the blame on "the failure of mainstream Canadian historians to pursue themes which readily include the Maritimes, ... and the failure of academics residing in the region to respond effectively to the

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<sup>28</sup> Lorne C. Callbeck, *The Cradle of Confederation – A Brief History of Prince Edward Island from its Discovery in 1534 to the present time* (Fredericton: Brunswick Press, 1964).

<sup>29</sup> F.W.P. Bolger, ed., *Canada's Smallest Province: A History of P.E.I.* (Charlottetown: Prince Edward Island Centennial Commission, 1973).

<sup>30</sup> Edward MacDonald, *If You're Stronghearted* (Charlottetown: Prince Edward Island Museum and Heritage Foundation, 2000).

Maritimes' own obvious, and sometimes desperate, search for a historical perspective which would help them to understand their plight in a modern world."<sup>31</sup> In response, two later works attempted to correct this: *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation* and *Atlantic Canada – A History* both provide this sweep of time and space, but also acknowledge the difficulty in doing so.<sup>32</sup> Both provide a comprehensive overview of the issues, trends, and events of the period even while debate continues to ensue on the validity of treating the four provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia as a region while recognizing their significant differences. Indeed, the concept of regional history itself is subject to discussion.<sup>33</sup> The difficulty of capturing both the national and regional perspectives continues to bedevil the field, especially as it became ever more crowded with the proliferation of diversified streams of history encompassing gender, race, locale, environmental, and many other perspectives since the 1970s.

The perspective that surfaces most often, addressed in both MacDonald's work on P.E.I. and the two works on the Atlantic Region, is regional development and the chronic state of the regional economy through much of the post-Confederation era. It is the subject of Donald Savoie's work in *Visiting Grandchildren: Economic Development in the Maritimes*. With the dual purpose of reviewing attempts to promote development in the region and to provide a foundation for future initiatives, Savoie reviews the history of

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<sup>31</sup> E.R. Forbes, "In Search of a Post-Confederation Maritime Historiography, 1900-1967" *Acadiensis* VIII 1 (Autumn 1978): 3-21.

<sup>32</sup> Margaret R. Conrad and James K. Hiller, *Atlantic Canada – A History, Second Edition* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2010). E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, eds., *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

<sup>33</sup> See for example John Herd Thompson, "Integrating Regional Patterns into a National Canadian History," *Acadiensis* XX 1 (Autumn 1990): 174-184; Ramsay Cook, "The Burden of Regionalism," *Acadiensis* VII 1 (1978): 110-115; John G. Reid, "Towards the Elusive Synthesis: The Atlantic Provinces in Recent General Treatments of Canadian History," *Acadiensis* XVI 2 (1987): 107-121.

government actions that have impacted development in the region, both negatively and positively. Beginning with the governance structures imparted by Confederation and their diminishing effect on the political power of the Maritime Region, through the implementation of the national Policy, and then to the machinations of C.D. Howe to skew war production to the central provinces, Savoie demonstrates that “Policies were struck in Ottawa to meet national objectives, which, to a Maritimer, became a code phrase meaning the economic interests of Ontario and Quebec only.”<sup>34</sup> He provides a history of the various studies and reports that detailed the issues facing the Maritimes, and the outcomes of innumerable attempts to find the solution to the region’s economic woes, designed of course to ensure that the privileged position of the central provinces would not be affected.

While Savoie tackled the national and regional scope of economic development, a number of writers have dissected individual projects from the postwar period to understand the varied attempts to develop and modernize the region. A review of recent literature reveals both the breadth of these attempts, as well as the varied motivations and responses to them. An early example of state activity to modernize an area was the construction of the Canso Causeway linking Cape Breton to mainland Nova Scotia, completed in 1955. Meaghan Beaton and Del Muisse outline the new role of the federal government as an active participant in projects deemed to be aimed at regional economic development. The authors seem quick to cast the causeway into this category, rather than the broader category of infrastructure development, where the federal government was increasingly active with the St. Lawrence Seaway and the Trans-Canada Pipeline as two

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<sup>34</sup> Donald J. Savoie, *Visiting Grandchildren: Economic Development in the Maritimes* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 27.

examples. By casting the Canso project as an example of government's attempt to "manage regional economies in ways never before attempted," the authors seem to fall into the storyline described by Savoie that policies and projects of benefit to Ontario or Quebec were national, while those in the Maritimes somehow were only regional.<sup>35</sup> While it was not the purpose of their article, the authors make no attempt to analyze the effect of the Seaway or the Pipeline on the economy of the Maritimes, especially the port traffic through Halifax and Saint John. They do frame the federal government's actions as a response to fears of economic slowdown in the postwar period, similar to that experienced after World War I, thus necessitating a more interventionist approach led by C.D. Howe.<sup>36</sup>

The post-war development of hydro-electricity generation in New Brunswick provides another view of modernization projects in the Maritimes. James Kenny and Andrew Secord view the building of the Mactaquac Dam as an example of "a high modernist mega-project" that evolved from a project designed to increase the generation of hydro-power along the Saint John River into a strategy for rural development in the Upper Valley.<sup>37</sup> Using the lens of high-modernism as developed by James C. Scott, they examine the role of the New Brunswick Electric Power Commission and the provincial government in casting the project as a step towards economic prosperity and modernization, and in dismissing criticisms by emphasizing the scientific and engineering expertise used to address any issue. New Brunswick also provides the setting for the examination of another aspect of modernization, that being the need for an

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<sup>35</sup> Meaghan Beaton and Del Muise, "The Canso Causeway: Tartan Tourism, Industrial Development, and the Promise of Progress for Cape Breton," *Acadiensis* XXXVII 2 (Summer/Autumn 2008): 39-69.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-45.

<sup>37</sup> James L. Kenny and Andrew G. Secord, "Engineering Modernity: Hydroelectric Development in New Brunswick, 1945-1970," *Acadiensis* XXXIX 1 (Winter/Spring 2010): 3-26.

effective and efficient bureaucracy to implement the various government programs that were to transform society.<sup>38</sup> Lisa Pasolli surveys the changes in public administration in N.B. under Louis J. Robichaud, especially the effect of a number of senior bureaucrats from Saskatchewan who arrived after the defeat of the New Democratic Party government in 1964. With the expanded role of the state in economic development and welfare programs, a new breed of bureaucrat was needed, one that could “turn political will into practical programs,” essentially “the bureaucratization of the Atlantic Revolution.”<sup>39</sup>

But the transformation to a modern society was not just about economic development; it encompassed a new attitude towards social norms, as illustrated by the regulation of alcohol in the Maritimes during the post-war period. Greg Marquis provides a counterpoint to the “discourse of anti-modernism that promoted an image of the Maritimer as a refuge from the North American mainstream” by examining the liberalization of liquor regulation through the post-war period as it changed from a policy geared towards control to one of providing consumer choice. He shows that the Maritimes “were part of the North American mainstream, ripe not only for tourism and investment, but also for a modern lifestyle.”<sup>40</sup>

This counterpoint and search for entry into the mainstream is evident in Stephen Dutcher’s treatment of the co-operative movement in the post-war period as it struggled to provide its membership with the fruits of the modern age. His study of the wholesaling side of the co-operative movement shows how a wider interpretation of anti-

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<sup>38</sup> Lisa Pasolli, “Bureaucratizing the Atlantic Revolution: The ‘Saskatchewan Mafia’ in the New Brunswick Civil Service, 1960-1970,” *Acadiensis* XXXVIII 1 (Winter/Spring 2009): 126-150.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>40</sup> Greg Marquis, “‘A Reluctant Concession to Modernity’: Alcohol and Modernization in the Maritimes, 1945-1980,” *Acadiensis* XXXII 2 (Spring 2003): 31-59.



modernism is needed, as “the different approaches (to the challenges of modernity) spearheaded by their managers reflected contrasting philosophies, priorities, and values regarding the building of the co-operative movement – differences that underlined the difficulties of achieving significant economic change in the region.”<sup>41</sup> He compares the opposing strategies employed by various parts of the organization, as some leaders followed a gradual approach stressing fiscal stability and centralization while others placed a higher priority on local autonomy and provision of new services to members. The study of co-operative wholesaling demonstrates that “modernity within the region was, as Daniel Samson suggests, ‘a contested ideological and cultural field ... with varying ideas about progress and civilization.’”<sup>42</sup>

It is this contested interpretation of this period that is the missing chapter in the history of the creation of today’s Prince Edward Island. The changes to the education system were not universally loved nor hated; while many of the changes had broad public support, others were fought. Opinions changed over time and as the circumstances altered. As with many aspects of modernization, there were benefits that came with costs. An examination of this part of the Shaw modernization agenda presents an opportunity to investigate how these projects fit into the broader context of modernization ideology. High modernism can be defined as universal, ambitious, and directive schemes using state power, social engineering, and technocratic control to impose rationality and order on societies deemed backward or traditional in an effort to make them resemble

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<sup>41</sup> Stephen Dutcher, “Looking Towards the Promised Land’: Modernity, Antimodernism, and Co-operative Wholesaling in the Maritime Provinces, 1945-1961,” *Acadiensis* XXXIV 2 (Spring 2005): 46-73.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

modern, western societies.<sup>43</sup> Ian McKay succinctly defines it as “urbanization, professionalization, and the rise of the positive state.”<sup>44</sup> Numerous writers have argued that modernization projects were implemented over the wishes of local communities driven by objectives set outside their influence, presenting an image of that era as, to use an expression from Newfoundland, Copesian – outside experts studying all aspects of the province and devising top down solutions for the betterment of the citizens.<sup>45</sup> But does that fit the reality? Or were the programs designed in a way to incorporate or accommodate the views of the citizens, in the lexicon of James C. Scott, having a certain *mētis*.<sup>46</sup>

In *Seeing Like a State*, Scott traces the concept of high modernism from its early development where the role of the state expanded to include the goal of improving the lives of its citizens, through the experience of Germany in World War I with its emphasis on rational state planning of production, and finally through the social and civic engineering of the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>47</sup> He argues that the process of modern statecraft seeks to rationalize and standardize “what was a social hieroglyph into a legible and administratively more convenient format” and from that order would flow a “greatly enhanced state capacity” making possible “interventions of every kind, such as public-health measures, political surveillance, and relief for the poor.”<sup>48</sup> He uses this

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<sup>43</sup> Michael E. Latham, “Feature Review: High-Modernist Dreams and Nightmares,” *Diplomatic History* Vol. 29 No. 4 (September 2005): 733. Latham notes that this definition derives from the work of James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

<sup>44</sup> Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Anti-Modernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), 39.

<sup>45</sup> Copesian comes from a ditty composed during the resettlement process during the 1960s “Parzival Copes, with his figures and notes.” Copes was an economist used extensively in Newfoundland at the time, and he spent some time on P.E.I. as well, looking at establishing designated harbours for the fishery.

<sup>46</sup> Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 355-356.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

perspective to investigate four factors that in his opinion combined to turn so many well-intentioned developments schemes of the mid-twentieth century into disasters. These are: the administrative ordering of society, “the unremarkable tools of modern statecraft”; a high-modernist ideology found across the political spectrum from right to left, a “faith that borrowed...the legitimacy of science and technology” and was overly “optimistic about the possibilities for the comprehensive planning of human settlement and production”; a government, usually authoritarian, “willing and able to use the full weight of its coercive power to bring these high modernist designs into being”; and finally, a “prostrate civil society that lacks the capacity to resist these plans”.<sup>49</sup> Scott cautions that however bleak his assessment of these projects may be, he is “emphatically not making a blanket case against either bureaucratic planning or high-modernist ideology. I am, however, making a case against an imperial or hegemonic planning mentality that excludes the necessary role of local knowledge and know-how.”<sup>50</sup> It is this latter point that Scott examines in detail by developing his concept of *mētis*, representing the “wide array of practical skills and acquired intelligence in responding to a constantly changing natural and human environment.”<sup>51</sup>

Scott’s caution that he is not railing against all development finds a sympathetic ear with Edward MacDonald. MacDonald colourfully characterizes modernization as “not some life force implanted by extraterrestrials. Nor, despite some later judgements, was it a sort of demon that devoured rural virtue...To the extent that Islanders thought about it at all, it was welcomed.”<sup>52</sup> In his chapters discussing the modernizing activities

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 313.

<sup>52</sup> MacDonald, *If You’re Stronghearted*, 227.

of the 1950s and 1960s, he outlines the many improvements in citizens' living conditions brought about by improved transportation links, specifically paved highways, airplanes, and ferries; extension of electrical service to rural areas; provision of basic welfare programs providing a social safety net; and the coming of television, although whether this was a benefit remains a matter of debate. Closer connection to the rest of Canada and the rest of the world broadened Islanders' sphere for comparing their condition, with the result being that "the goad for much conscious modernization was rising expectations."<sup>53</sup>

Michael E. Latham presents a darker view of modernization in *Modernization as Ideology*, examining the role of social sciences in formulating foreign policy related to the process of development during the 1950s and 60s, with the Kennedy era as its high water mark. He moves beyond Scott's treatment and considers modernization activities as part of the United States of America's arsenal in the Cold War.<sup>54</sup> In his view, it could be summarized as: "If modernization was at times a strategic tool or an instrument for preserving a capitalist world order, it also reflected a broader worldview, a constellation of mutually reinforcing ideas that often framed policy goals through a definition of America's values, character, and mission."<sup>55</sup> While his main focus is the use of modernization as a tool of foreign policy during the Cold War, the ideology can be extended to activities on the domestic front. Indeed, Latham comments on this, referring to Peace Corps training in inner cities and civic action teams of Green Berets home from Vietnam assisting poor residents of South Carolina as well as Native American villages

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.

<sup>54</sup> Latham, *Modernization as Ideology*.

<sup>55</sup> Michael E. Latham, "Ideology, Social Science, and Destiny: Modernization and the Kennedy-Era Alliance for Progress," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Spring 1998), 205.

in the Fort Bragg area.<sup>56</sup> This backdrop of the Cold War with the Soviet Union was ever present in the history of this era. While the impetus for modernizing the education system of P.E.I. was primarily to assist in the economic development of the Island and the preparation of its young people for life in the new society, the spectre of world domination by the Russians pervaded life in the 1950s and 1960s. The 1965 Bonnell Royal Commission on Higher Education was preoccupied by the Russians' attention to improve education and increase funding for the sciences, as well as the increased "revolutionary ferment" evident throughout a troubled world.<sup>57</sup>

At first glance, it appears that the Shaw government actions of the early 1960s in P.E.I. have a similar design as the projects highlighted by Scott and Latham. The goal was to improve the citizens' well-being by moving them from a traditional or backward society into a modern one, and the primary driver was government with the accompanying plethora of planners and bureaucrats. To meet the demographic and economic challenges of the postwar years, governments across Canada actively pursued a modernization agenda as they reformed social systems, developed new infrastructures, and invested in industrial and business ventures. On Prince Edward Island, this state agenda translated into programs to bring electricity to rural residents, build roads to connect communities, develop new industries, and provide students with an equitable opportunity for a better education at all levels. Against this backdrop, Walter R. Shaw and his party were eager to implement a wide range of programs touching a host of issues facing the Island, and viewed education as a key area that needed attention. However the Shaw administration employed a style distinct from the rigidly planned years of the

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<sup>56</sup> Latham, *Modernization as Ideology*, 215.

<sup>57</sup> John S. Bonnell, Norman A.M. MacKenzie, and Joseph A. McMillan, *Report of the Royal Commission on Higher Education for Prince Edward Island* (Charlottetown: January, 1965), 5.

following Campbell administration, partially explained by Shaw's philosophy in implementing public policy, especially in the area of education. *The Journal-Pioneer* in 1965 characterized the Shaw government as "a reluctant and fearful crusader for change," certainly not the mark of a high modernist but rather one who is only willing to go as far as he thinks his citizens are ready to handle.<sup>58</sup> Shaw understood his fellow Islanders and was well aware of how P.E.I.'s system of education reflected the history, religion, society and economy of the small province. His struggle to achieve a balance between the need for change and the capacity of Islanders to accept it will be the focus of this thesis.

Chapter Two examines the period leading up to Shaw's election as Premier in 1959, describing the economic and social changes from 1945 to 1959 on the Island. This period saw increased out-migration fueled by expanded opportunity in other provinces and reduced employment opportunities in the traditional rural economy on the Island. The rural farm population declined by more than 25% from 1951 to 1961, as young people left farms for other provinces, and older people abandoned farm life for the urban areas of P.E.I.<sup>59</sup> Chapter Two traces the impact of changes in government direction as the federal government followed a more interventionist role in social and economic affairs, increasing pensions, Family Allowances and Unemployment Insurance. Changes in education policy will be examined, especially the debate in 1957 on the provision of teacher training at Saint Dunstan's University. This event demonstrated the simmering religious intolerance of Island society and also precipitated an important Legislative Committee examination of education that led to the establishment of the LaZerte Royal

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<sup>58</sup> "Credit Where Credit Is Due," *The Journal-Pioneer*, 17 March 1965, 2.

<sup>59</sup> Dasgupta, "The Island in Transition: A Statistical Overview," 249.

Commission in 1959. The Conservative platform on education for the 1959 election was based in part on the brief presented to this committee by the Federation of Agriculture and formed the basis for Shaw's education policy in his first term.

The activity of Shaw's first term from 1959 to 1962 will be the focus of Chapter Three. The findings of Milton LaZerte meshed with Shaw's platform and provided the new government with a comprehensive plan for reforming education at the secondary level and improving teachers' professional qualifications and salaries; and yet, the plan proved to be too ambitious for the cautious Shaw. Major improvements were made as new regional high schools were constructed following the voluntary consolidation of school districts for that purpose. The province also utilized federal funding to improve the provision of vocational training to address development opportunities for unemployed and under-employed young people, especially males. The struggle for Shaw was to organize the activities of his government into some semblance of an overarching coherent plan, as opposed to simply a series of initiatives in education, health, and economic development. An outgrowth of this need was the establishment of a research division and the appointment of Hartwell Daley as its director. Daley became obsessed with the concept of adult education as the way forward for development of the rural population, leading to the formation of community schools and the Rural Development Council as a means for input to development planning. While there was substantial progress, there still remained much to accomplish especially at the primary level where most rural students were still housed in one room schools.

Shaw's second term from 1962-1965, the subject of Chapter Four, saw the government focus shift to reform of the post-secondary level, pushed by citizen groups

calling for improvements. Again, a Royal Commission provided the vision, but in this case it was a much more cautious path forward as the influence of religion intruded into the process of financing and organizing the two post-secondary institutions on the Island, Prince of Wales College and Saint Dunstan's University. Shaw's handling of the situation demonstrated his caution as he moved only far enough to make some progress without advancing past the boundaries of his electorate. He was faced with growing resistance to consolidation at the primary level, and refused to take a more directive stance, continuing to rely on his approach using voluntary consolidation. By this stage, his government had accumulated the usual baggage of failed programs and promises and Shaw himself was diminished by age and sickness. By 1966, he was narrowly defeated by Alex Campbell who would take a more direct leadership role and push the Island education system to a rapid transformation within five years of taking power.

The Shaw administration was a period of transition for P.E.I., as the provincial government moved from the reactive politics of the Jones and Matheson era through to the directive programs of Alex Campbell. During his two terms as Premier, Shaw displayed a deep understanding of Island sensibilities, acquired through his years of experience working as Deputy Minister of Agriculture in close contact with the farm community and the political powers of the day. While seemingly bold in some areas, he was reluctant to push in others, never wanting to be too far ahead of what his citizens could accept in a rapidly changing world, typically a safe stance for a politician. Nevertheless, the changes he did implement in the area of education changed the system and facilitated the later changes implemented under the next government of Alex Campbell. The period was a time of conflicting forces as waves of modernization swept



over the Island, welcomed by some, feared by others, and contested by all. Shaw's actions in modernizing P.E.I.'s system of education provides an example of how one leader navigated through these waves, using as a compass, his sense of the Island's needs and the capacity of its citizens to accept these changes.

## **Chapter Two**

### **The Road to Modernization 1945-1959**

I rejoice with you that our people continue to work hard in the old-fashioned way and live economically.<sup>1</sup>

These words of Lieutenant-Governor Joseph A. Bernard opened the spring session of the P.E.I. Legislature in February 1948, and captured the sentiment of the government of the day. Addressing the impact of a rapid increase in prices and costs as war-time price controls were removed, Bernard, on behalf of the recently re-elected government of J. Walter Jones, exhorted Islanders to rely on their own efforts and frugal living rather than any assistance from their provincial government. As with many aspects of life in the post-war period, expectations of a more prosperous, comfortable life and government's role in providing this life would take a radical turn in the next ten years as the Island embarked on the road to modernization that prevailed across Canada and the United States. This period of great transition for Prince Edward Island has been labelled "the break", denoting the shift from a rural, non-mechanized society to a modern society dependent on vehicles, electric power, and a varied service economy, divorced from the lifestyle of two hundred years past.<sup>2</sup> But the term is not entirely accurate because there was no sharp break with the past or single transformative event that can be considered as the prime cause. Rather, it was a gradual process that evolved through the century with the adoption of new technologies and changes in the economic patterns of Canada. With the end of the Second World War, the pace of these changes accelerated, in part driven by

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<sup>1</sup> Hon. Joseph A. Bernard, *Journal of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island 1948* (Charlottetown: Irwin Printing Company, 1948), 11.

<sup>2</sup> Weale, *Them Times*, 2-4.

the demographic pressures of the baby boom generation.<sup>3</sup> The events of this immediate post-war period set the stage for the agenda of modernization that Walter R. Shaw would use to bring his Progressive Conservative party to power in late 1959, and with it, begin the process of modernizing P.E.I.'s system of education.

This chapter examines the shifts that preceded the election of Walter R. Shaw as Premier in 1959 and the influence of this period in developing a consensus for action that Shaw would attempt to satisfy in his years as Premier. The period witnessed reduced employment opportunities in the traditional rural economy on the Island and increased economic opportunities in urban areas that fueled out-migration to other provinces. Without any appreciable urban base, the Island experienced much slower population growth than other areas of Canada. The rural farm population declined by more than 25% from 1951 to 1961, as young people left farms for other provinces, and older people abandoned farm life for the urban areas of P.E.I.<sup>4</sup> The federal government followed a more interventionist role in social and economic affairs, directly by increasing pensions, Family Allowances and Unemployment Insurance and indirectly by instituting equalization grants to poorer provinces and establishing vehicles for regional development.<sup>5</sup> These social and economic forces of change necessitated a corresponding response in education policy. Forced by circumstances to take a more activist approach, the Liberal governments led first by Walter Jones and then Alex Matheson, struggled to cope with the faltering economy and the demands of its citizens for a more modern system of education. These demands culminated in the appointment of a Royal Commission in 1959 led by Milton LaZerte that would provide Shaw with a blueprint for

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<sup>3</sup> MacDonald, *If You're Stronghearted*, 226-227.

<sup>4</sup> Dasgupta, "The Island in Transition: A Statistical Overview," 249.

<sup>5</sup> MacDonald, *If You're Stronghearted*, 227-229.

the modernization of the Island's system of education, but one that he rejected as too ambitious. These provincial events need to be considered against the backdrop of a North American society that became increasingly more urban, more prosperous, and involved in the struggle with communism that led governments to take a more active role in poverty reduction and a host of liberal welfare schemes in an effort to compete with the success of the Soviet Union as the world decolonized.<sup>6</sup>

### **Portrait of Prince Edward Island 1945-1959**

Just as the process of modernization had numerous threads and components, it affected different spheres of the region at different times and in different ways. Margaret Conrad described Atlantic Canada in 1950 as two distinct entities, “one largely rural and isolated ...the other essentially urban and fully integrated into mainstream North American culture.”<sup>7</sup> Walter Jones, the “Farmer Premier”, fully understood this separation and courted the farm population (some may say pandered to it) as he ruled the Island from 1943 to 1953 by following a narrowly defined path for government action in reacting to the forces of change that faced Island society.<sup>8</sup> Speaking to the Maritime Board of Trade in 1949, he remarked that “the heart of the province was in its rural districts and that the cities were only a place where people can meet and do their business. If the farmers all go foolish like the people in the towns, good-bye Prince Edward Island.”<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, his efforts did little to stem the tide of out-migration from the province and the abandonment of farmland. While the Island's population

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<sup>6</sup> Latham, *Modernization as Ideology*, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Margaret Conrad, “The 1950s – The Decade of Development” in E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, eds., *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 382.

<sup>8</sup> MacDonald, *If You're Stronghearted*, 237-238.

<sup>9</sup> Milne, “Politics in a Beleaguered Garden,” 43.

increased from 95,000 to over 104,000, or approximately 9.5 %, from 1941 to 1961, the rural farm population declined sharply from over 51,000 to 34,000, with the number of farms declining from over 12,000 to 7,300.<sup>10</sup> People were leaving the farms, heading “down the road” to Ontario or the West, or to an urban area of P.E.I., such as it was. In the twenty years from 1941 to 1961, the Island changed from a province with over half its population as rural farm people to a province with two-thirds of its population considered non-farm, either rural or urban. This trend would accelerate through the next fifteen years, so that by 1976 the rural farm population would decline to only twelve thousand residents, roughly ten percent of the total population.<sup>11</sup>

While a similar shift occurred in the other Maritime provinces, indeed across Canada, several features were specific to P.E.I. Its population growth rate was much slower than the Canadian rate of 58% for the same time period, or even that of other slow growing provinces, New Brunswick (30.8%) and Nova Scotia (27.5%), due to the high level of out-migration.<sup>12</sup> Both N.B. and N.S. had urban centers capable of absorbing some of the people that were leaving the farms. Halifax, Sydney, Saint John, and Moncton experienced growth through the period that while slower than the Canadian average, was at least able to provide some alternative economic opportunity for rural people in their home province.<sup>13</sup> Even the urban centers of Newfoundland, St. John’s and Corner Brook exhibited growth mainly by attracting people from the outport

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<sup>10</sup> Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *1961 Census of Canada, Agriculture, Prince Edward Island, Bulletin 5.1-3*, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, June 1963), Table 2. For additional information, Appendix 1 contains a table with selected information from various sources on Canada, P.E.I., and other provinces.

<sup>11</sup> Dasgupta, “The Island in Transition: A Statistical Overview,” 244, 249, 252.

<sup>12</sup> Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *1961 Census of Canada, Agriculture, New Brunswick, Bulletin 5.1-5*, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, June 1963), Table 2. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *1961 Census of Canada, Agriculture, Nova Scotia, Bulletin 5.1-4*, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, June 1963), Table 2.

<sup>13</sup> Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Canada Year Book, 1963-64* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1964), 162-163.

communities with services and opportunities unavailable in their rural villages.<sup>14</sup> Walter R. Shaw understood this critical relationship between farm production and the Island economy. In his speech at the Progressive Conservative leadership convention in 1957, he stated “worst of all is the fall in rural population and every man who leaves the farm is completely lost to this province and its business.”<sup>15</sup> He returned to this theme during the provincial election in 1959 in a radio address where he addressed the impact of a farmer leaving his farm. To Shaw, it meant “the complete removal of their earning capacity” as everyone in the local economy becomes poorer through the loss of the economic activity generated by a farm operation.<sup>16</sup> He added that in other provinces, farmers may move to an industrial activity in an urban center in that province and continue to contribute to the provincial economy, but that was not an option in P.E.I. Therefore, “it is of the utmost importance to business stability, to the upkeep of schools, churches, and all our services, that our farms be occupied and operating.”<sup>17</sup>

Shaw’s contention that farm activity was the primary driver of the Island economy was evident in the population numbers. P.E.I. had a much greater proportion of its population in 1941 identified as rural farm. Over 53% of the population lived on farms in 1941, compared to the Canadian average of 27.4% and a rate of 24.7% in N.S. and 35.7% in N.B. While these numbers declined sharply by 1961 to 11.7% in Canada as a whole, 7.9% in N.S., and 10.5% in N.B, in P.E.I. over 33% of the population still

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<sup>14</sup> Frederick W. Rowe, *Education and Culture in Newfoundland* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1976), 58-59.

<sup>15</sup> Acceptance speech 1957, P.E.I. Provincial Archives and Records Office, W.R. Shaw Fonds, Premier’s Files, 1959-1966; Elections, Provincial 1959; Speeches; acc. 3688, File 130.

<sup>16</sup> CFCY Speech, May 21, 1959, P.E.I. Provincial Archives and Records Office, W.R. Shaw Fonds, Premier’s Files, 1959-1966; Elections, Provincial 1959; Speeches and Broadcast; acc. 3688, File 131.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

remained on the farm.<sup>18</sup> With its high proportion of a rural farm population and limited urban growth potential, the Island was poorly situated for the period of economic growth in the 1950s that was centered on urban activities.

While P.E.I. remained a province largely rural in the 1950s, that rural life changed drastically, driven in part by government programs designed to strengthen rural communities. Farms became more mechanized through the use of electric power and machinery, and travel became easier with better roads and more vehicles. In 1951, only 22% of farms reported having electric power, with that number growing to 40% in 1956, and to almost 80% in 1961, showing the success of the provincial government's program of rural electrification. This program, launched in 1953 by the government of Alex Matheson who succeeded Walter Jones that year, assisted the expansion of service to the scattered farm communities of the Island by financing the construction of distribution lines. Maritime Electric had been expanding its service into rural areas by purchasing small rural power companies and increasing its generating capacity through the installation of new oil-fired boilers, but supplying the less densely populated rural areas needed government assistance. Matheson's program promised public financing for the construction of the distribution system with the electric companies, led by Maritime Electric, left only to service the new customers. Still, there were constraints to the expansion. The Public Utilities Commission established a guideline of at least four customers per mile of road before it would subsidize the construction of power lines in a district, and this could be difficult in many areas. Individual residents were still left with the cost of bringing the power from the road to their home or business, the extensive cost of installing the interior wiring, and finally, the ongoing monthly cost of an electric bill.

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<sup>18</sup> DBS, *1961 Census, Bulletins 5.1-3, 4, 5.*

Regardless, the program was a success as over 600 miles of power lines were developed in first five years of the program. It also proved popular with voters as it served as the major plank of Matheson's election campaign in 1955 when he won 27 of the 30 seats.<sup>19</sup> Even with this expansion though, P.E.I. lagged behind New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, where the degree of farm electrification was almost 90% by 1956 and over 95% by 1961 in both provinces.<sup>20</sup>

Electrification was not the only improvement in farm life through this period as farmers mechanized their operations. The use of trucks, tractors and combines increased considerably, with the number of trucks doubling, tractor use more than doubling, and the number of grain combines increasing from eighteen in 1951 to over six hundred in 1961.<sup>21</sup> While electric power and mechanization made farm life considerably easier, there was not a corresponding increase in farm size, as farms remained small, mixed operations up to 1961. As previously noted, there was a marked decrease in the number of farms from 1951 to 1961, but there was also a corresponding decrease in the total acres farmed as land went out of production with improved acreage declining by more than 10% in the period.<sup>22</sup> In 1951, 87% of farms were less than one hundred and eighty acres, showing only a small decline to 79% by 1961. The move to larger, specialized farms would accelerate in the next decade.<sup>23</sup>

While electrification and mechanization were important components to the modernization of rural P.E.I., it was the aggressive program of road paving through the

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<sup>19</sup> MacDonald, *If You're Strong-Hearted*, 246-249. Cusack, *A Party for Progress*, 114-115. Also see A. Kenneth Bell, *Getting the Lights – The Coming of Electricity to Prince Edward Island* (Charlottetown: Prince Edward Island Museum and Heritage Foundation, 1989). Bell provides an extensive review of the expansion of Maritime Electric as well as brief summaries of numerous small, local generating companies.

<sup>20</sup> DBS, *1961 Census, Bulletins 5.1-3,4,5*.

<sup>21</sup> DBS, *Canada Year Book, 1963-64*, 483-484.

<sup>22</sup> DBS, *1961 Census, Bulletin 5.1-3*.

<sup>23</sup> Dasgupta, "The Island in Transition: A Statistical Overview", 252.



1950s that drastically altered Island life. With the dramatic increase in hard surfaced roads and a trebling in the number of vehicles, rural residents were no longer bound to the dictates of a muddy, clay road and a horse drawn carriage for their trips for necessary purchases, schooling, church, and entertainment, severely restricting them especially in spring and winter. Paved roads and vehicles broadened their options, and made possible a host of changes – school consolidation, work in town, shopping in town, farm enlargement, and more choices for entertainment. It also influenced peoples’ choices about where to live, as people opted to construct new homes close or on the newly paved all-weather highways, and away from the back roads.<sup>24</sup> Fueled by federal cost-shared programs such as the building of the Trans-Canada Highway and the Roads to Resources program of the Diefenbaker government, road construction was a major focus of the provincial government, to such an extent that Premier Matheson created the Department of Highways in 1955.<sup>25</sup>

The effect of these changes in infrastructure and mechanization in conjunction with the depressed farm economy of the 1950s drove shifts in the composition of the labour force through this period. People were leaving farms for one over-riding reason: poverty. Janssen in his study of P.E.I. agriculture stated that “Most of the people who gave up farming would, if asked, explain that they went broke, or that they had to work very hard for a miserably low income. Poverty forced them to seek a better living doing something else, often somewhere else.”<sup>26</sup> Farm incomes in P.E.I. during the 1950s were low, whether measured against farm incomes of other provinces or labour incomes in

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<sup>24</sup> MacDonald, *If You’re Stronghearted*, 239-242.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>26</sup> William Janssen, “Agriculture in Transition,” in *The Garden Transformed: Prince Edward Island 1945-1980* eds. Verner Smitheram, David Milne, and Satadal Dasgupta (Charlottetown: Ragweed Press, 1982), 116.

Canada (see Table 2.1). While labour incomes tended to rise steadily over time, P.E.I. farm incomes were unpredictable, with declines in six years and increases in six years in the twelve year period from 1949 to 1961. Farms were abandoned, land was taken out of production and workers, mostly male, left the province with net migration for the period from 1941 to 1961 estimated at over -26,000.<sup>27</sup> Those that stayed attempted to improve yields through increased mechanization and more intensive methods. But these strategies relied on inputs that were purchased off Island, so much of the benefit accrued to those centers. As machinery replaced labour or horses, the source of the input changed as did the need for cash to purchase or finance the investment. The Island way of agriculture was changing from a mostly self-sufficient, closed system to one based on imported inputs such as machinery, fuel, seed, fertilizers, and chemicals so that a dollar generated by farm production no longer meant a dollar earned for the Island economy.<sup>28</sup>

The total labour force declined from 35,599 in 1941 to 34,399 in 1961, but the male portion of that labour force declined sharply by 14%. The entry of females into the labour force through the 1950s offset much of the decline as their participation rose by almost 60% from 1941.<sup>29</sup> This growth in female participation would continue, and accelerate through the next two decades. As well as shifts in the gender composition of the workforce, there were significant shifts in the occupations. Employment in the primary sectors of agriculture, fishing, and logging dropped from 44% of the labour force in 1951 to 33% in 1961. The service and white-collar categories accounted for an increase from 31% to 38%, and the skilled craftsman category increased from 13% to almost 16%. As in the male-female ratio, this trend of an increased importance in the

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<sup>27</sup> Dasgupta, "The Island in Transition: A Statistical Overview," 244.

<sup>28</sup> Janssen, "Agriculture in Transition," 123-125.

<sup>29</sup> Dasgupta, "The Island in Transition: A Statistical Overview," 256.

service and white-collar sector would accelerate in the coming decades, indicating the significance of this period as a turning point.<sup>30</sup>

**Table 2.1 – Farm and Labour Incomes PEI vs Canada (1949-1961)**

| year | Labour income per non-farm worker, Canada <sup>1</sup> | Income per farm worker, Canada <sup>1</sup> | Income per farm worker, PEI <sup>1</sup> | PEI Farm worker Income % of Cdn. non-farm labour income | PEI Farm worker Income % of Cdn. farm worker income | Farm Income per capita of farm population, PEI <sup>2</sup> | Personal Income per capita, Canada <sup>2</sup> | PEI per capita farm Income as % of Cdn. Personal income per capita |
|------|--|---|--|---|---|---|---|--|
| 1949 | 2293   | 2195  | 1176                                     | 51  | 54  | 259   | 996   | 26   |
| 1950 | 2364   | 1924  | 1087                                     | 46  | 56  | 237   | 1040  | 23   |
| 1951 | 2659   | 3099  | 1569                                     | 59  | 51  | 339   | 1199  | 28   |
| 1952 | 2833   | 3064  | 2441                                     | 86  | 80  | 528   | 1286  | 41   |
| 1953 | 2992   | 2583  | 1159                                     | 39  | 45  | 251   | 1317  | 19   |
| 1954 | 3144   | 1649  | 1037                                     | 33  | 63  | 225   | 1290  | 17   |
| 1955 | 3217   | 2010  | 1192                                     | 37  | 59  | 260   | 1355  | 19   |
| 1956 | 3457   | 2289  | 1257                                     | 36  | 55  | 275   | 1463  | 19   |
| 1957 | 3556   | 1787  | 1241                                     | 35  | 69  | 270   | 1515  | 18   |
| 1958 | 3519   | 2350  | 1332                                     | 38  | 57  | 288   | 1560  | 18   |
| 1959 | 3677   | 2117  | 1158                                     | 31  | 55  | 248   | 1608  | 15   |
| 1960 | 3734   | 2383  | 1620                                     | 43  | 68  | 344   | 1656  | 21   |
| 1961 | 3827   | 1944  | 933                                      | 24  | 48  | 197   | 1651  | 12   |

<sup>1</sup>. Janssen, "Agriculture in Transition," Table 2, 119.

<sup>2</sup>. Janssen, "Agriculture in Transition," Table 1, 116.

While per capita income levels in P.E.I. were still lower than the rest of Canada, the gap began to close through the 1950s. In 1951, the per capita income on P.E.I. was \$653 (current dollars), and rose to \$962 in 1961. As a percentage of national income, it had increased from 54% of the national average to 59% in 1961. There was a noticeable difference in the components of this income as the share from wages and salaries and from government transfers, essentially old age pensions and unemployment insurance benefits, increased from 50% to 72%, while net income from farm operators declined

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

from a quarter of the total to just 7% in 1961.<sup>31</sup>

While statistics can help provide a quantitative description of the province in the 1950s, it is helpful to have a qualitative view as well. Descriptions of life in the urban centers of Summerside and Charlottetown in many ways reflect that of today's residents, with concerts, movies, stores and restaurants for amusement. One of Summerside's leading citizens, Wanda Wyatt provided clues to the variety of daily life in her dairies. Admittedly, this was the life of a wealthy single woman, not necessarily representative of the general population but it demonstrates the gamut of activities that were possible, even if most residents were not able to partake of all the opportunities. Her diaries from the 1950s were filled with accounts of concerts, bridge games, trips abroad to Europe or Florida, and visits by dignitaries such as Queen Elizabeth and the Governor-General.<sup>32</sup> In sharp contrast was the life of rural residents, over two thirds of the population, where daily life was a very different story from today. With the provision of electricity to rural areas just at its beginning, daily life could be a grind. One example comes from the life of a young Tignish woman, Olive Gaudet. After spending some time in the Charlottetown area working at Saint Dunstan's University as a domestic, she returned to the rural area near her home town of Tignish to get married in 1954. With no electricity, no running water in the house, just a pump in the porch and an outhouse in the yard, she settled in for years of hard work raising children and maintaining the family. Her husband left home most winters to work in the New Brunswick woods, and in summer, he fished or looked for whatever work was available. The neighbours and nearby family constituted the social network, and provided assistance if needed. It was a life not much

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>32</sup> Deirdre Kessler, *A Century on Spring Street* (Charlottetown: Indigo Press, 1999), 346-361 and 365-370.

different from that of the early part of the century, but it was to change rapidly in the next few years.<sup>33</sup>

One driver of this change was an increased awareness of the poverty and lack of opportunity afforded by the Island, made even starker by that new invention of the age, television. It was one thing to be poor, quite another to be poor and aware of how poor you were. Television brought the world to everyone's living room and with it, the splendour of consumerism. Through the earlier post-war period families would compare their plight with rural neighbours or those in the towns of Charlottetown and Summerside; but the advent of television as CFCY began broadcasting in 1956 broadened that comparison visually to the rest of North America and the burgeoning suburban consumer culture. In addition to the virtual comparisons with the TV world, improved transportation links facilitated visits from relatives who had emigrated to Ontario or New England, with their stories of jobs at decent enough wages to afford modern apartments or small suburban homes equipped with the modern conveniences of the 1950s.

The task of meeting the rising expectations of Islanders fell to a provincial government with neither the will nor the resources for this challenge. Premier Jones directed his activity mainly to attempts to improve the situation of the farming community and industries that serviced it.<sup>34</sup> But his thinking, outlined in an open letter to ex-servicemen and women at the end of World War II, reflected the aspirations of a different era: "Farming is a way to live and immediate pecuniary plunges should be ignored and the idea of building a home in twenty or thirty years time should be the

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<sup>33</sup> Olive Gaudet, *Memories of a Lifetime* (Summerside: Crescent Island Publishers, 2005), 91.

<sup>34</sup> Wayne E. MacKinnon, *J. Walter Jones, the Farmer Premier* (Summerside: Williams and Crue, 1974), 25.

goal.”<sup>35</sup> For a generation that had lived through the hardship of the Great Depression and the sacrifices of World War II, the concept of putting off their dreams of a decent life and a family home for another twenty years was a hard sell. Jones restricted his efforts to small-scale initiatives aimed to improve the situation of existing farmers, such as schemes to improve agricultural trade with Newfoundland and protection of dairy farmers by banning sales of margarine.<sup>36</sup> His election strategies centered on courting the rural vote, with great success as he became the first politician to win three successive elections in 1943, 1947 and 1951.<sup>37</sup> Known for his autocratic style, at one time holding six cabinet positions, and brusque manner, he remained in power by catering to the rural population and riding on the munificence of the federal Liberal government as it expanded its role in the post-war period. Making the connection between federal and provincial Liberals, Jones would claim credit for the new car and rail ferry at Borden, family allowances and old age pensions, the Trans-Canada Highway, and various grants for storage warehouses. His mantra was a familiar one to Island voters: who is best placed to get money from Ottawa? With the Liberals under Mackenzie King and then Louis St. Laurent firmly in place in Ottawa, Island voters followed the easy route.<sup>38</sup>

Jones resigned in 1953 and was replaced by Alex Matheson, just as brusque and autocratic as Jones but without the good fortune of having the federal Liberals as allies throughout his tenure. Following a more structured program than Jones, he replaced the good intentions of Jones with an actual program for rural electrification, using that as his

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<sup>35</sup> Walter Jones to Ex-Service Men and Women, PARO, Premier’s Office Fonds, J. Walter Jones Papers, Education, Dept. of 1942, 1944-45. RG 25, Series 33, Sub-series 3, File 10.

<sup>36</sup> Wayne MacKinnon, *The Life of the Party: A History of the Liberal Party in Prince Edward Island* (Summerside: Prince Edward Island Liberal Party, 1973), 112-113.

<sup>37</sup> MacKinnon, *J. Walter Jones*, 5.

<sup>38</sup> MacKinnon, *The Life of the Party*, 117.

main platform in the 1955 election which he easily won. That was to be the pinnacle of his career as squabbles with the federal government over subsidies, religious questions in higher education, and the rise to power of John Diefenbaker and the federal Conservatives in 1957 all changed the political landscape in advance of the 1959 provincial election.<sup>39</sup> The critical point in both regimes was their dependence on federal funds and the tenuous nature of that funding, which restricted the scope of any action initiated by the province.

This point was recognized earlier by the Rowell-Sirois Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations in 1940. Appointed in 1937 by Prime Minister Mackenzie King, it set out to re-examine “the economic and financial basis of Confederation and of the distribution of legislative powers in light of the economic and social developments of the last seventy years.”<sup>40</sup> Premier Thane Campbell, Jones’s predecessor, accurately depicted the situation of P.E.I. when he appeared before the Commission and stated:

Our people have been obliged to look on while other provinces, more fortunately situated, or perhaps with a lesser degree of carefulness, have implemented many services equally necessary here, but which we felt we were unable to afford. We have seen other provinces forge ahead of us in public welfare work, in health measures, in education... This is not possible in Prince Edward Island, unless what appears to us to be undue carelessness is exhibited toward future expenditures.<sup>41</sup>

Created as a result of the failure of both levels of government to effectively deal with the Great Depression, the Commission’s recommendations were essentially shelved during

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<sup>39</sup> MacKinnon, *The Life of the Party*, 124-130. Cusack, *A Party for Progress*, 114-119. The two authors examined similar events but with varied interpretations understandable as each book was financed by the respective political party.

<sup>40</sup> Newton Rowell and Joseph Sirois, *Report of the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations-Book One* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1954), 9.  
<http://www.solon.org/Constitutions/Canada/English/Committees/Rowell-Sirois/> downloaded Sept. 11, 2014.

<sup>41</sup> MacKinnon, *The Life of the Party*, 117.

the war. But the federal level did manage to secure agreement for the implementation of the Unemployment Insurance Fund and for the exclusive use of income tax as a revenue source to be offset by grants to the provinces for the duration of the war.<sup>42</sup>

### **Post-War Liberalism and the Atlantic Revolution**

With the war coming to an end, King, unlike the Liberal premiers of P.E.I., demonstrated that he had the will to use government power to help citizens achieve their aspirations and he set out to acquire the resources to accomplish this by implementing the recommendations of Rowell-Sirois. At a series of federal-provincial meetings in 1945 and 1946, King attempted to get agreement for a radical shift in fiscal and program responsibilities. Promising a program of public works together with a comprehensive social security system based on the *Report on Social Security for Canada 1943* written by Leonard Marsh that would provide national old age pensions, children's allowances, sickness and maternity benefits to supplement the Unemployment Insurance Fund, and national health insurance, King hoped to wrest control of income tax and legislative powers from the provinces.<sup>43</sup> Thwarted by the vociferous opposition of Ontario Premier George Drew, Quebec Premier Maurice Duplessis, and Nova Scotia Premier Angus L. Macdonald as an assault on their tax revenues, King retreated to a more limited program of incremental change. Old Age Pensions were introduced in 1951, health grants assisted provinces with specific programs or capital investments, and public works programs

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<sup>42</sup> Savoie, *Visiting Grandchildren*, 41-42.

<sup>43</sup> Carman Miller, "1940s: War and Rehabilitation" in E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, eds., *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 326-329. Also see John I. Clark, "Report on Social Security for Canada 1943 by Leonard Marsh," *Canadian Public Policy/ Analyse de Politiques*, Vol. 1 No. 4 (Autumn, 1975): 587-589.



focused on roads, housing and resource development.<sup>44</sup>

It would take another Royal Commission to provide the next step. In 1955, the St. Laurent government appointed Walter Gordon to head a commission to review the economic prospects of the country, and as part of that review, he examined the chronic underdevelopment of the Atlantic Region. This time, the Atlantic premiers, led by Hugh John Fleming of New Brunswick, presented a more co-ordinated vision from the region. Fleming had defeated the Liberal government of John McNair in 1952 and, unlike McNair, was not averse to pushing the federal government. Henry Hicks had replaced the aging Angus L. Macdonald in Nova Scotia bringing with him a more active vision of the role of government. Joey Smallwood from Newfoundland had never been accused of taking a hands-off approach to development.<sup>45</sup> In response to a challenge from St. Laurent to the Atlantic provinces to present some ideas not just their constant pleas for assistance, Fleming organized the first meeting of the four premiers which in turn led to the formation of a more permanent committee of representatives charged with developing positions for discussion at future meetings. On the agenda were ideas such as subsidies to cover recurrent fiscal needs, revisions to transportation policies, introduction of regional development programs, preferential treatment in defence spending, and programs of resource development. The premiers continued to revise their proposals and work together, even as Hicks was defeated by Robert Stanfield in 1956. In May, 1957 they called on the federal government for the subsidization of coal for power generation, continual subsidies for infrastructure programs, coordination of education and other institutional programs, compensation for lost northern Crown lands allocated to certain

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<sup>44</sup> Miller, "1940s: War and Rehabilitation," 328.

<sup>45</sup> Conrad, "The 1950s – The Decade of Development," 404-405.

provinces, a causeway for P.E.I., and the establishment of Atlantic Region offices in various countries to develop trade links.<sup>46</sup>

While the individual items on the list are of interest, it was the shift in attitude that was more significant. No longer were the Atlantic premiers, indeed any politician, content to deliver simply a narrow range of services to their constituents. Their vision had broadened and they had acquired the will to provide programs and services that would fulfil the aspirations of their citizens.<sup>47</sup> However, they still needed to acquire the resources. While the Gordon Report advocated assistance for capital projects in the region, measures to increase private sector investment in the region, and subsidies on coal production, it cautioned on implementing measures that may disadvantage other regions of the country. Nevertheless, it did endorse this newly discovered will to intervene in the economy in an attempt to better the lives of the residents.<sup>48</sup> Separate from the discussion of the Gordon Report and its focus on regional development was the introduction of equalization payments in the dying days of the St. Laurent government in 1957. Savoie considers this the first attempt by the federal government to deal with the issue of regional disparity.<sup>49</sup> Designed to provide poorer provinces with the means to deliver core services at a level similar to richer provinces, it was not designed to be a tool of economic development, but in essence did much to provide provincial governments with the means to modernize their systems of education, health and social services. These initiatives, what some have called “the Atlantic Revolution,” established regional equality as a basic tenet of the Canadian federation, and bestowed on both levels of government a role in

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 410-412.

<sup>47</sup> Savoie, *Visiting Grandchildren*, 45.

<sup>48</sup> Conrad, “The 1950s – The Decade of Development,” 410.

<sup>49</sup> Savoie, *Visiting Grandchildren*, 81-82.

fighting regional disparity. Conrad states that it also established a more enduring impact: “In defining a regional consensus based on the belief in a vigorous capitalist economy, an interventionist democratic state, and mass consumption, it also brought Atlantic Canada into line with the dominant currents of North American culture.”<sup>50</sup>

The focus of that culture in the 1950s was defeating Communism and prevailing in the Cold War. Michael Latham comments that:

The central challenge... was to find ways to rejuvenate and project abroad America’s liberal social values, capitalist economic organizations, and democratic political structures. Victory... would depend on defeating the forces of monolithic communism by accelerating the natural process through which ‘traditional’ societies would move toward the enlightened ‘modernity’ most clearly represented by America itself.<sup>51</sup>

This struggle was not limited to the foreign sphere as shown by Elaine Tyler May. She demonstrates how the overarching principle of American foreign policy, security through the containment of the Soviet Union to a certain sphere of influence, also applied to American domestic life. Families searched for security through domestic containment, where the sphere of influence was the home, and attempted to build safe, secure but also personally liberating lives within that sphere, essentially constructing a space where all family members could have their needs fulfilled through their personal lives.<sup>52</sup> What was meant by the term domestic containment? For May, the kitchen debate of 1959 between Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev presented the heart of the discussion. For Nixon, modern suburban life, characterized by a bread winning husband and a professional homemaker wife in a ranch style bungalow surrounded by an array of modern conveniences, epitomized the core of American freedom. Superiority in

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<sup>50</sup> Conrad, “The 1950s – The Decade of Development,” 419.

<sup>51</sup> Latham, *Modernization as Ideology*, 6.

<sup>52</sup> Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 11-18.

the Cold War came not just from the strength of the country's weapons, but from its "secure, abundant family life of modern suburban homes."<sup>53</sup> This version of the American dream was there for everyone to aspire to, not just the white working and middle-classes, even if not all could attain it. This decade also saw the advent of the expert, associated with the determination of families to establish the new vision of family life. Given the rapid changes that science and engineering provided at that time, it was not unrealistic for young families to accept the advice of experts in the fields of medicine, social science and psychology. The hallmark of the age was adaptation not resistance, as people tried to keep some sense of security for their family unit and attempted to create the home of their dreams, safe from the forces of the outside world for the parents and the hopefully well-adjusted children.<sup>54</sup>

Catherine Briggs in a recent collection of articles supports the notion that these ideas influenced Canadian society as well. In her introduction, she contends that the postwar period was defined by closer economic and cultural ties to the United States and an acceptance of welfare liberalism and Keynesian economic concepts to provide economic security and equality of opportunity.<sup>55</sup> Canadian trade with the US expanded as that country solidified its position of as the leader of the western world accompanied by the expansion of the American military-industrial complex as it countered the threat of Communism throughout the world.<sup>56</sup> The same defining feature identified by May, the search for domestic security and stability, was evident in Canada as families embraced

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-31.

<sup>55</sup> Catherine Briggs, "Introduction," in *Modern Canada 1945 To Present*, ed. Catherine Briggs (Don Mills, Ont.: Oxford University Press, 2014), xi-xiv.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, xii.

the consumer culture and the comforts of a traditional family.<sup>57</sup> Canadian governments at all levels, municipal, provincial and federal, increasingly engaged in the conception and delivery of programs geared to the expansion of the welfare state to provide a certain level of security. These programs were first geared towards returning World War II veterans but soon expanded to programs of pensions, health care, seniors and public housing, and education for all citizens. Governments also intervened indirectly in the economy through the provision of infrastructure to encourage economic growth, with two prime examples being the St. Lawrence Seaway and the Trans-Canada Pipeline. Both projects facilitated the economic expansion of central Canada and furthered ties to the dominant American economy.<sup>58</sup>

### **The P.E.I. System of Education**

Mirroring the divide that was appearing between rural and urban life in society, there were two worlds in the 1959 school system of Prince Edward Island. One consisted of the one-room schools that predominated in the rural areas of P.E.I. Of the four hundred and fifty schools in the province, three hundred and fifty-one were one-room schools, with more than a third of the school population in attendance. In the other world were the urban schools of Summerside and Charlottetown, and some other bigger schools in areas of larger population, with six or more classrooms. These totalled twenty-four in all, with an enrollment greater than that of all the one-room schools, accounting for 40% of the enrollment. In between were the other smaller schools of between two and five rooms that accounted for the remaining 22% of the enrollment. These were closer to the

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, xii-xiii.

one-room schools, as the seventy-five schools averaged just over two rooms per school, and were ungraded as were the one-room schools.<sup>59</sup> Not only were there great differences in the size of schools, there were significant differences in teacher quality, as measured by the certification levels. The larger schools in the towns and city generally attracted better-qualified teachers as they could afford to pay the higher salary scale for better qualifications and pay supplements.<sup>60</sup>

At the heart of these disparities was the system of administration for schools. Established by the Public School Act of 1877, it defined the roles for the provincial government and the local school districts. The province would set the curriculum, establish standards, assist with school construction costs, licence teachers and pay the majority of their salaries. Districts would be responsible for the operation and maintenance of the school, hiring teachers, paying one-third of the teacher's salary, and raising money for construction of new schools. This Act was a revision of the pre-Confederation Free School Act of 1852, which had established the district system, based on the criteria of distance children could walk to a school, and the religious and cultural characteristics of the districts. It established 475 districts covering roughly five square miles, as well as separate districts for Charlottetown, Summerside and some other villages, and little had changed by 1959 where 469 still existed.<sup>61</sup> While this may have been an adequate system of administration in previous decades, by the 1950s it was evident that it was not providing an equitable, basic level of education for all students

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<sup>59</sup> Prince Edward Island Department of Education, *Annual Report for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1959* (Summerside: Journal Publishing Co., 1959), 13.

<sup>60</sup> Milton E. LaZerte, *Report of the Commissioner on Educational Finance and Related Problems in Administration* (Charlottetown: April, 1960), 24-25.

<sup>61</sup> Smitheram, "Development and the Debate over School Consolidation," 178-180.

regardless of their location.<sup>62</sup>

Generally, P.E.I. taxpayers supported their schools at a much lower rate compared to other provinces, although there were disparities between districts. In 1956, average expenditure per student for both elementary and secondary levels in P.E.I. was \$92, compared to the Canadian average of \$219. The P.E.I. expenditures were also much lower than the per student cost in the other Maritime provinces, with New Brunswick spending \$156, and Nova Scotia spending \$141. While expenditures increased to \$136 per student in 1959, it also increased in N.B. to \$186 and in N.S. to \$179.<sup>63</sup>

These issues of unequal opportunity, low salaries, poor administration, and low investment were not newly discovered in 1959. Indeed, a number of studies and commissions had investigated the system, beginning in the early part of the 1900s, and followed by others at regular intervals. All called for similar solutions – consolidation of school districts and higher standards and wages for teachers. However, the government did little in a general way to reform the system, rather individual districts applied particular stopgap solutions to fix whatever problem they encountered.<sup>64</sup> With the influx of students from the baby boom, the demands of the new service economy and the more sophisticated rural economy, and the increasing awareness of the disparity across districts, by the latter part of the 1950s, the system was approaching a crisis.

Government response to these calls for improvements in the system changed over time as did the tone and substance of the calls. In 1945, Premier Jones could dismiss requests for new high schools with a curt, barely polite reply. Sally MacKinnon of Uigg

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<sup>62</sup> LaZerte, *Report on Educational Financing*, 59.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10. Also of interest is Hartwell Daley, *Educational Surveys on Prince Edward Island 1908-1958* (Summerside: Journal Publishing Co., 1960). The small book contains a series of articles which had originally been published in the Journal-Pioneer newspaper.

wrote to him to express her pleasure on hearing of the possible construction of a rural high school in her area and to pledge the support of the Women's Institute of that area to overcome any community resistance as "the trustees do not always see eye to eye with the women." Jones tersely replied "Insofar as Rural High Schools are concerned, no action has been taken by the Government to establish them."<sup>65</sup> By 1957, the call came not from individuals but rather by large, well-organized community groups covering the complete spectrum of Island life. Disturbed by the lack of positive response to three separate briefs presented to the Matheson government through 1956, a coalition of groups demanded the establishment of a Royal Commission to investigate the problems facing the Island system, specifically the lack of trained teachers, the low numbers of people entering the profession, and unequal funding for school districts leading to an inequality in educational opportunity. The coalition included the Provincial Association of Home and School, the Federation of Agriculture, the Provincial Women's Institute, the Catholic Women's League of P.E.I., the P.E.I. Teacher's Federation, the Charlottetown Board of Trade, and the Provincial Command of the Canadian Legion, representing interests spanning rural and urban, Catholic and Protestant, male and female. Its letter to Premier Matheson concluded: "Therefore, we strongly recommend, once more, that a complete public examination and study of all matters pertaining to Public School Education in this province be made, and would emphasize the urgency of the problems involved."<sup>66</sup>

Matheson was well aware of the issues but was reluctant to proceed with a Royal Commission. In his meeting with the coalition in February 1957, he suggested some

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<sup>65</sup> Letter from Mrs. W.E. (Sally) MacKinnon to Premier Jones Jan. 31, 1945 and Jones to MacKinnon Feb. 26, 1945. PARO, J.W. Jones Papers, RG 25, Series 33, Sub series 3, File 10: Education, Dept. of; 1942, 1944-45.

<sup>66</sup> Letter to Hon. Alexander Matheson (no date). PARO, Alex Matheson Papers, RG 25, Series 24, File 27a.



alternatives that could help to improve conditions without resorting to the long process of a Royal Commission: local Women's Institutes expanding their Education Committees to include men and hold more meetings through the year; a focus on increased financial support from local taxes as the provincial treasury was limited; an attempt to have the federal government subsidize funding for education. His meeting notes included suggestions for campaigns to inform the public of the need for larger administrative units and a program to remove grade 9 and 10 from one room schools by adding an additional room to an existing small school to house the students from nearby districts. But his essential tactic was to stall and delay.<sup>67</sup>

Unenthused by Matheson's response, the coalition continued its campaign for a Royal Commission. The day following their meeting with Matheson, the group sent a letter to Dr. George Dewar, the education critic for the Opposition Progressive Conservatives, asking him to support their call for a formal investigation into the Island's educational problems.<sup>68</sup> Dewar would get the perfect opportunity to provide that support as the Matheson government lurched into a crisis that exposed the simmering religious intolerance in Island society and pushed the government into some form of action, albeit tentative. As the need for more qualified teachers became critical in the late 1950s, Saint Dunstan's University (SDU) offered to establish a program of teacher training, which until then had been the prerogative of Prince of Wales College (PWC). Minister of Education, Keir Clark, accepted the offer and an exchange of letters between himself and

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<sup>67</sup> Notes on Educational Crisis (Discussion Material for Women's Institutes). PARO, Alex Matheson Papers, RG 25, Series 24, File 27a. Smitheram, "Development and the Debate over School Consolidation," 183-184.

<sup>68</sup> Letter from Estelle Bowness, Feb. 8, 1957. PARO, Acc. 5018, Sous Fonds 1, Series 3, File 10. Dr. George and Jean Dewar Fonds, George Dewar Sous Fonds, Political Activities, Education Week 1957.

Rev. Edmund Roche, the Registrar of SDU, outlined the conditions.<sup>69</sup> That a Roman Catholic institution would be allowed to train teachers for the public school system was too much for some regardless of political party, causing heated debate in the Cabinet and later in the Legislative Assembly.<sup>70</sup> Forced by events, on March 12, 1957 Matheson announced the creation of a Select Standing Committee on Education “to hear representations from persons interested in presenting their ideas and opinions for educational changes,” with Fred Large, a Liberal who was highly critical of the decision to allow teacher training at SDU, as the chair.<sup>71</sup> Matheson hoped the committee would quell the calls for a more substantive Royal Commission study and provide a means to dispel the furor over the SDU decision. While successful in smoothing over the latter, it did little to stop the call for more study. Dewar, in the debate on establishing the committee, moved an amendment calling for a Royal Commission instead of the proposed select committee, but it was easily defeated by the government.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, Dewar managed to demonstrate publicly his support for the groups that were clamouring for the Royal Commission.

The call for a more substantive study of the issues would continue after the report of the Select Standing Committee, tabled only one month after its creation. Twenty groups and four individuals submitted briefs or appeared at one of the six public hearings and the Committee visited a number of schools and institutions across the province. Additionally, some members travelled to New Brunswick to examine the regional

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<sup>69</sup> “Correspondence Filed Re Teacher Courses at S.D.U.,” *The Guardian*, 20 March 1957.

<sup>70</sup> MacKinnon, *Life of the Party*, 129-130. Sister Mary Olga McKenna, *The History of Higher Education in the Province of Prince Edward Island* (Memorial University of Newfoundland: Canadian Catholic Historical Association, May 30, 1971), 36-41.

<sup>71</sup> “Debate Opens on Gov’t Motion to Set Up House Committee on Education,” *The Journal-Pioneer*, 13 March 1957.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

composite high schools and the system of county financing. While it provided some recommendations based on the briefs presented to it, the Committee struggled to provide concrete recommendations on the central issues of the system of school administration and educational financing. It recommended a policy to encourage the voluntary union of districts into larger administrative units, the establishment of regional high schools to accommodate Grades IX through XII, better pay and higher standards for teachers and their training, and the extension of vocational training.<sup>73</sup> But its recommendations on overall administration and financing were woefully short on detail. Ideas for financing could come from a bi-partisan committee of the Legislature charged with examining the level of expenditure on education as well as the tax structure of the province, reminding readers that someone needs to pay for the costs. Equally fuzzy were its comments on administration, stating that there was too much de-centralization of administration on P.E.I., but that “over-centralization is not conducive to good administration.”<sup>74</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The many groups that had pushed for serious education reform based on more equality of opportunity, regional high schools, vocational training, and better qualified teachers continued to call for reform. But the Matheson government made little attempt to respond to their calls, except for a 1958 revision to the *School Act* that provided a mechanism for local districts to combine to establish a Regional High School Unit.<sup>75</sup>

Finally in 1959, he relented to the pressure and agreed to appoint a Royal Commission to

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<sup>73</sup> Report of the Select Standing Committee on Education. PARO, RG 25, Series 34, File 27b; Premier's Office Fonds, Alex W. Matheson Papers, Education 1957-1959.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>75</sup> An Act to Amend the School Act. PARO, RG 25, Series 34, File 27b; Premier's Office Fonds, Alex W. Matheson Papers, Education 1957-1959. 6-9.

enquire into “all matters relating to the administration and the financial support of schools” in P.E.I.<sup>76</sup> But by the time Milton LaZerte, the one man Royal Commission, arrived in P.E.I. to begin his work in October, the tired Liberal government had been swept away and replaced by Walter R. Shaw and the Progressive Conservative platform of modernization. The question now shifted to whether this promise of modernization would be delivered by the new government. From the promises made leading up to and during the 1959 election campaign, Islanders had ample reason to believe that Shaw and his new government would help them fulfil their aspirations for a more modern society, especially in education.

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<sup>76</sup> LaZerte, *Report of the Commissioner on Educational Financing*, 2.

## **Chapter Three**

### **A Bold Yet Cautious Beginning 1959-1962**

The problems of interest today are those of an agricultural and fishing area, thickly populated with small rural schools that, once so convenient and acceptable, are now asked to serve a new generation of students who must be educated for a society quite different from that served by these schools when they were first built.<sup>1</sup>

As the 1950s came to a close, much had changed; as the 1960s began, the pace of that change would only quicken. Many of the Island's citizens were now unwilling to accept existing conditions and demanded improved services in many areas, especially in education. There was almost an air of inevitability as both main political parties centered their 1959 election platforms on promises of new schools and more money for education. In its first term from 1959 to 1962, the newly elected government of Walter R. Shaw worked to satisfy the demands of its citizens to build schools and improve the educational prospects of its population, similar to processes in other provinces. This chapter focuses on the first term of Shaw's government, during which he took bold yet cautious steps to bring the education system of P.E.I. in line with reforms that had been implemented in many other jurisdictions across Canada. While outwardly a contradiction, "bold yet cautious" describes how Shaw and his government proceeded: using bold words but never exceeding the limits that Shaw believed the population could accept, specifically at the elementary and post-secondary levels. It was in this navigation of limits where Shaw displayed his skill as a politician in the contentious education file as it embodied Islanders' struggle to resolve the over-riding issue of how much development or modernization was appropriate. Shaw's philosophy was to rely on the push from citizen groups, whether it be civil society or local school boards. Unlike our common perception

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<sup>1</sup> LaZerte, *Report of the Commissioner on Educational Finance*, 9.

of modernization, he did not use the power of the state to achieve certain ends; rather he reacted to the expressed demands of his citizens. He played a facilitative role rather than a directive role.

This chapter examines the first phase of Shaw's attempt to answer this question by surveying the changes made to the Island's education system during his first term as Premier from September 1959 to the next election of December 1962. The first section will introduce Walter R. Shaw, provide an overview of the election of 1959 that brought him to power, and place the Island's situation within a Maritime context. The second section reviews the establishment and findings of the LaZerte Commission, indicating how Shaw would find this plan too ambitious for his more cautious approach. The third section details the government's response to LaZerte, with the implementation of a number of regional high schools, all at the request of local boards that voluntarily consolidated for that purpose. Finally, the chapter closes with a review of Shaw's link between education and economic development as seen by the development of vocational schools and a system of adult education meant to drive a development process.

Shaw led the Progressive Conservatives to a large majority, defeating a tired Liberal regime that had been in power for twenty-five years. Armed with a mandate to modernize Island society, the focus of the new government was to invigorate the failing rural economy of the Island through a program of development that would provide rural Islanders with equal opportunities for education, jobs, and prosperity. Much like rural electrification and road construction in the previous decade, this program of development targeted the rural areas of P.E.I. and looked to change the Island in order to preserve its way of life, another apparent contradiction. Its components were three-fold: better

education for rural children; continuing education for rural adults; and industrial development based on food processing. Shaw and his Minister of Education, George Dewar, began a series of improvements for the rural high school system and the vocational school system where there was a clear consensus on the direction for change.

Their education modernization agenda rested on a belief in the primacy of the citizen or local district, that the decision making power rested with the smallest unit and change should not be imposed by some central authority. New high schools were built across the rural areas of the Island as individual school districts voluntarily amalgamated into larger units to provide their students with the opportunity to obtain a high school education up to Grade Twelve. With funding available from the federal government, Shaw and Dewar greatly expanded the vocational school system, building one school in Summerside and implementing the plans for a second school in Charlottetown to replace and expand its existing school. In addition, the new government made tentative steps in the field of adult education, as part of Shaw's attempt to develop the rural economy which included attracting new food processing companies to the Island. Many of these actions were recommended either by the 1957 Select Committee of Education or from the wide ranging report completed by Milton LaZerte shortly after the new government took office. The first term saw much progress in improving the system of education in the rural areas of P.E.I., but many decisions or actions were delayed because Shaw and Dewar concentrated their efforts on those willing to work with them, leaving difficult issues for the second term. As the program of modernization advanced and turned its attention to the elementary and post-secondary sectors in Shaw's second term, attitudes towards those changes began to shift.

**Figure 3.1 – The Premier and His Education Minister**



Hon. Walter R. Shaw, Premier



Dr. L. George Dewar

Source: Prince Edward Island Legislative Documents Online. (<http://www.peildo.ca/fedora>)

### **Shaw Comes to Power**

Walter R. Shaw, born 20 December 1887, was seventy-one when he became Premier and the unlikely bearer of the mantle of modernizer or reformer. It was his first sitting as a member of the Legislature, having been defeated in his earlier attempt to gain a seat in the 1955 election. He brought a wealth of administrative experience from his earlier career as a senior civil servant in the Department of Agriculture, retiring as Deputy Minister in 1954.<sup>2</sup> David Milne described Shaw as “bringing to government the confidence of the rational planner and civil servant,” a description with its own contradictions that suited a man who exhibited many contradictions.<sup>3</sup> Few civil servants in that era, especially deputy ministers, had much confidence as their positions were typically at the pleasure of the government of the day. Shaw had managed to survive as

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<sup>2</sup> Walter Russell Shaw Biography, Prince Edward Island Legislative Documents Online. <http://www.peildo.ca/fedora/repository/leg%3A20916> accessed Oct. 14, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> David A. Milne, “Politics in a Beleaguered Garden,” 45.



the Deputy Minister of Agriculture under a series of Liberal premiers; indeed, much of his civil service career was during Liberal tenure. A farmer with a B.Sc. from the University of Toronto, earned prior to his service in World War I, he began a thirty-two year career with the provincial government in 1922, serving until his retirement in 1954. In nominating Shaw at the 1957 Progressive Conservative leadership convention, Henry Wedge called him “a man of keen intelligence and native ability... able to talk in practical language to men, women, and youth in every strata of activity, and at the same time meet on an equal footing those of high scientific training and in high positions of Government.”<sup>4</sup> Equally comfortable with farmers or senior federal bureaucrats and capable of relating well with both, Shaw evoked a grandfatherly image but also bemoaned the end of the rough and tumble days of joint political meetings that often ended in minor brawls.<sup>5</sup>

Milne’s description gave the Shaw agenda too much credit for rationality. It implied a well-conceived plan for the overall development of the Island that Shaw lacked. While Shaw may have examined the issues and developed solutions in a more comprehensive manner from the previous Liberal governments of Jones and Matheson, in reality his agenda had two parts: programs or actions to satisfy well-known wishes of the electorate; and a plethora of studies initiated to determine future action or to investigate intriguing concepts without any overarching policy framework. In a 1959 interview shortly after his election as Premier, Shaw outlined his strategy for the economic development of the Island:

I believe that there may be many opportunities for small industries. A full exploration has never been made. We must first make a full exploration of the

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<sup>4</sup> Nominating Speech by Henry Wedge, 1957. PARO, W.R. Shaw, Premier’s Papers, Acc. 3688, File 130.

<sup>5</sup> Walter R. Shaw, *Tell Me the Tales* (Charlottetown: Square Deal Publications, 1975), 115.

possibilities and then we will encourage whatever new industries seem practical. There is probably room for food processing and for plants that deal in sea products. We will give some thought to Irish moss. There may even be a field for peat moss.<sup>6</sup>

Eighteen months later, Shaw's thinking had failed to advance much as he rose in the Legislative Assembly to provide members with a preview of the government's plans, stating that the Resources Development Program would include surveys covering all aspects of life on P.E.I. from primary industries to education using a co-operative approach with input from all citizens and government agencies.<sup>7</sup> The Shaw government viewed education reform as integral to the preservation of the economic vitality of the rural Island but struggled to conceptualize an appropriate framework for economic development and to place education within that framework.

The federal government faced a similar struggle as it began to take a more active role in addressing regional development issues. Donald Savoie has noted that while equalization payments, introduced in 1957, were meant to provide all provinces with the means to deliver core public services on an equal basis, the Diefenbaker government began a series of initiatives directly targeted at reducing regional disparity. Savoie traced the origins of these programs in the 1960s, with the first being the Agriculture Rehabilitation and Development Act of 1961. Like Shaw, the federal government looked to improve the economic situation of rural areas through better use of rural resources; it would be much later in the decade when it extended its programming to absorb surplus labour from the farm sector.<sup>8</sup> Rather than a general plan for the modernization of the society, programs were viewed as a particular response to a declining agricultural sector.

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<sup>6</sup> "Shaw After One Week as Premier," *The Journal-Pioneer*, 23 September 1959, 3, 13.

<sup>7</sup> "Intensified Development Is Indicated For Province," *The Guardian*, 15 March 1961, 1.

<sup>8</sup> Savoie, *Visiting Grandchildren*, 81-85.

The introduction of these programs was a direct result of a more aggressive nature on the part of Atlantic Canadian politicians and lobby groups, what W.S. MacNutt termed the Atlantic Revolution of the 1950s. At the end of World War II, per capita income in the Maritimes was 24% lower than the Canadian average and it continued to drop through the 1950s as the rest of Canada enjoyed increasing prosperity. By 1955, the Maritimes per capita income was 33% lower; for the four Atlantic provinces, it was 37% lower than the Canadian average, given Newfoundland's even lower income.<sup>9</sup> In the view of Corey Slumkoski, leaders in Atlantic Canada were influenced by three factors in their attempt to reach the goal of economic parity with the rest of Canada: an acceptance of a larger role for the state; a change in political leadership in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia; and the entry of Newfoundland into Confederation.<sup>10</sup> The positive experience of state planning through the war years and the acceptance of Keynesian economics as orthodoxy led governments to take a more active and interventionist role in the economy. The death of Angus L. MacDonald and the ascension of Henry Hicks as Premier of Nova Scotia removed a champion of provincial rights and a powerful politician, who believed in a limited and indirect role for government, hardly attributes suitable for the Atlantic Revolution.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Hugh John Flemming replaced John McNair in New Brunswick, adding a dynamic proponent of collective action from the Atlantic provinces. The entry of Newfoundland to Confederation contributed increased political influence with more seats in Parliament and the contribution of Joseph Smallwood. He was a vociferous critic of policies that he believed favoured the central provinces over the Atlantic region, and

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<sup>9</sup> Corey Slumkoski, " 'A Narrow Provincialism': Regionalism in Atlantic Canada, 1945-1970," in *Modern Canada 1945 to Present*, ed. Catherine Briggs (Don Mills, Ont.: Oxford University Press, 2014), 115.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>11</sup> T. Stephen Henderson, *Angus L. Macdonald: A Provincial Liberal* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 188-193 and 212-216.

he was an unbridled advocate of state intervention to promote industry. The election of John Diefenbaker in 1957, with significant support from the Maritimes, led to tentative steps to satisfy regional demands but the Revolution was already beginning to stall. Smallwood, stung by the federal government's hard line stance on the payment of a transitional grant to cover the cost of integrating Newfoundland into Confederation, distanced himself from the other premiers unsure of their support for his position. Both Flemming and Hicks were defeated, replaced by Louis Robichaud in N.B. and Robert Stanfield in N.S. The premiers settled back into their traditional role of bilateral dealings with the federal government and a narrow view of protecting their respective provincial interests.<sup>12</sup>

Both Robichaud and Stanfield shared Shaw's understanding that education was a vital component of any strategy to combat the chronic underdevelopment of their respective provinces. Stanfield served as his own Minister of Education for his entire term of eleven years as Premier, and in the view of Geoffrey Stevens, "he did more for education in the province than any leader since Sir Charles Tupper introduced free schooling before Confederation."<sup>13</sup> He followed the lead of the previous administration of Henry Hicks who had passed a new education act that abolished many of the smaller school boards, consolidating them into larger administrative units. Hicks also established a foundation program that established base levels of funding for teachers' salaries and program costs. Stanfield increased funding available to the municipalities for education, followed an aggressive program of rural school consolidation, and greatly expanded the vocational system of education. In addition, he instituted a program of operating grants

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<sup>12</sup> Slumkoski, "A Narrow Provincialism," 116-119.

<sup>13</sup> Geoffrey Stevens, *Stanfield* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), 131.

to the province's universities that grew exponentially from 1960 to 1967.<sup>14</sup>

Robichaud followed a similar course but with a distinctive theme centred on his Programme for Equal Opportunity, based on the report of the Byrne Commission, which established a complete restructuring of the delivery of social programs in the province. Education would be delivered under a new *Schools Act* passed in July 1966 which established a program to consolidate schools, reduce the number and power of school boards, and increase the authority of the Department of Education by assuming full responsibility for all school funding. The goal was to provide every child in New Brunswick with the same opportunity to acquire an education, regardless of his/her religion, language, or location.<sup>15</sup>

By 1959, the Liberal government of P.E.I. under Alex Matheson had run its course. In the September 1 election, it lost power to the Progressive Conservatives led by Walter R. Shaw. Shaw ran on a wide ranging platform, headlined by the slogan "The Party of the Causeway," and trumpeted changes in a variety of industries and services sure to improve the lives of all Islanders.<sup>16</sup> Key to his platform was the support he would receive from the recently victorious federal Progressive Conservative party, led by John Diefenbaker. Shaw's platform on education was broad with little that anyone would disagree with: the province would pay the teachers' supplement, improve the situation of teachers, assist local districts to improve facilities, and remove impossible financial burdens from small districts. Shaw and his party also pledged to respect the

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 131-132.

<sup>15</sup> Della M. M. Stanley, *Louis Robichaud: A Decade of Power* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1984), 155-162.

<sup>16</sup> Election Pamphlet for 1959, P.E.I. PARO, W.R. Shaw, Premier's Papers, Elections - Provincial 1959, acc. 3688, File 129.

independence of the district school boards.<sup>17</sup> The supplement had always been the responsibility of the local school district and allowed richer districts to pay teachers at a higher rate, thus attracting the better or more qualified teachers to their district. The Conservatives put a simple spin on the core of their program – the province would pay all teachers’ supplements – with little detail on costs or implementation. Then, as now, election platforms reflected more intent than actual commitment. While it took close to forty years to see the construction of a fixed link, Shaw implemented many aspects of his education platform in a short period.

Matheson and the Liberals proposed a more detailed modernization agenda for education, but the detail seemed only to obscure the message of reform by hedging on actual commitments.<sup>18</sup> Discussions of costs and who will pay, and the mechanisms of district control under various equalization schemes, did not excite the voters as much as the Tory promise of the province paying the teachers’ supplements. Regardless of the differences between the two platforms, there was evidently a general consensus for the need to modernize the system of education. The Federation of Agriculture in its 1957 brief to the Select Standing Committee provided an accurate summary of this need:

With our present system of autonomous trustee boards for each school district, the wonder is not that the system works as well as it does, but that it works at all... The pattern of land settlement, division into rural districts and transportation facilities imposed upon the province in a pioneer era still continue to influence our thinking in school organization.<sup>19</sup>

In its opinion, the system of small school districts served only to divide the rural communities and blocked the widening definition of community that was forming

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> “Let’s Discuss Education (Liberal Party Ad),” *The Journal Pioneer*, 28 August 1959.

<sup>19</sup> P.E.I. Federation of Agriculture, 1957 Brief to the Select Standing Committee on Education, PARO, W.R. Shaw Fonds, Series Civil Service Career 1944-1954, Acc. 3688, File 69, 8.

throughout the Island, based on the introduction of better roads and new technology such as telephone and television.

### **LaZerte Commission on Educational Financing**

Armed with this general consensus, Shaw and his newly appointed Minister of Education, George Dewar, began the process of modernization by utilizing the tools provided by the previous Liberal administration. For most Islanders, modernization was not a term that was generally used; rather they looked for improvements in the system to provide more equality of access to high school, better standards for teachers, and more opportunities for those not considering university. In 1958, the Liberals amended the School Act to allow districts to come together to form regional high school units, and just prior to the election, it had begun the process of establishing a Royal Commission to study the financing of education in P.E.I.<sup>20</sup> This action was further evidence of the consensus that existed to modernize the system. While Matheson had earlier resisted the many calls for a Royal Commission, by the end of his term he had agreed to its establishment and had decided on Milton LaZerte as the sole commissioner. Shaw confirmed both the terms of reference and LaZerte's appointment after he took power, and in October 1959, LaZerte began his investigation into the financing and administration of education in the province. His terms of reference provided an opening to review any and all aspects of education at the primary and secondary level in P.E.I., with the inclusion of a clause requesting recommendations related to "any other matters related to the general administration of education and the effective financial support of

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<sup>20</sup> L. George Dewar, *Prescription for a Full Life* (Summerside: Williams and Crue, 1993), 172-173. The pertinent section of the amendments to the School Act can be found in *An Act to Amend the School Act*, 1958, pages 6-9, PARO, RG 25 – 34, File 27b, Box 2.

schools.”<sup>21</sup> LaZerte, a widely-recognized educator from Alberta, had a reputation for expanding the boundaries of his studies, and this clause served as an open invitation to review every aspect of the system.<sup>22</sup> Nor would his findings and final recommendations be a surprise, since they would mirror those of his recently completed study, *School Finance in Canada*, completed in 1955 for the Canadian School Trustees Association. In this report, he called for higher minimum standards for teachers, larger units for school administration, establishment of foundation programs based on per student costs as a means of ensuring equality across units, increased provincial funding for capital expenditures, and the replacement of various programs of grants with a simple equalization grant to the administrative unit in all provinces. His final recommendation demanded the assistance of the federal government in providing sufficient funds to each province in order to meet a certain acceptable Canadian standard, a recommendation that would be music to the always cash-strapped government of P.E.I.<sup>23</sup> With this history, the government of P.E.I. surely expected similar recommendations for its province. Given the Liberals’ recruitment of LaZerte and the Conservatives’ subsequent approval of his engagement, both parties must have had a certain level of comfort with these expected results.

LaZerte did not disappoint. His report, presented to the government in April 1960, contained many of the themes of his earlier work and followed the trends that were evident in education across Canada and the United States. Smitheram summarized these trends as the acceptance of education as an investment in the state’s future, that every

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<sup>21</sup> LaZerte, *Report of the Commissioner on Educational Finance*, 2.

<sup>22</sup> John W. Chalmers, *Gladly Would He Teach: A Biography of Milton Ezra LaZerte* (Edmonton: Alberta Teachers’ Association Educational Trust, 1978), 133.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*



child should have an equal opportunity, that this equality could only be provided by large schools capable of offering a wide variety of programs, and that these schools needed to be organized and administered by professional school boards.<sup>24</sup> These trends were familiar to LaZerte because his previous work in Alberta had dealt with the reorganization of small local districts into larger units more than twenty years previously.<sup>25</sup> LaZerte outlined the many previous reports that had accurately reported on the failings of the system but which elicited little or no response from government, making some parts of his report uncomfortable reading for Islanders. In his words, “past governments have authorized investigations and published reports recommending changes in schools and education although few changes followed those investigations.”<sup>26</sup> He was equally scathing in his review of the province’s commitment to provide adequate services and fund education at a reasonable level. His exhaustive and objective analysis, accompanied by comparative data from other provinces and Canadian averages, determined that the Island ranked at the bottom of all provinces for educational services and made the least contribution based on its ability to pay to provide these services.

To improve this situation, Lazerte enunciated three principles that served as the framework for his thirty-nine recommendations. First, no school program should be permitted to fall below a certain minimum standard; second, all children should be afforded an equal opportunity for education without regard for the ability of that district to pay; and third, the responsibility for educating students was no longer a responsibility solely for the local district, rather the responsibility needed to be shared at the provincial

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<sup>24</sup> Smitheram, “Development and the Debate over School Consolidation,” 184-185.

<sup>25</sup> Chalmers, *Gladly Would He Teach*, 138-139.

<sup>26</sup> LaZerte, *Report of the Commissioner on Educational Finance*, 9.

and federal level given the changes in society.<sup>27</sup> His recommendations called for more investment in education in the province, establishment of a foundation program outlining the core standards and funding requirements for all districts to ensure equality of opportunity, higher standards and better salaries for teachers, and major changes to the system of administration for districts. His vision was to have local school boards advising on the operation of single or consolidated schools for pupils in grades one to six. Regional units would operate all the schools feeding into the junior high schools (grades seven to nine) in their region. The final step would be five composite school units, based on composite high schools for grades ten to twelve in Charlottetown, Summerside, Souris, Montague, and O’Leary, fed by regional junior high schools within that unit. Lazerte’s report was far-reaching and all-encompassing, covering elementary and secondary levels, teacher training, organization of the Department of Education, salaries for teachers as well as professors at Prince of Wales College, and vocational and adult education programs. He recommended that all changes should be realized by 1965, a schedule he felt allowed for the gradual implementation of his program.<sup>28</sup> While the report provided a blueprint for educational reform, major parts of it would prove to be too ambitious for Shaw, left for the subsequent Campbell administration to be fully implemented.

### **The Government’s Response to LaZerte**

George Dewar, the Minister of Education, outlined the government’s response to these wide ranging recommendations in his television address of October 26, 1960.

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 54-58.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 98-102.

Shaw had instituted a series of televised reports by each cabinet minister, and Dewar took that opportunity to mark out the new government's approach to education. Dewar, born 20 October 1915 in eastern P.E.I., was a medical doctor with a practice in the O'Leary area. He was first elected in 1955 and had run against Shaw for the party leadership in 1957, losing by two votes.<sup>29</sup> While he had hoped to be named Health Minister, he recognized that he had experience as a teacher and had been the education critic during his time in opposition.<sup>30</sup> In his televised remarks, Dewar acknowledged the analysis contained in the LaZerte Report that P.E.I. was behind the other provinces in many areas of education, and indicated that the government had already implemented some recommendations and more would come. Dewar outlined his objections to the current administrative system, echoing the faults that LaZerte cited, stating that the main impediment to progress was the many small units with their local jealousies, petty rivalries, and lack of rational management practice. He emphasized the concept of equality of opportunity, in terms of ensuring that income levels were not a barrier nor were educational needs, for example in vocational training. The provincial government would start paying equalization grants, and would cover the cost of teachers' supplements. He stressed the link between better roads and the establishment of graded and consolidated schools. While he encouraged the consolidation of districts into larger units, he did not demand it. Dewar praised the communities that had moved ahead to form regional high schools, by that date seven in total, but established what would be a hallmark for the Shaw government. It would facilitate the consolidation of districts and the formation of larger schools, both at a high school and elementary level, but it would

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<sup>29</sup> Dr. Lloyd George Dewar Biography, Prince Edward Island Legislative Documents Online. [http://www.peildo.ca/fedora/repository/leg%3A\\_20884](http://www.peildo.ca/fedora/repository/leg%3A_20884) accessed Oct. 14, 2014.

<sup>30</sup> Dewar, *Prescription for a Full Life*, 169.

not go the next step and actually require its implementation.<sup>31</sup> Shaw and Dewar achieved early success by moving in the general direction laid out in the LaZerte Report, but not by being slaves to it. If politics is the art of the possible, then they practiced that art to perfection. They worked with the willing. In the beginning, the process facilitated the wishes of communities that wanted to consolidate to access a service previously unattainable on their own: a fully equipped high school. As those groups succeeded, more came onside and the momentum moved in the direction of consolidation, making it the normal course of events.

Clearly, there were groups ready to move. In 1960 alone, seven regional high schools were approved after a series of public meetings and votes were held to ensure that the districts and the residents of the areas were in favour of the move. The newspapers of the day followed the local meetings closely as Milton LaZerte spoke at many of the meetings, providing details on his recommendations even prior to submitting his final report to Cabinet.<sup>32</sup> Officials of the Department of Education attended most meetings, as did Minister George Dewar on one occasion. The report on the process followed in the Central Queens area detailed the extensive process of consultation that preceded the vote. Organized by a local committee of parents headed by Rev. Foster Hall of Hunter River, a series of radio broadcasts using local teachers, parents and school trustees provided information on the current state of education in their area. This was followed by a televised panel discussion with Milton LaZerte and Malcolm MacKenzie, P.E.I. Deputy Minister of Education. Over 1100 people attended the subsequent public

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<sup>31</sup> Notes for TV Address, Oct. 26, 1960, PARO, Dr. George Dewar, Political Activities, Cabinet Report 1960, acc. 5018, s.f. 1, ser.3, file 18.

<sup>32</sup> See *The Guardian*, 13 January 1960 (Montague and Abrams Village), 14 January 1960 (Southern Kings), 21 January 1960 (Central Queens and O'Leary), 25 January 1960 (Morell), 1 February 1960 (Tignish), 23 February 1960 (Kings County), 19 April 1960 (Kensington), 23 April 1960 (Montague).

meetings that were held to provide further detail about the proposal to build a regional high school. This was followed by a vote organized in each of the 31 existing districts where eligible voters were provided with leaflets explaining the proposal and asked to vote for or against it. The press report noted how encouraged the committee was by the recent success of the proposed school in Abrams Village.<sup>33</sup> The results indicated that 22 districts voted in favour while 9 were against, and the area then proceeded to organize the building of a new school in Hunter River for those districts in favour.<sup>34</sup> Other areas followed a similar process with high participation from local ratepayers.

**Table 3.1 – Regional High School Establishment in P.E.I.**

| School Location               | Year Established | # of Component Districts (1965) | # Students 1964-65 |
|-------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| Alberton                      | 1960             | 16                              | 166                |
| Central Queens (Hunter River) | 1960             | 22                              | 148                |
| Evangeline (Abrams Village)   | 1960             | 12                              | 123                |
| Montague                      | 1960             | 78                              | 799                |
| O’Leary                       | 1960             | 30                              | 288                |
| Stella Maris (North Rustico)  | 1960             | 10                              | 128                |
| Tignish                       | 1960             | 22                              | 235                |
| Englewood (Crapaud)           | 1961             | 14                              | 153                |
| Kensington                    | 1961             | 20                              | 250                |
| Morell                        | 1961             | 18                              | 246                |
| Souris                        | 1961             | 29                              | 373                |
| Athena (rural Summerside)     | 1962             | 20                              | 300                |
| Kinkora                       | 1962             | 10                              | 220                |
| Miscouche                     | 1962             | 8                               | 167                |
| Charlottetown Rural           | 1963             | 55                              | 852                |
| Total                         |                  | 364                             | 4448               |

Source: Data from 1965 Annual Report, P.E.I. Department of Education.

<sup>33</sup> “Central Queens Rural High Vote To Be Held On Friday,” *The Guardian*, 21 January 1960, 2.

<sup>34</sup> “Regional High Schools Are Favoured In Vote,” *The Guardian*, 29 January 1960, 1.

Dewar continued to extol the virtues of education, and the improvements that the Shaw government was making to the system. In his 1961 speech to the Legislative Assembly on the Throne Speech, he outlined the direction of his department: better facilities through the continued construction of regional high schools; new efforts in vocational and technical training; and, better organization of the system through consolidated schools and larger administrative units.<sup>35</sup> Significant progress was made in the development of new regional high schools with seven schools opening in 1960, four in 1961, three in 1962, and one in 1963.<sup>36</sup> (see Table 3.1) Together with existing high schools in Summerside and Charlottetown, by 1963, the secondary level of the Island's school system had been completely revamped in four years. Close to 80% of the rural districts were served by a regional high school and the push continued to have all districts as part of the system. In 1962, Louis Herring, the Superintendent for Area 5 called for this, as "Many boys and girls are being deprived of their rightful heritage simply because they happen to live in a district where the people are so complacent and backward in their thinking that they do not provide High School privileges."<sup>37</sup>

It was not just complacency that deterred districts from amalgamation to establish regional high school. Religion still played an important role in dividing communities, evident in the controversy that accompanied the establishment of a new regional school in the Kinkora area. The village of Kinkora had a small high school that served the area and was staffed mainly by Catholics, many of them nuns. In 1961, districts in southeast

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<sup>35</sup> George Dewar, Prince Edward Island, *Speeches of the Legislative Assembly*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 49<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, (Summerside: Williams and Crue Ltd., 1961) 116.

<sup>36</sup> Prince Edward Island Department of Education, *Annual Report for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1965* (Summerside: Williams and Crue Ltd., 1965), 52-55.

<sup>37</sup> Prince Edward Island Department of Education, *Annual Report for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1962* (Summerside: Williams and Crue Ltd., 1962), 49.

Prince County began investigating the feasibility of establishing a regional high school to serve the area which would include the area served by the existing Kinkora school. A delegation representing the Catholic ratepayers of 26 districts in the area presented a brief to Minister Dewar, asking that the existing high school in Kinkora be retained regardless of the establishment of any new school. The brief stated that “This problem comes not as a direct result of geographical lines, but of religion. The public high school in Kinkora, because of its being staffed by Catholic teachers has often been erroneously classed as a denominational school.”<sup>38</sup> The delegation felt that their rights as parents and citizens were being trampled by the move to supplant their existing school with a new regional school. In response, the Protestants from 22 of the districts submitted their own brief to the Minister shortly thereafter. Over 100 parents and ratepayers met the Minister and “expressed concern over religious influence in any regional high school.”<sup>39</sup> They made their displeasure clear over the use of their tax dollars to fund any school where their children would be “educated in a sectarian school, that is, a school staffed or partly staffed by teachers dressed in the garb of their religious order and partly financed by taxes levied on Protestant ratepayers.”<sup>40</sup> Later in 1962, the Kinkora regional high school would be established but with only 10 districts represented and many of the dissatisfied districts moving to the Athena school in the greater Summerside area. This indicated that not all areas accepted the new vision, nor was religious tolerance to be expected throughout the Island. It also provided an example of how difficult the consolidation process would become when existing schools became targeted for closure or change in status.

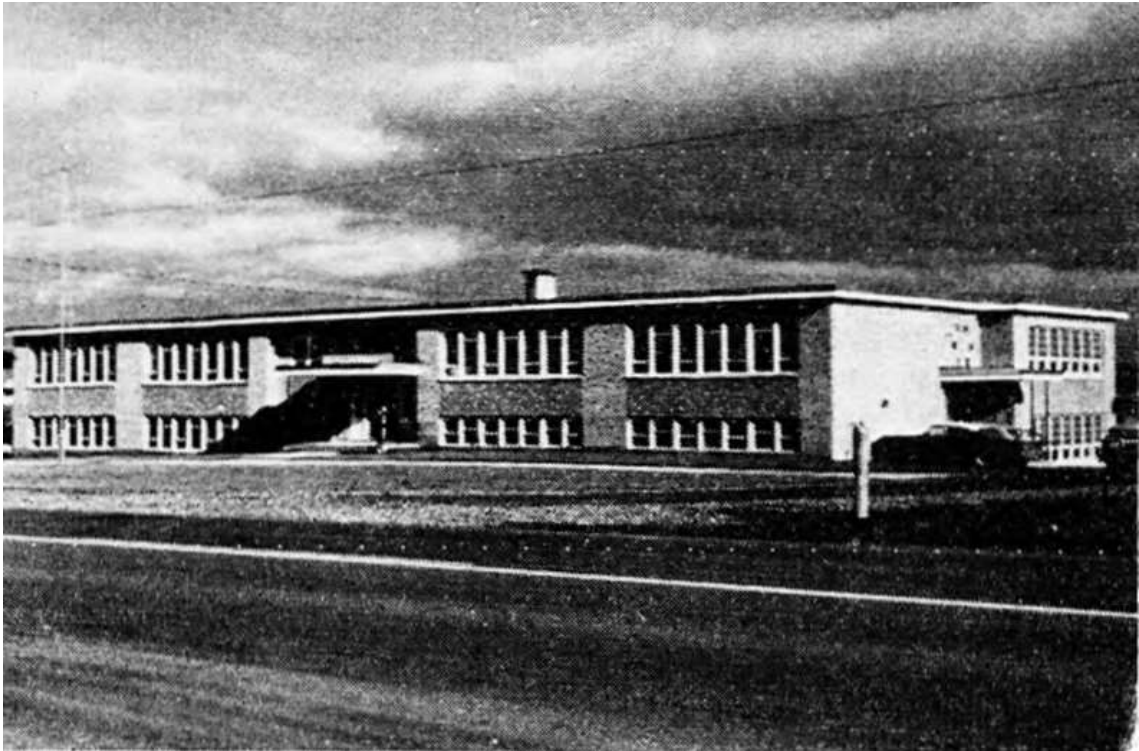
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<sup>38</sup> “Plea Made To Retain Kinkora High School,” *The Guardian*, 27 January 1961, 1.

<sup>39</sup> “Protestant Views Given On Kinkora Issue,” *The Guardian*, 2 February 1961, 1, 5.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

**Figure 3.2 – Englewood Regional High School, Crapaud**



Source: Dept. of Education Annual Report for the Year Ended 1962, 53.

The Shaw government did not restrict its efforts to the regional high schools. It increased expenditure across all areas: capital, teachers' salaries, vocational and special education. Nor was this increase simply a result of a growing cohort of students. While enrollment increased by 21% from 1959 to 1965, expenditure by the provincial government increased by over 200%. The commitment to improve services was not solely borne by the province, as district spending increased by 90% over the same time period. Expenditure per student increased from \$136 in 1959 to \$300 in 1965. (see Table 3.2) Clearly the commitment to improve and modernize the education system of P.E.I. was a shared objective across the Island as local districts raised funds within their areas to fund the improvements and all citizens contributed to increased tax levels to fund



the growing commitment to education.<sup>41</sup> However, there were few moves to consolidate at the elementary level, leaving many one room and small schools open and under the control of the local school districts. This was a battle left for the second term.

**Table 3.2 Provincial and District Expenditures 1959-1965 (\$000)**

|                                  | 1959  | 1960  | 1961  | 1962  | 1963  | 1964  | 1965  |
|----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Total Expenditure by Province    | 1791  | 2382  | 2992  | 3980  | 5833  | 6814  | 5782  |
| - Teachers' salaries             | 1089  | 1501  | 1566  | 1997  | 2488  | 2707  | 2876  |
| - Capital Expenditure            | 92    | 130   | 284   | 827   | 1797  | 1899  | 148   |
| Total District Expenditure       | 1242  | 1412  | 1627  | 1724  | 1870  | 2149  | 2364  |
| Provincial Total (Dist. + Prov.) | 3033  | 3794  | 4619  | 5704  | 7703  | 8963  | 8146  |
| Enrollment                       | 22334 | 24151 | 24200 | 25505 | 26381 | 27092 | 27135 |
| Per capita Expenditure           | 136   | 157   | 191   | 224   | 292   | 331   | 300   |

Source: Annual Reports of the Department of Education for the years 1959 to 1965, Tables B, D, and F. The large capital expenditures from 1962 to 1964 include payment for the vocational schools, PVI and PCVHS.

There was also significant progress on another major recommendation from LaZerte, that of better qualifications and pay for teachers. Pay scales increased and teachers pursued higher qualifications through attendance at summer school sessions or by attending university prior to entry into the profession. The provincial government, as a means of fulfilling Shaw's commitment to pay the teachers' supplement, instituted a new scale for grants towards the salaries of teachers based on years of service and the qualifications in 1961.<sup>42</sup> From 1960 to 1964, there was a significant improvement in both the qualifications of teachers in the system and their pay scale as the government

<sup>41</sup> Prince Edward Island Department of Education, *Annual Report for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965*, Tables B, D, F, H.

<sup>42</sup> Prince Edward Island Department of Education, *Annual Report for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1961*, 63.

followed through on its commitment to better support for teachers, and the teachers worked to increase their qualifications. In 1960, only 16% of the teachers held Superior 1 or higher certification, increasing in 1964 to over 34% of the total. The lower end exhibited significant positive change as well, declining from 46% of the teachers holding less than a First Class B licence in 1960 to only 21% in 1964.

**Table 3.3 -Teachers' Qualifications and Salary Levels 1959-1965**

| Category                    | 1960 |             | 1961 |             | 1962 |             | 1963 |             | 1964 |             |
|-----------------------------|------|-------------|------|-------------|------|-------------|------|-------------|------|-------------|
|                             | #    | Avg. Salary | #    | Avg. Salary | #    | Avg. Salary | #    | Avg. Salary | #    | Avg. Salary |
| Grade XI & XII <sup>a</sup> | 36   | 3673        |      |             |      |             |      |             |      |             |
| Superior 4                  | 15   | 4009        | 39   | 4091        | 53   | 5153        | 83   | 5019        | 106  | 5260        |
| Superior 3                  | 6    | 3605        | 17   | 3663        | 23   | 4008        | 27   | 3998        | 41   | 4006        |
| Superior 2                  | 16   | 3313        | 44   | 3341        | 46   | 3856        | 60   | 3912        | 76   | 3974        |
| Superior 1                  | 75   | 3029        | 77   | 3064        | 100  | 3491        | 117  | 3384        | 156  | 3342        |
| First Class A               | 204  | 2505        | 274  | 2521        | 304  | 2837        | 358  | 2833        | 372  | 2858        |
| First Class B               | 147  | 2209        | 168  | 2270        | 176  | 2515        | 164  | 2456        | 145  | 2491        |
| Second Class                | 339  | 2077        | 298  | 2128        | 266  | 2384        | 231  | 2373        | 216  | 2374        |
| Third Class                 | 13   | 1558        | 10   | 1577        | 10   | 1676        | 9    | 1692        | 4    | 1746        |
| Permit                      | 66   | 1381        | 38   | 1417        | 33   | 1574        | 20   | 1536        | 14   | 1548        |
| Total                       | 917  | 2340        | 965  | 2467        | 1011 | 2868        | 1069 | 2962        | 1130 | 3107        |

Source: Annual Reports of the P.E.I. Department of Education, 1960-1964, Table H.

a - This category was only applicable in 1960.

### **Education and Economic Development**

Education and improvements in the system were not ends in themselves; rather they were meant to be building blocks for the economic development of the Island. In the Speech from the Throne opening the 1961 session of the Legislative Assembly, the government announced its plan to develop the Island through a complete exploration of its human and natural resources with the hope that “if such resources were properly

mobilized and coordinated and given the necessary leadership, the economic, social and cultural growth would be immeasurably stimulated.”<sup>43</sup> Shaw and Dewar understood that the rural economy was under threat, and the Island faced two choices: become a more productive rural society; or, prepare for the new economy that would be more urban. With the reform of the secondary education system well underway in the first term, attention shifted to other components that would assist the Island’s development, specifically vocational and adult education. Shaw’s speech to the Legislature on the 1961 draft address provided more detail on this link. He stated that the program to develop resources would need a complete inventory of the province’s resources and that education would be an integral part of the program: “Academic and vocational training will be fostered under our resources development program. With our people involved, backed up by the assistance of the extension department of the various sections of government, I can see great things to come.”<sup>44</sup> Adult and vocational training were areas with broad public support for further investment as evidenced by statements from the 1957 Select Standing Committee hearings. The Committee reported that “Strong arguments were heard in favour of the need for more diversified courses in high school so that students, who prefer to take home economics, machine work and other vocational subjects rather than training for the professions, may be accommodated.”<sup>45</sup> The need for courses in agriculture and the fishery were highlighted in its recommendation for a study to determine ways of extending vocational training to meet the needs of rural students.<sup>46</sup> The Federation of Agriculture placed particular emphasis on the need for continuing adult

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<sup>43</sup> Hon. F. Walter Hyndman, *Journal of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island 1961*, 15. <http://www.peildo.ca/fedora/repository/leg:4720/-/%20leg:4720> Downloaded October 24, 2014.

<sup>44</sup> “Premier Explains Plan to Develop Resources,” *The Guardian*, 16 February 1961, 1.

<sup>45</sup> 1957 Report of the Select Standing Committee on Education, PARO, 5.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

education in its brief to the Select Committee, stating ““We believe that this province and its rural people stand in great need of a co-ordinated program of Adult Education, a program which can if properly developed have a marked effect in the improvement of our position through the development of our human resources.”<sup>47</sup> Shaw and Dewar expected little controversy from any investment in vocational or adult education as these investments resulted in additional services. For their first term, this fit perfectly with their agenda of avoiding contentious issues and making progress in addressing those areas of broad consensus.

The government’s strategy to improve adult education comprised two components. The Department of Education embarked on standard programs in areas of academic upgrading and short courses on various vocational and trade related subjects, as suggested by the Federation of Agriculture in its 1957 brief. The second component was part of the newly announced Resources Development Program. Shaw engaged Hartwell Daley, first on a part-time basis early in 1961 and shortly thereafter as the full time Director of the Research Division for the Department of Industry and Natural Resources. Daley, a reporter and branch manager for *The Journal-Pioneer’s* Charlottetown branch office, was charged with creating the province’s Resources Development Program and he viewed community development in the rural areas as a key component of that program. Daley, a native of Salem, Massachusetts, had graduated from Tufts University and had worked for various radio and newspaper companies in the U.S. before moving to P.E.I.<sup>48</sup> The fact that he continued to work as a journalist drew sharp criticism from *The Guardian*, which stated in an editorial that the principle of separation between press and

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<sup>47</sup> Federation of Agriculture, 1957 Brief to the Select Standing Committee on Education, PARO, 22.

<sup>48</sup> “Hartwell Daley Named Director of Research,” *The Guardian*, 16 February 1961, 5.

government had been violated by Daley's appointment and that the role of the press can only be conducted when journalists are not "inside the government."<sup>49</sup> Aside from the questionable ethics of the appointment, Daley's lack of experience as a bureaucrat or a planner raises serious concerns about Shaw's choice, especially if compared to the New Brunswick experience as outlined by Lisa Pasolli. Louis Robichaud, the newly elected premier, looked to experienced senior officials from other jurisdictions to lead his program of development and modernization. By 1964, he had attracted a number of deputy ministers and other senior officials from provinces such as Saskatchewan that had experience in developing and implementing programs. These experts would be essential in transforming both the provincial civil service and the programs of the N.B. government, allowing Robichaud to achieve great progress in modernizing his province.<sup>50</sup> While Shaw took some modest steps to modernize the civil service of P.E.I. with the passage of *The Civil Service Act of 1962* which introduced the merit principle for hiring and afforded some protection from political dismissal, there were still many deficiencies in capacity in the later part of the decade.<sup>51</sup>

In addition to his work with *The Journal-Pioneer*, Daley set out to mobilize human resources in the rural communities in efforts to design plans that would put P.E.I. in a position to access newly announced federal programs to re-develop rural areas (Agriculture Rehabilitation and Development Act).<sup>52</sup> He established a correspondence course with its own study manual written by him, "Gateways to Growth," to acquaint

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<sup>49</sup> "Government and Press," *The Guardian*, 17 February 1961, 4.

<sup>50</sup> Pasolli, "Bureaucratizing the Atlantic Revolution," 126-128.

<sup>51</sup> Donald Nemetz, "Managing Development," in *The Garden Transformed: Prince Edward Island 1945-1980* eds. Verner Smitheram, David Milne, and Satadal Dasgupta (Charlottetown: Ragweed Press, 1982), 159-163.

<sup>52</sup> Prince Edward Island Department of Industry and Natural Resources, *Annual Report for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1962*, 36-37. <http://www.peildo.ca/> Downloaded Sept.30, 2014.

people with the principles of community development and leadership skills. By March 1962 over 100 people had completed the course, with a secondary outcome being “the study course has proved the interest of local people in self-improvement and adult education.”<sup>53</sup> While the official report listed 100 people as completing the course, newspaper reports were more glowing, and probably exaggerated, as *The Financial Post* reported more than 300 people had graduated from the course in an article that praised the efforts of this grass roots movement to develop the economy.<sup>54</sup>

Daley and his Research Division determined:

that the economic development of our rural areas hinges on the two major items: (1) Adult education with an emphasis on good farm management, small business management and training in ways of supplementing income; (2) The creation of jobs outside of agriculture by the establishment of new industries that create both full-time and part-time opportunities for rural people.<sup>55</sup>

Daley established local development groups across the Island that met to develop goals and ideas for the growth of their community based on a survey of the human and physical resources of the area. He worked with the Home and School Federation to explore a more formal adult education program, but other than expressions of interest on courses in arithmetic, English, leadership skills, and handicrafts, his only reported success was a series of television programs to incite interest in his training activities and the distribution of pamphlets discussing small business management.<sup>56</sup>

Daley’s efforts to excite a grass roots approach to development exhibited only limited success in its first years, but the idea resonated with Shaw’s agenda and

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>54</sup> “P.E.I. Lets ‘Little Guy’ Boost Economy,” *The Financial Post*, Nov. 25, 1961, Hartwell Daley Fonds, PARO Acc.3565; Notes Correspondence, Articles; Freelance Work 1959-1963. Given other correspondence in the file, for example between Daley and the office of then Senator John Kennedy, there is reason to believe that Daley may have been prone to exaggeration.

<sup>55</sup> Prince Edward Island Department of Industry and Natural Resources, *Annual Report for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1963*, 35. <http://www.peildo.ca/> Downloaded Sept.30, 2014.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

philosophy for two reasons. First, the goal of Daley's work was to elaborate an overall strategy to improve the economic future of the province. In Shaw's speech at the Progressive Conservative leadership convention in 1957, he provided the delegates with his primary objective:

Our first consideration must be closely related to the preservation of this good province as a land of good living standards and opportunity for ourselves and those who come after us, using political parties only as an honest and constructive means through which these things may be achieved.<sup>57</sup>

From his first days as premier, he searched for a strategy that would link various initiatives into a cohesive whole capable of showing how the development process would work – how education reform connected to an improved economy, or how better transportation would lead to better returns for farmers. This search for his holy grail continued into his second term and led to a multiplicity of studies and reports, ultimately leading to the Acres Report, the cornerstone of the later Comprehensive Development Plan.<sup>58</sup>

Second, the strategy was to be established using principles of community development, based on the needs and aspirations of the various local planning groups similar in many ways to the philosophy of the co-operative movement. It was an approach not directed by the central authority of government; it relied on communities and local planning areas to determine the direction and pace, similar to Shaw's approach in instituting regional high schools. He had been introduced to these concepts years previously through his association with John Croteau, a driving force in the establishment of credit unions, co-operatives, and adult education groups in P.E.I. in the 1930s and

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<sup>57</sup> Leader of the Conservative Party, 2 November 1957. PARO, W.R. Shaw Fonds, Series: Premier's Files 1959-1966; Speeches, Political. Acc. 3688, File 173.

<sup>58</sup> Milne, "Politics in a Beleaguered Garden," 45.

1940s. Croteau, also originally from Massachusetts, arrived in P.E.I. in 1933 to accept a position funded by the Carnegie Foundation to teach economics and sociology at both Prince of Wales College and St. Dunstan's University.<sup>59</sup> In the late 1930s, Croteau was instrumental in establishing a program of adult education in cooperation with the provincial government and he worked closely with Shaw who was part of the small five person executive committee that oversaw the project. Croteau credited Shaw with being "a great help...an able administrator, vigorous and confident."<sup>60</sup> By 1938, they had established 350 study clubs involving over 4,000 participants.<sup>61</sup> The two also collaborated closely in establishing the P.E.I. Federation of Agriculture in 1941, with Shaw serving as its General Secretary and Croteau as one of the founding Directors.<sup>62</sup> The link between the co-operative movement and the Federation continued as it occupied office space with the Co-operative Wholesale, the Credit Union League, and the Women's Institutes on the second floor of the Co-op Supermarket in downtown Charlottetown, established in 1949.<sup>63</sup> The two also worked together on a series of radio broadcasts on behalf of the Adult Education League. Daley's efforts had a similar style to that used by Shaw and Croteau twenty years earlier – study groups and media programs as a means to assist community development. Rather than attempting to drag the Island out of the depths of the Depression in the 1930s, the effort in the 1960s was directed at moving it into the mainstream of North American society.

The strategy for improving the delivery of vocational training was more

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<sup>59</sup> J.T. Croteau, *Cradled In the Waves* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1951), 5.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-19.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 37, 41. Walter Russell Shaw Biography, Prince Edward Island Legislative Documents Online. <http://www.peildo.ca/fedora/repository/leg%3A20916> accessed Oct. 14, 2014.

<sup>63</sup> Croteau, *Cradled In the Waves*, 3.



straightforward and conventional. Fueled by federal dollars, growth in this area was rapid. The LaZerte Report was largely silent on vocational training stating that while important in other provinces, the only industry meriting any attention would be agriculture and that could be handled within existing facilities.<sup>64</sup> However, the provincial government did not accept that view, and vocational training began to figure more prominently in the provincial plans. In July 1961, P.E.I. signed an agreement with the federal government under the *Technical and Vocational Assistance Act*, providing the province with funding for the construction of schools and the operation of programs to develop skilled labour.<sup>65</sup> Members of the government made the link between vocational training and the ability to find work. Mel McQuaid, the Provincial Treasurer, stated that trained labour was as important as university degrees, and that vocational training was the answer to unemployment.<sup>66</sup> Minister of Health, Hubert McNeill, connected the lack of training and unemployment, and placed education as the most important item for the government.<sup>67</sup> Even opposition members were on the bandwagon of support for vocational training, as Liberal member Harold Smith called for more vocational training, reasoning that the unemployed are poorly educated.<sup>68</sup> From a paltry amount of \$81,218 spent on vocational education for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1960, the province expended over \$746,000 in fiscal year 1965-66.<sup>69</sup> The Prince County Vocational High

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<sup>64</sup> LaZerte, *Report of the Commissioner on Educational Finance*, 17.

<sup>65</sup> Prince Edward Island Department of Education, *Annual Report for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1962* (Summerside: Williams and Crue Ltd., 1962), 93.

<sup>66</sup> Mel McQuaid, Prince Edward Island, *Speeches of the Legislative Assembly*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 49<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (Summerside: Williams and Crue Ltd., 1961), 213-215.

<sup>67</sup> Hubert McNeill, Prince Edward Island, *Speeches of the Legislative Assembly*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 49<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (Summerside: Williams and Crue Ltd., 1961), 239-240.

<sup>68</sup> Harold Smith, Prince Edward Island, *Speeches of the Legislative Assembly*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 49<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (Summerside: Williams and Crue Ltd., 1961), 178-179.

<sup>69</sup> Prince Edward Island Department of Education, *Annual Report for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1966* (Summerside: Williams and Crue Ltd., 1966), 18 and Prince Edward Island Department of

School was opened in September 1962, followed in 1964 by the opening of the new Provincial Vocational Institute in Charlottetown, replacing the older Provincial Vocational School. Both schools offered similar programs of high school level subjects tailored to those not continuing to university, trade and apprenticeship programs, night school on particular subjects and short courses on a variety of job related subjects, all with the goal of preparing students for entry to a changing and challenging job market.

This issue of unemployment bedeviled the government. As farms and fishing operations became more mechanized, they required less labour, and the labour they did require needed levels of technical training unheard of in earlier days. With electrical and mechanical equipment increasingly common, labourers needed the ability to operate and maintain the equipment. No longer was it simply muscle power. This shift to capital equipment displaced labourers and they needed retraining to find appropriate positions in an economy that was increasingly service or technically oriented with decreasing opportunities for manual labour. Recognizing that only a minor percentage of the school population would continue on to university, vocational training and adult education were seen as a means to increase opportunities for that segment of the labour force that had previously been able to function in the old economy with only a minimum education. This was not solely a concern for labourers who stayed in P.E.I., as the many that migrated to the urban centers of Canada and New England needed skills for the new economy that was creating jobs. Those who left with few skills tended to return as they were not prepared for the city and their prospects on the Island were no better than they would be in Toronto.

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Education, *Annual Report for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1960* (Summerside: Williams and Crue Ltd., 1960), 17.

The perception of uneducated Maritimers, many of them from P.E.I., as victims unprepared for the realities of life in urban Canada, especially in Toronto became an issue by the 1960s. Greg Marquis described Torontonians' view of Maritimers as "undesirable migrants from a backward region," or "yesterday's people" comparable to the migrants from the Appalachian region to the urban centers of the American mid-west.<sup>70</sup> Torontonians began to view these migrants as a social problem when they became linked to requests for social services and welfare, a responsibility of the municipal government. This stereotype of freeloaders exploiting the generosity of Toronto's welfare system was difficult to shed even if it was not true.<sup>71</sup> The national media persisted in characterizing the entire region negatively, focussing on its continuing need for assistance, its declining industries, and even its supposedly high rate of mental illness.<sup>72</sup> Naturally, the issue was viewed quite differently in P.E.I. No region wanted to be viewed as backward, or to have its people denigrated as such, thus creating an incentive to ensure that its people had the skills to contribute to the economy, whether that be in P.E.I. or elsewhere. As well, it did not help to have the Island deemed backward when Shaw was actively engaged in attracting industrial enterprises to the Island. He wanted to be able to describe the workforce as talented and ready to contribute to any industry willing to move to the Island.

## **Conclusion**

The Shaw government remained relatively popular with Island voters with little

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<sup>70</sup> Greg Marquis, "Confederation's Casualties: The "Maritimer" as a Problem in 1960s Toronto," *Acadiensis* XXXIX no.1 (Winter/Spring 2010): 83-84.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 88-89.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 98-99.

criticism for any of the actions taken as its first term came to a close at the end of 1962. The move to regional high schools was built on extensive community participation, allowing individual districts to decide their future. Vocational schools addressed an obvious need, and with generous funding from the federal government, did not place an onerous burden on the Island. Shaw and Dewar were in that comfortable zone for politicians, fulfilling well defined needs that their voters demanded within tax levels that they were willing to pay. In addition to the massive changes in the education system, Shaw had implemented a host of programs in a short period of three years: industrial development programs that attracted food processing companies such as Seabrook Frozen Foods and Langley Fruit Packers to the Island; road paving of over 400 miles of road; introduction of a program of seniors' housing units and nursing homes; creation of 23 provincial parks; changes to the Election Act; reform of the provincial civil service; and introduction of Daylight Saving Time.<sup>73</sup> However, Shaw entered hospital on July 24 after a continuing illness, and later underwent surgery not leaving the hospital until August 28 for another month of recuperation at his home.<sup>74</sup> For a man of 74 just recovered from a serious illness requiring two surgeries that had hospitalized him for much of the summer, there was much speculation that Shaw would retire prior to the next election anticipated for 1963. There were suggestions in the local media that he would be appointed the next Lieutenant-Governor in the spring of 1963.<sup>75</sup> But in a surprise move, he called an election for December 10, 1962 not giving the Liberals a chance to replace

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<sup>73</sup> MacKinnon, *Between Two Cultures*, 14.

<sup>74</sup> "Premier's Illness Said Not Serious," *The Guardian* 25 July 1962, 1. "Premier Shaw Leaves Hospital," *The Guardian*, 29 August 1962, 1.

<sup>75</sup> Farmer Tissington, "Premier Shaw Suggested For Lieutenant-Governor," *The Guardian*, 31 July 1962, 1.

their divisive leader, Alex Matheson.<sup>76</sup> Running on a program trumpeting their first term achievements and promising to continue their efforts, Shaw and his party easily defeated the Liberals winning 19 of the 30 seats. Even with increased taxes to cover the costs of these new services, in particular the introduction of a 4% sales tax, the electorate was in broad agreement that the agenda of modernization was the road they preferred.<sup>77</sup>

The strategy employed by Shaw during the first term allowed him to accomplish much. By moving in the areas where there was already a solid consensus for action, he did not face serious opposition to his program. By allowing local districts to make the decision of whether or not to consolidate, he avoided the perception that the province was forcing districts in a certain direction. By the end of Shaw's first term, 364 small local districts had met, discussed, and approved the idea of consolidating with their neighbouring districts for the purpose of establishing a regional high school. This represented more than 75% of the total number of districts. These districts made conscious choices, aware that they would be faced with additional costs to be borne by their ratepayers even with the additional assistance that would come from the province. The people of the province wanted to enter into this new phase of education and Shaw was there to help them move towards it. His approach was to facilitate, not to direct, by providing the means and the resources so districts could take the action that he desired. He avoided those more contentious issues of consolidation at the elementary level and the financing of two post-secondary institutions in a small province. However, while the first term had seen progress in moving the province into the mainstream of North American

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<sup>76</sup> Cusack, *A Party for Progress*, 130-137.

<sup>77</sup> The *Revenue Tax Act* received Royal assent on 13 April 1960 (*Journal of the Legislative Assembly 1960*, 144). MacDonald, *If You're Stronghearted*, 232 refers to the federal government's attempt to get P.E.I. to implement a sales tax in 1959 to finance the implementation of hospital insurance and the province's refusal to do so in an election year.

society, the second term would be more contentious as Shaw, running out of time and facing issues lacking consensus, would be forced to choose between his facilitating approach and his commitment to modernization.

## **Chapter Four**

### **A Faltering Finish 1963-1966**

The government of Walter R. Shaw surely anticipated a second term of solid accomplishments with the security of a mandate from the voters and the opposition Liberals in disarray as Alex Matheson clung to his leadership. In the December 1962 election campaign, Shaw promised to remake the Island into “one of the most prosperous and finest places to live... Just give us time: in 10 years you won’t know this place.”<sup>1</sup> However, this was not to be as his second term was beset by resistance, mismanagement, and poorly developed concepts. This chapter will explore the second phase of Shaw’s transformation of the Island’s system of education, examine why that strategy failed to achieve its goals, and discuss the implications these setbacks had for the next administration led by Alex Campbell. I contend that Shaw’s overall strategy did not contain the requisite pieces for the next stage in the development of the Island’s education system. His facilitative approach based on consensus from the districts was not appropriate for completing the difficult task of consolidation of elementary schools or administrative reform of the district system. In post-secondary education, the government had no apparent plan; instead it reacted to requests for changes in the structure of the sector. Finally, Shaw replaced his earlier attraction to grass roots rural development led by a program of adult education with a more directed industrial promotion model. Shaw allowed others to set the agenda, presenting a picture of a government without clear priorities for action and lacking leadership to develop or advance on those priorities.

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<sup>1</sup> “Premier Shaw Fighting Second Election Battle,” *The Guardian*, 10 December 1962, 4.

This chapter presents four themes. The first is the move to consolidate elementary schools and the district school boards. With the regional high schools in place, Shaw and Dewar turned their attention to consolidation at the elementary level and the administrative structure for the school system, and attempted to use the same process of voluntary amalgamation that had been so successful with the regional high schools. The success of the first phase, outlined in Chapter Three, did not involve the loss of any existing assets or control by local groups making the development of a consensus much easier. However, the second phase implied significant change for communities as consolidation at the elementary level effectively meant the closure of some community schools and the amalgamation of district school boards lessened local control. While stated as a priority in the government's first Throne Speech of its second term, little progress was made.<sup>2</sup>

The second theme is Shaw's lack of agenda for reform at the post-secondary level. The debate on the future of post-secondary education was not started by the government; rather, it initiated with citizen groups and soon escalated out of the control of Shaw and Dewar, in turn exposing splits in the government that mirrored the lack of consensus in the population at large. The debate on the issue threatened to divide his government, and with no consensus on the direction for change, Shaw's response was little more than to appoint a Royal Commission.

The third theme is the shift from the grass roots approach for rural development to a more conventional program of industrial development with substantial government financial support and extensive study by consultants. The adult education system, a

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<sup>2</sup> Hon. F. Walter Hyndman, *Journal of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island* 1963, 16.



significant component of the Resources Development Program, lost direction as that program decreased in influence with the introduction of the more directive Industrial Development Program. Unable to produce results and subject to criticism by farm groups, the Resources Development Program lost influence inside the Cabinet, and attention shifted to more direct intervention through the Industrial Development Program. The government's shift from a resource development approach based on co-operation, adult education, and community input to a more directive approach of government investment in selected projects led to a financial debacle in Gulf Garden Foods and Bathurst Marine. Shaw's inability to clearly articulate a strategy for development and lack of leadership in pushing his agenda when faced with opposition presented a picture of a government without direction.

The final theme is a more general discussion of other issues that pre-occupied the government or affected the attention of Shaw to the running of his government. The 1964 celebration of the centenary of the Charlottetown Conference demanded the attention of Shaw given the large number of events including a Royal visit. The government faced financial pressures given its continued deficits and heavy financial investment in the Georgetown developments. With the defeat of John Diefenbaker in 1963, Shaw had to contend with a Liberal administration in Ottawa and expend energy in selling the Causeway concept to the Pearson government. Personally, injury from a car accident in 1963 and advancing age began to reduce his effectiveness. By the election campaign of 1966, Alex Campbell, the young, energetic new leader of the Liberals

characterized the government as “the horse and buggy boys” and narrowly defeated Shaw, ending his two terms in office.<sup>3</sup>

### **Consolidation of Elementary Schools and District Boards**

With George Dewar reappointed as the Minister of Education, the government looked to continue its program of modernization at the high school level and to extend that process of consolidation to the elementary level. In the Speech from the Throne opening the 1963 spring session of the P.E.I. Legislative Assembly, Lieutenant-Governor F.W. Hyndman used these bold words:

It is with pride and satisfaction that my Government views the advancements that have been made in education in this Province during recent years....My Government believes that progress can also be effected in the elementary school system through the consolidation and reorganization of districts and will encourage and support a movement to achieve this end.<sup>4</sup>

Dewar outlined the progress made in the government’s first term in the following debate on the Throne Speech. It had established fifteen regional high schools, with only a part of Prince County and the rural area around Charlottetown left. He reported on the progress made in the area of vocational training with the impending openings of schools in Summerside and Charlottetown. But there had been little progress in the third area of his plan, the move towards larger units of administration and improvements to the elementary system as called for in the LaZerte Report. Dewar explained that the consolidation of elementary schools and the establishment of a modern and efficient administrative system would be a more challenging task, taking the longest time to

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<sup>3</sup> MacKinnon, *Between Two Cultures*, 17.

<sup>4</sup> Hon. F. Walter Hyndman, *Journal of the Legislative Assembly 1963*, 16.

finish.<sup>5</sup> In fact, Dewar and Shaw made little progress in this area as Dewar noted in his autobiography. By the end of his term in 1966 “much remained to be done as there were still many one room schools and consolidation was left to my successor who, with summary action, reduced the number of school districts from hundreds to five with consequent improvement in administration and facilities.”<sup>6</sup>

The debate in the House provided evidence of why this task would be more difficult, as the opposition Liberal members discovered themes they were willing to exploit: schools were becoming too large, and fear of the consequences of changes at the elementary level. While some Liberals expressed agreement with the concept of consolidation at the high school level, not all did. Arthur MacDonald spoke against the idea, arguing that the high schools were too large and travel times for children were too long.<sup>7</sup> Prosper Arsenault was more concerned about the next phase, speaking against consolidation at the elementary level, saying the time is “not ripe.”<sup>8</sup> He had two main concerns: the first was the effect on young children as they would need to leave early in the morning and not arrive home until after 5:30; and secondly, the cost to the local districts for new schools would be a “heavy financial burden.”<sup>9</sup> However, Daniel J. MacDonald hit the crucial question in the debate. While expressing his agreement on the need for regional high schools, he introduced what would be a common refrain for the next fifteen years as the wave of consolidation swept through the system. He agreed that those schools with only four or five pupils could not continue to operate, but he was

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<sup>5</sup> George Dewar, Prince Edward Island, *Speeches of the Legislative Assembly*, 1st Session, 50<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (Summerside: Williams and Crue Ltd., 1963), 167.

<sup>6</sup> Dewar, *Prescription for a Full Life*, 195.

<sup>7</sup> Arthur MacDonald, Prince Edward Island, *Speeches of the Legislative Assembly*, 1st Session, 50<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (Summerside: Williams and Crue Ltd., 1963), 186.

<sup>8</sup> “Time Considered Not Ripe For School Consolidation,” *The Guardian*, 4 April 1963, 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

concerned that closing schools would mean the death of that community.<sup>10</sup> This notion had not surfaced in the previous debates on regional high schools as these were new additions to the community infrastructure, but the closure of existing schools had a more direct impact on community life.

Alex Matheson, the former Premier and now Opposition Leader, raised the issue of religious segregation and the need to remove it from the system, citing much criss-crossing of districts at a high cost for transporting students. The many small school districts perpetuated the informal system of religious segregation that had existed since the beginnings of public schooling in P.E.I. With school districts established in each locality, and settlement in those areas usually based on families of similar religions, there was little mixing of the religions. Many citizens were comfortable with that segregation and feared that consolidation would upset that delicate balance that had existed for years in the Island's system. In calling for an end to this practice, Matheson specifically raised the situation in the Charlottetown high schools of Birchwood and Queen Charlotte, which while supposedly non-denominational, effectively segregated Roman Catholic and Protestant students by following an unwritten policy of each religion attending a specified school.<sup>11</sup>

These speeches echoed the general sense in P.E.I. concerning consolidation at the elementary level. While there had been an overwhelming consensus about the need for regional high schools, that consensus did not extend to the elementary level. Shaw maintained his position that the province would only move if the individual school

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<sup>10</sup> Daniel J. MacDonald, Prince Edward Island, *Speeches of the Legislative Assembly*, 1st Session, 50<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (Summerside: Williams and Crue Ltd.,1963), 160-161.

<sup>11</sup> Alex Matheson, Prince Edward Island, *Speeches of the Legislative Assembly*, 1st Session, 50<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (Summerside: Williams and Crue Ltd.,1963), 72.

districts expressed a clear intention to amalgamate with other districts. Few districts applied to take advantage of this offer. On May 30, 1963 the first large unit for the administration of both elementary and high schools (outside the existing school boards of Summerside and Charlottetown) was created when twelve small districts amalgamated to form the Evangeline School Unit.<sup>12</sup> In the debate on the draft address in 1964, Dewar complimented the region for this progressive action stating that he had not received any complaints from ratepayers, even if there may be increased costs in future.<sup>13</sup> This region was not typical as it was established for the expressed purpose of promoting education in the French language in the Acadian area of Egmont Bay in Prince County.<sup>14</sup> In 1964,

**Table 4.1 – Change in Administrative Structures, 1966-1971**

| Type of Administrative Unit                 | 1966 | 1967 | 1968 | 1969 | 1970 | 1971 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Urban School Districts (S'side and Ch'town) | 2    | 2    | 2    | 2    | 2    | 2    |
| Large Unit of Administration (Evangeline)   | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    |
| Regional High School Districts              | 16   | 16   | 16   | 16   | 16   | 16   |
| Consolidated Elementary School Districts    | 13   | 16   | 19   | 20   | 21   | 26   |
| Small, Unconsolidated School Districts      | 331  | 295  | 256  | 240  | 208  | 130  |
| Districts where no school is open           | 45   | 41   | 44   | 45   | 51   | 42   |
| Total # Administrative Units                | 408  | 371  | 338  | 324  | 299  | 217  |

Source: Data from P.E.I. Department of Education Annual Reports, 1966 to 1971.

three small districts consolidated to form the St. Peters District and in 1965, eight new units were formed through the consolidation of forty existing districts, encouraged by the introduction of grants from the provincial government for the construction of

<sup>12</sup> Prince Edward Island Department of Education, *Annual Report 1963*, 25.

<sup>13</sup> "Minister," *The Guardian*, 26 February 1964, 2. The debate on the draft address is the Island terminology for the debate on the Speech from the Throne.

<sup>14</sup> Georges Arsenault, *The Island Acadians 1720-1980*, trans. Sally Ross (Charlottetown: Ragweed Press, 1989), 246.

consolidated elementary schools.<sup>15</sup> Four additional units were created in 1966 but by 1971 there were still only twenty-six consolidated elementary units out of a total of 217 school boards.<sup>16</sup> The rate of consolidation was slow, bordering on glacial.

A series of letters from the small district of St. Ann's demonstrated the difficulties involved when the process of consolidation was left solely to the discretion of majority votes in individual districts with no overall planning or structure regarding boundaries. Shaw had a number of letters from parents who felt the decisions taken by the districts did not accurately reflect the will of majority, especially if it meant joining with a group of the other religion. Mrs. Russell Parsons wrote to the Deputy Minister of Education Malcolm MacKenzie complaining about the consolidation of her one room school in Millvale into the newly constructed St. Ann's Consolidated Elementary School. Indignant that two Protestants, Mr. Shaw and Dr. Dewar, allowed this to happen and "left us with no other but a Roman Catholic school, run by a Priest who shows his definite dislike of the Protestants," she asked that her school remain open or that arrangements be made to transport eight children of the district to a decent school in South Granville.<sup>17</sup> Premier Shaw's response clearly stated his ongoing philosophy: the districts made a decision that followed a legitimate process, "it was a decision of the ratepayers there, not the decision of this government" and he would not step in to alter that decision.<sup>18</sup> In an obvious attempt to at least soften that blow, Dewar preceded Shaw's letter with his own letter to the Secretary of Trustees of the St. Ann's District, informing Mr. Bulger that Mrs. Parsons and a delegation had met with the Premier to

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<sup>15</sup> Prince Edward Island Department of Education, *Annual Report 1965*, 26-27.

<sup>16</sup> Prince Edward Island Department of Education, *Annual Report 1971*, 103.

<sup>17</sup> Mrs. Russell Parsons to Mr. MacKenzie, June 16, 1965, P.E.I. PARO, W.R. Shaw, Acc. 3688, File 188.

<sup>18</sup> Walter R. Shaw to Mrs. Russell Parsons, June 22, 1965, P.E.I. PARO, W.R. Shaw, Acc. 3688, File 188.

voice their discomfort at being “exposed to religious influence other than their present belief” which they considered a serious infringement of their rights.<sup>19</sup> Dewar strongly suggested that the Board provide these people with assurance that school programs would be delivered in an acceptable manner and in no way would it “be repugnant in its operation to any citizen of whatever race, class, or creed.”<sup>20</sup>

Another letter came from a group of six families with eighteen children that informed the Stanley Bridge District that they were leaving that district and the children would be attending the newly formed consolidated school in St. Ann’s. They understood that they would be compelled to pay tuition for their children as they were outside the district, but they felt that this was compensated by the benefits from attending a consolidated school and reduced costs for transportation as the new school would supply that free of cost. Their other concern was the possibility of future consolidation for the Stanley Bridge area with districts that were further from their homes.<sup>21</sup>

Both these issues were the focus of correspondence between Father Denis Gallant and Premier Shaw in early 1966 following a visit by Shaw to the area in January 1966. Shaw called the visit “entirely unofficial” and simply “to see if some solution could be found to the difficulty there” concerning the various transfers of children between districts and to the new school, but Father Gallant read much more into it.<sup>22</sup> Based on the visit by the Premier, Gallant convened three meetings of the St. Ann’s Elementary School Board and sent a letter to Shaw asking for a meeting with the Board, the Premier, two other cabinet ministers and the various parties to the disputes to see if some solution

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<sup>19</sup> Dewar to Mr. Bulger, June 10, 1965, P.E.I. PARO, W.R. Shaw, Acc. 3688, File 188.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Lea Reid to J. Reginald MacDonald, June 9, 1965 and Reid to Chairman of School Trustees, June 4, 1965, P.E.I. PARO, W.R. Shaw, Acc. 3688, File 188.

<sup>22</sup> Shaw to Father Denis Gallant, Feb. 16, 1966, P.E.I. PARO, W.R. Shaw, Acc. 3688, File 189.

could be developed.<sup>23</sup> Shaw replied that these issues must be resolved at the local level. He did not believe that it was role of the provincial government to implement solutions stating:

I do not think the Government would have the temerity to go in, in a dictatorial manner and present an ultimatum to any district that they would have to do something on which they have not themselves voted... Inasmuch as it is a matter that is outside of my direct jurisdiction, I would think the solution must be found to a very great extent, at the local level.<sup>24</sup>

Dewar had outlined a more aggressive approach in his speech to the House in 1964 – the government would look at establishing larger administrative units and allow those units to determine the best course for their own area.<sup>25</sup> Shaw's position, so clearly stated in these letters, showed a fundamental difference between his position and Dewar's proposal to establish larger administrative units. That proposal, based on the recommendations of the LaZerte Report, did not become government policy, and for the remainder of its second term the government would only act if there was agreement by the districts and the ratepayers in those districts.

The reliance on voluntary association was not unusual, nor was P.E.I. substantially behind other provinces in creating consolidated school districts. Ontario in the early 1960s had 3,472 administrative units or school districts and its government had a position similar to that of Shaw. Premier John Robarts promised that district consolidation would be encouraged but not imposed. Robarts abruptly changed his position in 1964 as he moved to implement a new funding model that required large administrative units with comparable tax bases. By 1968, the number of units had been

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<sup>23</sup> Gallant to Shaw, Feb. 1, 1966, P.E.I. PARO, W.R. Shaw, Acc. 3688, File 189.

<sup>24</sup> Shaw to Gallant, Feb. 16, 1966, P.E.I. PARO, W.R. Shaw, Acc. 3688, File 189.

<sup>25</sup> Dewar, Prince Edward Island, *Speeches of the Legislative Assembly*, 2st Session, 50<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (Summerside: Williams and Crue Ltd., 1964), 219-220.



aligned with county administrative units, reduced effectively to 126 school boards (although an additional 104 boards for special purposes or isolated areas still existed).<sup>26</sup> In contrast, Alberta had enacted legislation years earlier in 1933 that created nine large units from the previous 615 small school districts. Saskatchewan followed that example in 1944 with the passage of *The Larger School Units Act* by the newly elected CCF government. By November 1945, 2,331 districts were combined into 29 large units.<sup>27</sup> In the Atlantic region, each province followed its own course. New Brunswick imposed consolidated school boards as part of the overall restructuring of the education system under Robichaud's Program of Equal Opportunity. A new *Schools Act* was passed in 1966 and by the next year, the number of districts was cut to thirty-three, fulfilling the recommendations of the much earlier MacKenzie Royal Commission of 1955.<sup>28</sup> In Nova Scotia, Henry Hicks during his term as Premier led the reformation of the school system with the passage of Bill 66, based on the recommendations of the Pottier Royal Commission of 1953. Small local school boards were abolished and new, larger units were created together with a Foundation Program to fund salaries and other operating costs.<sup>29</sup> Newfoundland, with its system complicated by the mix of separate religious school boards, followed a much different pattern. The Roman Catholic system had 80 boards in 1962 which it gradually reduced to 12 by 1975. The various Protestant denominations had 229 boards in 1962. Three denominations, the Anglican, the United Church, and the Salvation Army, decided to integrate their educational services and by

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<sup>26</sup> R.D. Gidney, *From Hope to Harris: The Reshaping of Ontario's Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 48-49.

<sup>27</sup> M. Owen, "Towards a New Day: The Larger School Unit in Saskatchewan 1935-1950," in *A History of Education in Saskatchewan: Selected Readings*, eds. Brian Noonan, Dianne Hallman, Murray Scharf (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina, 2006), 40-43.

<sup>28</sup> Stanley, *Louis Robichaud*, 155-156.

<sup>29</sup> Simpson, *Stanfield*, 131-132.

1975, had reduced the number of their boards to 22. The other two Protestant denominations, Pentecostal and Seventh Day Adventist Churches, each had one school board for all their facilities in the province. In total, Newfoundland went from 309 boards in 1962 to 36 in 1975, all through the voluntary efforts of the various groups.<sup>30</sup> While the voluntary process of consolidation adopted by Shaw may appear to be slow, it resulted in a reduction of over 50% of the school districts from 1960 to 1971, although most of that reduction occurred after Shaw's term in office. The final step was left to the next government of Alex Campbell who continued the voluntary process of consolidation until the passage of a new *School Act* that established five administrative units encompassing the entire province in 1972.<sup>31</sup>

Dewar did push ahead with the development and implementation of another key recommendation of the LaZerte report, the Foundation Program, but only at the regional high school level. Accepted by the Cabinet in 1965, it established an equitable level of services and grants for the provision of those services for all regional high schools across the province. It outlined grant levels for construction and operation of the schools, and a process for determining equalization grants to ensure that even those districts faced with low tax revenue would have resources sufficient to meet certain standards.<sup>32</sup> As with school board consolidation, similar legislation was introduced in most provinces at various times in the late 1950s or 1960s. The new policy did not address an issue identified earlier by Opposition Leader Alex Matheson who complained about the empty classes in some of the relatively new high schools such as Rustico and Hunter River as

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<sup>30</sup> Rowe, *Education and Culture in Newfoundland*, 153-154.

<sup>31</sup> Prince Edward Island Department of Education, *Annual Report 1972*, 14.

<sup>32</sup> Submission to Executive Council, Jan. 7, 1965, PARO, W.R. Shaw, Premier's Papers, 1965 - Education, Acc. 3688, File 188.

newer schools opened. Citing the case of the just opened Charlottetown Rural High, he claimed parents were opting for the newest school, causing duplication of services in bussing students from some districts to different high schools. He called for a boundaries commission to apply clear rules to reduce duplication of services and ensure that all facilities were properly utilized.<sup>33</sup>

The actions of the Shaw government were similar to that of other jurisdictions throughout Canada, first relying on voluntary association before contemplating more direct action on the part of government. However, the pace of that change created a rift between Shaw and Dewar. Dewar indicated in his speeches his preference for a more aggressive move towards consolidation and while Shaw did not contradict him publicly, his correspondence, and the government's actions, clearly shows his reluctance to move any faster than individual districts were willing to go.<sup>34</sup> This developing rift would be apparent in another file that threatened to split the government, that of the status of Prince of Wales College (PWC).

### **The Future of Post-Secondary Education**

Similar to its position on school board consolidation, the government appeared to have no clear strategy for post-secondary education other than to respond to agendas from various pressure groups. The catalyst for action came not from government leadership, but from demands by various groups in P.E.I. for degree status for PWC.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> "Opposition Leader Urges Policy on Regional Highs," *The Guardian*, 19 March 1964, 1.

<sup>34</sup> "Education Statistics Reveal Small Schools," *The Guardian*, 21 March 1963, 5. For examples of Shaw's position on consolidation in his correspondence, see Shaw to Parsons, June 22, 1965, PARO, W.R. Shaw, Acc. 3688, File 188; and Shaw to Gallant, Feb. 16, 1966, PARO, W.R. Shaw, Acc. 3688, File 189.

<sup>35</sup> Details of the story that started in 1962 and did not completely end until the creation of UPEI in 1969 are covered with various interpretations in MacDonald, *If You're Stronghearted*, 290-293; MacKinnon, *Between Two Cultures*, 85-96; McKenna, "Higher Education," 208-217; Dewar, *Prescription for a Full*

The resulting divisions between Catholics and Protestants in the Conservative caucus almost led to a public split in the government when it responded with legislation to deal with the demand in the spring of 1964. One aftermath of that battle was the appointment of a Royal Commission on Higher Education which ultimately led to a second and even fiercer debate about the future of the two post-secondary institutions, PWC and St. Dunstan's University (SDU). The key point from the controversy is the lack of preparation by Dewar and Shaw; first, to anticipate the need for change in the post-secondary structure of education in P.E.I.; and second, to prepare the population for that change. The fact that they did not even prepare their own caucus serves as proof of that failing.

The two institutions in question were different in every way. SDU was a denominational institution, operated and financed by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Charlottetown. Established in 1855 as St. Dunstan's College, it received no provincial government funding and had only begun receiving federal funding in the 1950s when the federal government instituted programs to both private and public universities based on the number of students. It affiliated with Laval in 1892 and became St. Dunstan's University in 1917, conferring its own degrees in 1941. By the 1950s, with a strong adult education program, SDU "promoted the Christian ideal with its humanistic social orientation, extending the services of the university to the community at large and encouraging participation in Christian social action."<sup>36</sup> PWC had equally long roots. Opened as the Central Academy in 1836, it was a creation of the colonial legislature,

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*Life*, 178-196; Marian Bruce, *A Century of Excellence*, 190-215; H. Wade MacLauchlan, *Alex B. Campbell*, 105-121; John Eldon Green, *A Mind of One's Own: Memoirs of an Albany Boy* (Charlottetown: Tangle Lane, nd), 158-167; Frank MacKinnon, *Church Politics & Education In Canada: The P.E.I. Experience* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1995) which often reads as a diatribe against the Roman Catholic Church.

<sup>36</sup> McKenna, "Higher Education," 204-208.

owned and operated by the colony, an arrangement that was still in effect. In 1860, it was incorporated as Prince of Wales College, dedicated to the provision of “a first class mathematical, classical and philosophical education.”<sup>37</sup> This philosophy continued through the decades as PWC “concentrated on academically promising students and insisted on high scholastic standards through a ruthless examination system.”<sup>38</sup> By 1964, both schools offered Grade Eleven and Twelve with SDU providing the full four years leading to a Bachelor level degree in Arts, Science, Commerce, or Education. PWC offered the first and second years of university program, preparing graduates to move on to the third year of a university program at another institution. In 1963-64, SDU had 510 students enrolled in the university program with 90% Catholic, while PWC had 228 with only 17% Catholic.<sup>39</sup>

The struggles to adapt to the changing conditions of the 1960s for both institutions were well known and centered mainly on money. With the increasing number of high school graduates from the expanded regional high school system and the increased emphasis on higher education throughout society, more Island students were headed to university. The number of students in Grade Twelve had jumped from 570 in 1960 to 906 in 1964, and many of them wanted to continue to university.<sup>40</sup> Both institutions and the provincial government recognized the fact that P.E.I. had the highest percentage of students (37%) who left their province for a university education.<sup>41</sup> Once

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>39</sup> John S. Bonnell, Norman A.M. MacKenzie, and Joseph A. McMillan, *Report of the Royal Commission on Higher Education for Prince Edward Island* (Charlottetown: January, 1965), 11, 42. The 228 number for PWC is from p. 42 rather than the 263 figure from p. 11. I believe that higher figure includes students enrolled in a commerce course. The 228 figure corresponds with the number in the Dept. of Education Annual Report for the year ended 1964, page 100.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

promising students left, it was less likely that they would return to the Island to contribute to its growth. To accommodate the increasing numbers seeking a university education, SDU and PWC needed to expand their facilities; and in the case of PWC, it needed to elevate its status to degree-granting. PWC had a second concern as well, the loss of its high school students which would reduce it to a college offering only the first two years of university. LaZerte had recommended that the PWC high school be incorporated into the new regional high school system, and that the Charlottetown system become responsible for Grade Eleven and Twelve.<sup>42</sup> While this had not yet happened by 1964, the Charlottetown School Board had begun planning for a new school to accommodate the additional grades and to relieve the parents of the burden of paying tuition for their children to finish high school.<sup>43</sup> Squeezed on both ends, PWC realized its best option was to acquire the status of a full university; and SDU realized that meant competition for students and dollars.

The government was well aware of these concerns. In early 1963, Dewar spoke to the House raising the possibility of university status for PWC. He commented that it was an appropriate time to review the college's role given the significant changes in the Island's education system. He alluded to a review that a group of interested citizens would soon present to government with speculation that it would recommend university status for PWC.<sup>44</sup> This twenty person committee included prominent members of the Island's business, legal, medical and professional groups, and its work had to be well-known to Dewar. Its report of July 1962 listed as consultants Dr. Frank MacKinnon, the

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<sup>42</sup> LaZerte, *Report of the Commissioner on Educational Finance*, 101. The reference in Recommendation 24 to sections 102-125 of the School Act relate to Summerside and Charlottetown.

<sup>43</sup> "New High School For City Is Considered By Board," *The Guardian*, 2 February 1965, 1. The new school was approved and built, opening in September 1966.

<sup>44</sup> "University Status For PWC Suggested as Possibility," *The Guardian*, 30 March 1963, 1.

principal of PWC and Malcolm MacKenzie, Dewar's Deputy Minister of Education, both of whom obviously had close contact with Dewar.<sup>45</sup> Dewar was quite close to MacKinnon; they had been classmates at PWC before World War II and Dewar had tried to convince MacKinnon to run for the leadership of the Conservative Party back in 1957. Although extremely interested, Mackinnon declined for financial reasons as the position carried no salary.<sup>46</sup> The report examined five aspects of the issue: administration or governance, infrastructure, financing, student population, and curriculum standards. It concluded its eighteen page report by stating:

1. It is entirely feasible from educational, administrative, and financial viewpoints to proceed immediately with the proposal to elevate Prince of Wales College to the level of a degree institution.
2. That such a move is not only feasible, but highly desirable and even necessary for the welfare of our province and of our youth.<sup>47</sup>

In addition to this well prepared brief, Dewar received similar representations in 1963 and early 1964 from over fifty different organizations asking for the elevation of PWC's status.<sup>48</sup> He met with the legal representatives of the Citizen's Committee numerous times during the lead up to the 1964 spring session of the Legislature and with Dr. MacKinnon on February 5, 1964 to discuss the proposed bill where he indicated that the Premier "wanted to soft pedal the issue for now" meaning there would not be explicit reference to the bill in the Throne Speech.<sup>49</sup> It seems the only people he didn't meet with were members of his own caucus and they would be the source of much of his discomfort

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<sup>45</sup> "Report of A Citizen's Committee To Study The Feasibility of Prince of Wales College Becoming a Degree Granting Institution, July 1962," PARO, Frank MacKinnon Fonds, Acc. 4499, Series 5 – PWC Records, File 7 – Degree Granting Status, 1.

<sup>46</sup> Dewar, *Prescription for a Full Life*, 140-141.

<sup>47</sup> "Report of A Citizen's Committee To Study The Feasibility of Prince of Wales College Becoming a Degree Granting Institution, July 1962," PARO, Frank MacKinnon Fonds, Acc. 4499, Series 5 – PWC Records, File 7 – Degree Granting Status, 17.

<sup>48</sup> Dewar, *Prescription for a Full Life*, 183.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

when the House met in 1964.

**Figure 4.1 – Participants in the University Debate**



Dr. Frank MacKinnon



Bishop Malcolm MacEachern

Source: MacLauchlan, *Alex B. Campbell*, 109, 111.

Both leaders of the two institutions were busy courting public opinion as well. MacKinnon spoke to numerous groups in the winter, among them the First Baptist Laymen's Association. He extolled the high standards of PWC and referred to the Citizen's Committee brief, after which the chair of the meeting urged all in attendance to sign a petition requesting action on the elevation of PWC to degree granting status.<sup>50</sup> Nor was SDU silent on the issue. In a brief presented to Shaw in February, 1964, the President of SDU, the Very Rev. G.A. MacDonald asked for a grant of \$300,000 to help with the escalating operating costs of the university and to cover the current deficit, similar to the request which was denied the previous year. He also indicated that there was a need to investigate the structure of higher education in P.E.I if the government was considering the elevation of PWC's status. He was concerned with the prospect of two

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<sup>50</sup> "15 New Universities Spark PWC Interest," *The Guardian*, 8 January 1964, 3. A similar story can be found in *The Guardian*, 18 March 1964, 3, where MacKinnon spoke to the United Church Men's Association.



institutions in competition, but with PWC receiving provincial government support while SDU would receive nothing. His second concern was that the province would attempt to assist both institutions, a strategy he felt “could lead to a debilitating educational mediocrity for both which is hardly a satisfactory solution.”<sup>51</sup> While clearly stating that SDU was not proposing any sort of merger of the two institutions, MacDonald indicated his willingness to undertake any study directed at achieving what would be in the best interests of the students and the people of P.E.I. In response, Shaw hinted that the upcoming session of the Legislature may appoint a commission to study higher education.<sup>52</sup>

The government did just that the next day, announcing in the Throne Speech its intention to appoint a Royal Commission to study “the organization and financing of university education in this Province” and to give “careful consideration” to the various appeals it had received to elevate PWC to degree granting status.<sup>53</sup> The trouble for the Conservative government began when Dewar finally met with caucus three weeks later to communicate what the Throne Speech really meant. In caucus on March 5, 1964 he reviewed the draft bill that would elevate the status of PWC but in a long meeting the Catholic members of caucus, led by Minister of Finance Alban Farmer, revolted. On March 9, Farmer introduced a motion in the House to amend the bill and make PWC a private institution, putting it on a par with SDU and removing its access to provincial funding. The fight continued later that night in another caucus meeting, where the idea of a delayed proclamation of the bill was floated by Henry Wedge. This was opposed by Dewar and defeated in caucus by a majority of Protestants. But Shaw later met with the

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<sup>51</sup> “SDU Offers To Participate In Higher Education Study,” *The Guardian*, 11 February, 1, 5.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Hon. W.J. MacDonald, *Journal of the Legislative Assembly 1964*, 11-12.

Protestant members of caucus and persuaded them to accept this delayed proclamation.<sup>54</sup> When the bill reached second reading in the House on March 19, Wedge made the amendment to delay the proclamation of the bill and the bill carried. Dewar could not accept that amendment and voted against it, leaving the government in a position where two senior Ministers led different revolts against a significant piece of legislation in a very public manner with no resulting discipline.<sup>55</sup>

The second consequence of this dispute was the establishment of the Royal Commission on Higher Education, chaired by Rev. John Bonnell and tasked to recommend a course of action for postsecondary education. Delays in nominating members slowed the start of the Commission's work as the government attempted to strike what it thought was an appropriate balance in the religious character of the Commission. Bonnell, the retired minister of the prestigious Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York, maintained a summer home in eastern P.E.I.<sup>56</sup> He was known as a supporter of the ecumenical movement and had received a medal from the Pope for service in promoting the concept.<sup>57</sup> This sentiment no doubt angered MacKinnon whose views on ecumenism were extreme. Writing thirty years later, he charged the Catholic clergy with using it as a ruse, a type of "Trojan Horse," to lure unsuspecting and gullible Protestant ministers to support a campaign for one university.<sup>58</sup> Dr. Joseph MacMillan, a prominent Charlottetown surgeon and graduate of SDU, and Dr. Norman MacKenzie, former president of the University of New Brunswick and the University of British Columbia, were the other members. Dewar had promoted Walter Darby, a Summerside

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<sup>54</sup> Cusack, *A Party For Progress*, 144-145.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Dewar, *Prescription for a Full Life*, 186.

<sup>57</sup> Bruce, *A Century of Excellence*, 196.

<sup>58</sup> MacKinnon, *Church Politics & Education In Canada*, 85-87.

judge, but Cabinet refused the suggestion “mostly for religious connotations.”<sup>59</sup> By September 1964, the Commission was finally ready to begin its task.

As the Commission noted, the passage of the PWC Act and the establishment of the Commission marked the first substantial effort of the provincial government in the realm of planning at the university level. The Commission directed its attention at three main issues: government’s contribution to operating and capital costs at both institutions; the future role for PWC as a university; and the possible integration or merging of the two institutions into one university.<sup>60</sup> In January 1965, the Commission recommended that more money should be provided to both institutions, that the PWC Act be proclaimed immediately, PWC move with haste to develop its four-year university program, the province provide operating grants of \$300 per student, and both institutions discontinue provision of high school classes. More controversial were the recommendations on the establishment of the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI). The Commission called for more cooperation between the two institutions, and in time, the establishment of UPEI as a federation of the two existing bodies.<sup>61</sup> Prior to the public release of the recommendations, Bonnell met with Shaw and his Cabinet to provide a preliminary review of the Commission’s report. Bonnell advised them that the Commission would recommend a loose federation of the two institutions allowing each to retain its identity, but he cautioned against any hasty action, stating, “A period of courtship and preparation for marriage usually insures a happier one.”<sup>62</sup> He insisted that both institutions should be given the right to consent to any movement to amalgamate and that the decision would

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<sup>59</sup> Dewar, *Prescription for a Full Life*, 186.

<sup>60</sup> Bonnell et. al., *Report of the Commission on Higher Education*, 10, 12.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-33.

<sup>62</sup> “Remarks by J.S. Bonnell to Meeting of the Premier and Executive Council of the Government, Dec. 8, 1964,” PARO, W.R. Shaw Fonds, Acc. 3688, File 189.

need to be taken by PWC, SDU and the government.<sup>63</sup>

As it did with the requests for PWC to be granted degree status, the government lost control of the debate on amalgamation. Another citizens' committee came forward with a proposal for a single university for P.E.I., not a federation of the two existing institutions but one where both were "completely submerged in the new institution."<sup>64</sup> Led by numerous leaders of various churches from across the Island and other prominent citizens, it claimed that the religious question was the biggest obstacle to resolving the problems of higher education in P.E.I. and nothing could be accomplished until this was addressed publicly.<sup>65</sup> The group later expanded to include twenty-three members from across the Island and it embarked on a program of public information and debate. Led by its co-chairs Dr. Malcolm Beck and Dr. John Maloney, it used television, radio, and public meetings to generate debate on the issue. One such meeting occurred in Charlottetown in March 1965 where Hartwell Daley moderated a panel of group members John Eldon Green and Dr. John Maloney. Green pointed out that "Both PWC and St. Dunstan's have 100 years of tradition behind them. However, we can't go on servicing traditions. Where traditions hinder or obstruct progress, we have to file them away."<sup>66</sup> In 1966, Maloney stated that over 1,200 people had been engaged in the discussion across the Island and only two people openly opposed the concept of a single university.<sup>67</sup> The tide for more aggressive action on the part of government was flowing through the Island, but Shaw and Dewar were not ready to move that quickly.

The government agreed to fund both institutions on a per student basis as

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<sup>63</sup> Bonnell et. al., *Report of the Commission on Higher Education*, 33.

<sup>64</sup> "Ten Man Study Group," *The Journal-Pioneer*, 23 February 1965, 3.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> "P.E.I. At Social Crossroads With PWC-SDU Merger Talk," *The Guardian*, 11 March 1965, 3.

<sup>67</sup> MacLauchlan, *Alex. B. Campbell*, 107-108.

recommended in the Bonnell Report and it facilitated a series of meetings with PWC and SDU to discuss possible avenues of cooperation, but took no leadership role in moving the parties towards a resolution. It proclaimed the Prince of Wales College Act of 1964 on June 1, 1965 granting PWC the right to confer degrees.<sup>68</sup> While the Board of SDU expressed openness to the idea of federation, there was little receptivity to the idea by PWC. After a joint meeting of the boards in July 1966, little progress was made, and both institutions made separate plans for expansion and improvement of their infrastructure. For SDU, that included changing its charter to reflect a more secular organization and possibly a more deserving university financially.<sup>69</sup>

When both institutions met with recently elected Premier Campbell in January 1967 to present their spending plans, the new premier was dismayed by the lack of cooperation, the evident duplication, and the excessive cost. A change in the funding mechanism for universities by the federal government gave Campbell the lever he needed to effect change. The funding would no longer go directly to the institutions; it would go to the provincial government who could decide on specific funding amounts for each institution.<sup>70</sup> Armed with the authority to direct financing in the direction he wanted and frustrated by the lack of cooperation from PWC and SDU and the resistance of Frank MacKinnon in particular, by 1968 Campbell could wait no longer. With PWC students protesting in the streets, in the Legislative Assembly and in Protestant churches urging opposition to Campbell's proposed funding mechanism, the University Grants Commission, Campbell took direct aim at the problem. Even though he had only a one-seat majority in the House, he issued a Policy Statement in the House on higher

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<sup>68</sup> Dewar, *Prescription For A Full Life*, 188-190.

<sup>69</sup> MacDonald, *If You're Stronghearted*, " 291.

<sup>70</sup> MacLauchlan, *Alex. B. Campbell*, 111-114.

education. Speaking for over ninety minutes, he outlined the creation of a single, non-denominational university, the creation of a technical college, and a program of student aid. He declared that SDU and PWC could continue to exist if they wished, but they would receive no government support.<sup>71</sup> Both PWC and SDU quickly capitulated, although MacKinnon quickly resigned and left in a fit of sulkiness for the University of Calgary. Campbell's action, regarded as one of high political courage at the time, was considered "a watershed in Island history" by Ed MacDonald:

After being suppressed for almost a century, the genie of religious dissension had escaped from the bottle and nothing had happened. Religion would continue to be a factor in Island politics, but it had lost its power to topple governments. While his opponents were still locked into the old paradigm of sectarian rivalry, Alex Campbell and his allies had approached the issue in terms of comprehensive development planning that had by now begun to define the era on Prince Edward Island.<sup>72</sup>

### **The Declining Emphasis on Adult Education**

The Shaw government's approach to development planning continued to evolve through its second term, as it moved from an emphasis on adult education and community development to one predicated on industrial expansion financed by public money. His first term saw the establishment of a Resources Development Program in the Department of Industry and Natural Resources under the leadership of Hartwell Daley in early 1961. By the end of Shaw's second term in 1966, Daley will have resigned, the program will have been transferred to the Department of Agriculture and much reduced, and the government will have embarked on a disastrous program of financing industrial development.

By the start of the new session of the Legislature in 1963, Daley had been

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 115-119.

<sup>72</sup> MacDonald, *If You're Stronghearted*, 292-293.

directing the Resources Development Program for two years. The 1963 Speech from the Throne noted “the spectacular development” that had occurred through the efforts of the program and the government’s intention to “press vigorously this significant program,” especially in the area of adult education as that provided “a solution to many of our economic problems.”<sup>73</sup> However, the government’s actions seemed at odds with its intention to rely on the bottom up approach espoused by Daley. He believed that his year-long study of the various approaches to economic development determined that success came when “a great deal of the responsibility for development had been placed upon local people and local institutions.”<sup>74</sup> Apparently Shaw had other thoughts. On 26 March 1963, the Conservative candidate for Prince County in the approaching federal election, Lorne Monkley announced a joint federal-provincial economic and planning survey of the county. He indicated that federal, provincial and private research people would combine to study the area thoroughly and then “lay out, in detail, specific plans for meeting those needs.”<sup>75</sup> Shaw commented that he was “pleased to see the realization of a long-time dream in the decision to make a thorough study of Prince County” and indicated special interest in the “set up of a definite plan for the economic improvement of the area.”<sup>76</sup> The era of the development consultant had hit P.E.I.

Shaw was not yet ready to abandon his previous approach as he exhibited that particular characteristic of holding two contradictory positions at the same time. In speaking to the House later that week, he praised the value of the Prince County survey

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<sup>73</sup> Hon. F. W. Hyndman, *Journal of the Legislative Assembly 1963*, 17, 19.

<sup>74</sup> Prince Edward Island Department of Industry and Natural Resources, *Annual Report for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1962*, 36.

<sup>75</sup> “Economic Survey of Prince Slated,” *The Guardian*, 27 March 1963, 2. Monkley had been the Conservative MLA for 5<sup>th</sup> Prince, resigning to contest the federal seat.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

and hoped to see a similar effort for the eastern end of the Island. He went on though, to laud the efforts of Daley's approach citing the attention it had garnered from other provinces and from the United States with many observers coming to the Island to study the effects of this approach:

This is an experiment, a new approach, a new type that had tremendous potentialities. We believe that we are now recognized as having started something from the grass roots up, rather than from the top down, that people are really sincerely and enthusiastically co-operating with the government in an effort to rehabilitate themselves, and develop the many opportunities existant in this province but neglected in the past.<sup>77</sup>

It was not just Shaw who had begun to question the effectiveness of the co-operative approach of Daley. The Federation of Agriculture in its annual brief to the Legislature sharply criticized the government's approach for advancing projects for funding under ARDA, stating "frankly, we are not complimented by, or satisfied with the treatment accorded the first major proposal brought forward of an agricultural nature," in reference to lack of consideration given to the Federation's proposal to establish a commission to develop programs aimed at preparing farm communities for agricultural change.<sup>78</sup> The proposed commission implied a certain level of frustration with the current approach by establishing a new body that would bypass the current Research Director, Hartwell Daley. It went so far as to indicate that the commission chair would need "experience and skill as a regional planner," a jab at the resume of the journalist Daley.<sup>79</sup> Shaw rejected the proposal out of hand, "I don't believe in setting up too many commissions. We have a research department. We don't need another. That's not very

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<sup>77</sup> "Premier Stresses Value of Resources Program," *The Guardian*, 28 March 1963, 1, 3.

<sup>78</sup> "Resources Development Program Sharply Criticized by Fed. Of Agric.," *The Guardian*, 28 March 1963, 1, 3.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*



clear thinking – there’s no doubt about that.”<sup>80</sup>

The difficulties with Daley’s approach were deeper than simply a squabble over process. His approach, supported by Shaw in the beginning, considered the underdevelopment of the Island through a rural lens. The roots of the problem were a lack of development of the rural communities and its cure would be found through adult education of those “backward” people and the improvement of farm practices through better production methods, marketing, or new crops. David Milne suggests that Daley’s strategy did not address the structural issues that confronted the Island, most of which had external causes.<sup>81</sup> Farm prices were the issue, not production methods, and prices were set on world markets outside the control of Island farmers. As farms increased productivity through the adoption of more technology, labour became surplus in the farm sector and other sectors needed to develop to absorb this surplus, or out-migration would continue.

The Shaw government’s reliance on studies of the issues in specific sectors and areas proliferated for the remainder of his term. By 1965, it had commissioned eight large-scale surveys along with numerous studies by individual consultants.<sup>82</sup> Its dalliance with co-operative development planning was done. In November 1963 after less than three years on the job, Daley left the provincial government service and the division was transferred to the Department of Agriculture with a much modified mandate that had little or nothing to do with adult education.<sup>83</sup> Daley’s efforts to advance his theories of rural development based on grass roots involvement of community groups were quickly

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Milne, “Politics in the Garden,” 46.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>83</sup> Prince Edward Island Department of Industry and Natural Resources, *Annual Report for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1964*, 7.

forgotten inside government circles but the idea of adult education through a network of community schools took hold in P.E.I. Beginning in 1965 without any government assistance, local communities organized classes based on their identification of need or interest. This grew into a network of community schools under a more formal organization, the Rural Development Council, in 1966.<sup>84</sup>

While Reid Sangster, the new Director of Research replacing Daley, professed a similar commitment to the grass roots approach of Daley, it became increasingly obvious that the Island was embracing a model of industrial development that was evident throughout the Atlantic region. In an extended interview on the changes in the Resources Development Program in *The Guardian*, Sangster outlined the three phases of programming: first, what local groups could do for themselves; second, what local groups could do in conjunction with federal and provincial agencies; and third, “the large phase – industrial development. This is mainly the job of government and big business.”<sup>85</sup> This third phase, industrial development, and a more directive approach would now be the foundation for the Island’s development. A consultant associated with the Prince County study, J. Edward Coombes of Colorado Springs clearly articulated this new approach in a letter to Reid Sangster concerning the implementation of action plans resulting from the Prince County studies. In his view, the local groups needed to be told what to do, not asked for their opinion. His procedure was entirely top down. The action plan would be presented to Cabinet for approval, then to a selected gathering of key people, and finally released to the public, but only for their information, “not for opinion, but as a fait

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<sup>84</sup> Edward MacDonald, *A Community of Schools: The First Twenty Years* (Charlottetown: Institute of Island Studies, 1985) 21-25.

<sup>85</sup> “Council on resources is given reshuffling,” *The Guardian*, 28 February 1964, 10A.

accompli.”<sup>86</sup>

### **Contributing Factors to the Lack of Progress**

Every government has a finite reservoir of time, energy, money and political capital that it can use to effect change and implement its program. In Shaw’s second term, he began to run short of all these items. The government’s questionable foray into industrial development projects, especially in Georgetown, ate up huge amounts of money totalling almost \$10 million. Shaw’s legislation to reform the Elections Act, the removal of the ban on the sale of margarine, and the loosening of regulations on liquor sales depleted his stock of political capital. He directed time and energy towards securing the causeway for P.E.I. and the events surrounding the centennial celebrations in 1964. His health declined with age and from the effects of a car accident in late 1963. All these factors contributed to a reduced emphasis on pursuing radical change in the education system when that change was not universally accepted.

The Shaw government’s initial foray into industrial development occurred in its first term when they attracted two food processing companies to P.E.I., Seabrook Frozen Foods and Langley Fruit Packers. Both plants produced frozen vegetables and encouraged farmers to grow new crops such as broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts and carrots. Initially, the plants were relatively successful and encouraged the government to push ahead with more investment in industrial expansion.<sup>87</sup> Drawn in by the promises of a young, energetic and unscrupulous Montreal businessman, Jens Moe, the government sank over \$9.9 million in building a large seafood processing facility and

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<sup>86</sup> J. Edward Coombes to Reid Sangster, 28 March 1964, PARO, H. Daley Fonds, Acc. 3565, File:Development Plan - Notes, Correspondence, Memos 1962-1972.

<sup>87</sup> MacDonald, *If You’re Stronghearted*, 268.

a shipyard designed to build steel trawlers to supply the plant.<sup>88</sup> From the first contact in 1963 to the bankruptcy of the plant and the shipyard by 1967, the financial transactions were marked by their lack of transparency and their dubious nature. When Alex Campbell assumed power in 1966, there were no files related to the investments in the Premier's Office and scant records in either the Fishermen's Loan Board or the Industrial Development Corporation.<sup>89</sup> Through the sessions of 1965 and 1966, the Liberals had badgered the Minister responsible, Leo Rossiter, for information on the security of the province's investment as rumors abounded of improper dealings. To clean up the mess resulting from the bankruptcies, the Campbell government established a commission of inquiry into the whole affair. In the end, it concluded that while the government was sincere in its interest to promote new industrial activity, there should have been more prudence exercised in the management of public funds. Considering that \$9.9 million was invested in the undertaking, and that the total ordinary expenditure of the entire government of the Island for the fiscal year ending March 1965 was \$25.9 million, it was an expensive lesson in the inherent perils of industrial development.<sup>90</sup>

Shaw and his government passed numerous pieces of legislation in his second term that helped to modernize the Island, with the Elections Act 1963 the most significant. The Island system consisted of fifteen constituencies each represented by two members, a councillor and an assemblyman. There were no voters lists kept and councillors were voted on by anyone who owned property in the constituency, leading to numerous people having votes in ridings across the Island. The new Act eliminated the

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<sup>88</sup> MacKinnon, *Between Two Cultures*, 40-63.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>90</sup> *Public Accounts of the Province of Prince Edward Island for the year ended March 31<sup>st</sup> 1965* (Charlottetown: Dillon Printing Co., 1965), 27.

property vote, established an electoral officer, and required the establishment of a voters list. It also proposed a redistribution of seats as the urban areas of Summerside and Charlottetown were severely underrepresented. The move to remove two rural seats from Kings County and allocate them to Charlottetown caused uproar in the House and among Shaw's Kings County caucus. In the end, Shaw relented and returned the Kings County seats but he did create an additional constituency in Charlottetown with two seats.<sup>91</sup>

Other contentious legislation demonstrated the progress that the Island had made in moving towards a less "backward" society. The first concerned the loosening of the regulations on the sale of liquor. Coming into the centennial celebrations of 1964, regulations were amended to allow liquor to be sold in lounges and with meals in restaurants, quite a step forward for a province that only repealed prohibition in 1948.<sup>92</sup> The other two were mostly symbolic, the adoption of daylight saving time and the removal of the ban on the sale of margarine. After trial periods with daylight saving time in the previous two years, Shaw felt comfortable enough to implement it across the Island after the 1962 election. Although the farm community continued to protest, P.E.I joined the other provinces of Canada in April 1963 as they pushed the clocks ahead (except of course in Saskatchewan).<sup>93</sup> The legalization of the sale of margarine was so controversial that Shaw declared it a free vote in the House. Again, farm groups were furious about the removal of the ban which had been in place since the end of World War II. Arguing that the ban was in effect a class issue, as rich people could travel to neighbouring provinces and buy it while the poor could not, Conservative Russell Driscoll moved to remove the ban. The bill passed, but Premier Shaw voted against the repeal. All these moves to

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<sup>91</sup> Cusack, *A Party for Progress*, 141, 155.

<sup>92</sup> MacDonald, *If You're Stronghearted*, 278-279.

<sup>93</sup> Cusack, *A Party for Progress*, 141.

modernize Island society led one newspaper to comment:

It (the legalization of margarine) will represent one more step in bringing this province into line with the rest of Canada. We now have Daylight Saving Time, we have done away with the property vote, our liquor law, while still filled with flaws, is more in line with modern thinking than it previously was, and now we are about to join the people of the rest of Canada in being able to eat margarine – legally that is. Although the present government has been a reluctant and fearful crusader for change, it must be given the credit for most of these developments.<sup>94</sup>

Other issues fought for the Premier's time. He continued to press the federal government to construct a causeway to New Brunswick, succeeding in having actual tenders called in 1965 with some work completed on the approaches. By 1966, the federal government rescheduled the project, but in 1967 when tenders came in at a much higher cost than anticipated, the project was put on hold.<sup>95</sup> During 1964 the premier was the host to numerous dignitaries and national meetings, highlighted by an extended visit by the Queen for the Centennial celebrations. The centenary was the impetus for the building of the Confederation Centre. While the project was driven by Frank MacKinnon, the Island government was responsible for securing the site for the new centre and the financing of its ongoing operation.<sup>96</sup> Just prior to the start of the Centennial celebrations, the premier was involved in a serious car accident on 4 December 1963 that kept him housebound recovering until after Christmas.<sup>97</sup> Politically, the government lost two by-elections in 1965, cutting their majority to only three members once the Speaker was appointed. One winner was the thirty-one year old Alex Campbell who later that year would become the leader of the Liberal Party and face

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<sup>94</sup> "Credit Where Credit Is Due," *The Journal-Pioneer*, 17 March 1965, 2. The writer was my father, J. Elmer Murphy and he was an unrepentant smuggler of margarine, bringing tubs of uncolored vegetable fat back on every trip we took off the Island. I suspect the thrill was doing something illegal as no one actually liked the stuff.

<sup>95</sup> MacDonald, *If You're Stronghearted*, 294.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 279-282.

<sup>97</sup> "Injuries Said Not Serious," *The Guardian*, 6 December 1963, 1. "Premier's Family Gathered at Hotel," *The Guardian*, 26 December 1963, 1.

Shaw in the next election.<sup>98</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Shaw's second term was uneven at best. The rapid pace of progress in reforming the education system shown in the first term slowed appreciably. Consolidation at the elementary level would only happen if the government directed it. While some districts moved to consolidate, the process was slow and fraught with squabbles about boundaries and process. Shaw was reluctant to move beyond the role of government acting simply as the facilitator. In post-secondary education, the government moved to grant PWC with degree granting status, but made no progress in moving the two institutions to federate. Shaw's rural development program was supplanted by a more aggressive program of industrial development, but that program was quickly turning into a financial and political disaster. Even his growing reliance on economic surveys was ending in frustration as none seemed capable of providing him with that magic cure. In one last attempt, Shaw in conjunction with the federal government launched a major study of the Island's social and economic conditions. Ever hopeful, Shaw viewed this \$340,000 study as the means to finally obtain those "bold, ambitious and co-ordinated approaches" needed to push the Island forward.<sup>99</sup> Not completed until 1967, it contained little of substance in terms of specific development proposals but the masses of data collected eventually contributed to the subsequent Comprehensive Development Plan.

By 1966, the Shaw government had reached its end, yet still almost won the election that year. His government suffered from the battles of seven years in power,

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<sup>98</sup> MacLauchlan, *Alex B. Campbell*, 39.

<sup>99</sup> MacKinnon, *Between Two Cultures*, 103.

beset by failures in its industrial promotion schemes, especially in Georgetown, and lack of progress on the causeway issue. While some of those battles were over seemingly small issues, like the introduction of Daylight Saving Time and changes to the regulations on liquor purchases, there were major issues as well. Outmigration was still a problem, farm population continued to decline, and incomes still lagged behind the Canadian average.<sup>100</sup> In addition, Shaw was now running against the young, attractive Liberal leader Alex Campbell, and he could no longer count on help from the federal government, now in Liberal hands. After the dust settled in one of the closest elections in history, with a deferred vote in one riding in Kings County, Campbell had seventeen seats to Shaw's fifteen, bringing a close to seven years of power for the Conservatives.<sup>101</sup>

The defining image of that election was the Liberal campaign ad, a full page ad showing a young, confident Alex Campbell striding toward the future promising action now. The Liberal campaign had restrained their attacks on Shaw, recognizing how well liked and respected he was by Islanders. Their focus went to the members of cabinet, with the line "Poor Walter Shaw, a nice old man who can't control some of the boys in his cabinet."<sup>102</sup> But even with the Georgetown fiasco, increased taxes to cover an increasing deficit, and the scars of seven years in office, the seventy-eight year old Shaw almost managed to win another four years of power.

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<sup>100</sup> Dasgupta, "The Island in Transition: A Statistical Overview", 244, 249, 251.

<sup>101</sup> MacDonald, *If You're Stronghearted*, 284.

<sup>102</sup> MacKinnon, *Between Two Cultures*, 55.



Figure 4.2 – Liberal Election Ad, 1966

**THIS IS THE MAN**  
**VOTE**  
**MONDAY**

**THIS IS THE PARTY**  
**LIBERAL**  
**MAY 30**

ALEX CAMPBELL  
LIBERAL LEADER

**- BETTER JOBS -**  
**HIGHER WAGES - \$100 PENSION**

ACTION FOR AGRICULTURE • INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT • ELECTRIC POWER  
IMPROVED FISHERIES • ROAD-BUILDING PROGRAM • LOW COST HOUSING PROGRAM  
\$100 A MONTH FOR SENIOR CITIZENS • TOURISM, GOLF COURSES AND PARKS  
PROMOTE AN ENERGETIC ISLAND... ELECT THIS TEAM ON MONDAY, MAY 30

IN KINGS  
IN QUEENS  
IN PRINCE

**VOT LIBERAL** FOR RESOURCEFUL RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

Source: *The Guardian*, 28 May 1966, 13.

## Chapter Five Conclusion

This thesis explored one aspect of the modernization of Prince Edward Island by analyzing the changes in the education system during the government of Walter R. Shaw from 1959 to 1966. The objective was to explore whether the transformation of the P.E.I. education system fits the established stereotype of this period. Was it a government-led modernization project that disregarded the underlying sentiments of the citizens – in other words, did it fit James C. Scott’s definition of high-modernism – or was it the product of something else?

The portrayal of Walter R. Shaw and his government as “a reluctant and fearful crusader for change” is an accurate description.<sup>1</sup> Nor are those necessarily pejorative qualities for a politician. History has seen no end of bold, courageous leaders ready to fearlessly charge into disastrous schemes. This period is often characterized as a time when the coercive power of the state manipulated an unsuspecting citizenry into accepting a new ideology of modernization. But my analysis presents a different picture: rather than the state pushing change upon its citizens, here the citizens were the agents for change.

The conditions existing in P.E.I. in the post-war period before Shaw came to power defined his first term. The government of Walter Jones (1943-1953) followed a narrowly defined course of government action targeted at improving the situation of the farm population. He considered the rural sector, especially farming, to be the driving force in P.E.I.’s economic and social life. His policies and programs, limited as they

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<sup>1</sup> “Credit Where Credit Is Due,” *The Journal-Pioneer*, 17 March 1965, 2.

were, attempted to improve the situation of farmers but with little success. His successor, Alex Matheson (1953-1959), followed a similar course somewhat more purposefully. One major program was the provision of electricity to rural areas, significantly improving the quality of life in the areas but also contributing to the increasing use of technology in the agriculture. His second major program was an aggressive move to improve transportation across the Island by paving roads. These paved roads broadened the definition of community for rural areas, providing rural residents with new options for work, shopping, entertainment, and school. The new roads influenced people's choices of where to live, how to farm, and who they considered to be their neighbours.

These limited programs did little to stem the migration away from the farms and rural areas of P.E.I. Net migration was over -26,000 and the labour force declined by 3% for the period from 1941 to 1961, compared to a rapid expansion elsewhere in Canada.<sup>2</sup> Those who stayed on the Island faced lower incomes than elsewhere in Canada. Per capita income for Island workers ranged between 54% and 59% of the national average from 1951 to 1961.<sup>3</sup> Per capita farm incomes were even lower rarely exceeding 20% of the national average per capita income.<sup>4</sup> People left the farms because their incomes were poor and opportunities for employment and a better life could be found in other regions, mainly in the metropolitan centers of the Maritimes, central Canada, and New England. In this quest, migrant Islanders were part of a similar transformation across North American society as people from rural areas flooded into the cities and the burgeoning new suburbs in search of the American dream.

That American dream had two parts, security abroad and security at home, and

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<sup>2</sup> Dasgupta, "The Island in Transition," 244, 256.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>4</sup> Janssen, "Agriculture in Transition," 116, 119.

through the 1950s, Canada was increasingly influenced by the same concepts. Security abroad meant defeating Communism both militarily by prevailing in the Cold War and culturally by projecting America's values and economic system onto backward societies in an effort to move them into modernity.<sup>5</sup> The containment of Soviet influence also applied to the domestic sphere as American families searched for security through domestic containment, building safe, secure and personally fulfilling lives as described by Elaine Tyler May.<sup>6</sup> These same defining features of domestic security and stability were evident in Canada as families embraced the consumer culture and the comforts of a traditional family. Canadian governments were challenged to meet these needs through programs that expanded the welfare state. Programs were first geared towards returning World War II veterans but soon expanded to programs of pensions, health care, seniors and public housing, and education for all citizens.<sup>7</sup> Governments took a more active and interventionist role in the economy, first indirectly through the provision of infrastructure to encourage economic growth and later to address equality in the provision of basic services and regional disparity issues.<sup>8</sup> These programs were the product of an aggressive effort by Atlantic Canadian politicians and lobby groups, commonly termed the "Atlantic Revolution" of the 1950s, to reach the goal of economic parity with the rest of Canada. Corey Slumkoski asserts that it was influenced by three regional factors: an acceptance of a larger role for the state; a change in political leadership in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia as Hugh John Flemming and Henry Hicks came to power; and the entry of Newfoundland into Confederation, with Joseph Smallwood being an

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<sup>5</sup> Latham, *Modernization as Ideology*, 6.

<sup>6</sup> May, *Homeward Bound*, 11-18.

<sup>7</sup> Briggs, "Introduction," xi-xiv.

<sup>8</sup> Savoie, *Visiting Grandchildren*, 81-85.

unbridled advocate of state intervention to promote industry and provide services. While the election of John Diefenbaker in 1957 led to tentative steps to satisfy regional demands, the Revolution was already beginning to stall as the Atlantic provinces reverted to their traditional role of bilateral dealings with the federal government and a narrow view of protecting their respective provincial interests.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, these initiatives established regional equality as a basic tenet of the Canadian federation and imparted a role to both federal and provincial governments in reducing regional disparity. Margaret Conrad considers the acceptance of a regional consensus that brought Atlantic Canada into line with the prevailing tenets of North American culture - that of a capitalist economy based on mass consumption and an interventionist state predicated on Keynesian economics - to be the lasting impact of the Atlantic Revolution.<sup>10</sup>

A key component to lessening regional disparity was better and more equitable education. The 1959 school system of P.E.I. reflected two worlds: one of the one-room schools that predominated in the rural areas of P.E.I.; the other, the urban schools of Summerside and Charlottetown, and some scattered larger schools. The problems facing the system were not newly discovered in 1959 as numerous studies and commissions had investigated the system. All called for similar solutions – consolidation of school districts, and higher standards and wages for teachers. As the Matheson government reached its end in 1959, many groups pushed for serious education reform based on more equality of opportunity, regional high schools, vocational training, and better qualified teachers, as part of a broader effort to rejuvenate the rural economy. The Matheson government made little attempt to respond to these calls until he finally relented in 1959,

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<sup>9</sup> Slumkoski, “A Narrow Provincialism,” 115-119.

<sup>10</sup> Conrad, “The 1950s – The Decade of Development,” 419.

appointing a Royal Commission to enquire into “all matters relating to the administration and the financial support of schools” in P.E.I.<sup>11</sup>

In 1959, Walter R. Shaw became Premier with a mandate to invigorate the failing economy by providing rural Islanders with equal opportunities for education, jobs, and prosperity. Much like rural electrification and road construction in the previous decade, his program targeted the rural areas of P.E.I. to change the Island in order to preserve its way of life. Acting in areas where there was a clear consensus, Shaw and his Minister of Education, George Dewar, began a series of improvements for the rural high school system and the vocational school system. He allowed local districts to make the decision of whether or not to consolidate for the purpose of establishing a regional high school. By the end of his first term, more than 75% of the local districts made a well-formed decision after much discussion and debate to build fifteen new high schools administered by much larger administrative bodies. Shaw was there to facilitate the movement of the districts towards his desired result, but never did he impose. He provided the means and the resources so districts could take the action that he desired. Shaw took advantage of generous federal assistance and established two vocational schools responding to earlier calls to equip Islanders for the changing job market. A program of adult education was the centerpiece of his Resources Development Program, but it lacked a clear articulation of direction or purpose. Built on similar principles as used in the Antigonish Movement for developing co-operative study groups, it floundered and by Shaw’s second term was more of an afterthought than a centerpiece, replaced by a more directed program of industrial incentives.

Returned to power in December 1962, Shaw’s second term turned its attention to

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<sup>11</sup> LaZerte, *Report of the Commissioner on Educational Financing*, 2.

consolidation at the elementary level and reform of the administrative structure of the school districts. He was even more reluctant to move without the consent of local authorities, using a voluntary approach where boards could amalgamate and build consolidated elementary schools, an approach that yielded only limited progress. Shaw was forced by the volume of petitions from citizens' groups to deal with the post-secondary level for changes in the status of PWC. He avoided taking any action to push the two institutions to co-operate or amalgamate, a principal recommendation of the Bonnell Commission he had established.

Shaw was narrowly defeated in 1966 by the youthful Alex Campbell, who not only promised action, but delivered. Campbell took unilateral action and established one university for P.E.I., and disbanded all the local school authorities, establishing five school boards for the entire Island. He signed the Comprehensive Development Plan, "a fifteen-year federal-provincial agreement to restructure and rationalize the Island's economy and society," the epitome of a high modernist project.<sup>12</sup>

**Figure 5.1 – Walter R. Shaw and Alex B. Campbell**



Source: MacLauchlan, *Alex B. Campbell*, 99. The picture shows the two at the 1969 First Ministers' Conference. Shaw, Opposition Leader at the time, was invited to attend by Campbell.

<sup>12</sup> Milne, "Politics in the Garden," 48.

Four characteristics of high modernism, as defined by James C. Scott, are relevant to my assessment of the Shaw government. These include an administrative ordering of society; a belief in the potential for comprehensive planning; a disposition by government to use the coercive power of the state; and, a civil society without the capacity to resist.<sup>13</sup> While Shaw exhibited a penchant for comprehensive studies and planning, the third and fourth conditions were definitely not part of his time in office. His actions in the modernization of the school system were cautious and based on requests from local districts. He firmly believed the local authorities were responsible and the provincial government's role was to encourage and facilitate. He did not waver from that position. He refused to push SDU and PWC to closer co-operation and only moved on consolidation at the elementary level when districts came forward with proposed amalgamations. But his period of power clearly served as a transition phase for the process of consolidation at the elementary level. The debate changed from whether or not to consolidate to one concerned with how large schools should be. The transition was facilitated by Shaw and paved the way for the later more directive approach used by Campbell. It was clear though that there was general agreement that consolidation was the road to follow, as Smitheram noted:

The fact that the Conservatives under the Shaw administration laid the groundwork and the Liberals under Alexander B. Campbell carried out the process of change indicates that there was a broad political acceptance of the direction to be taken.<sup>14</sup>

Civil society provided the impetus for change during the Shaw administration, especially at the high school and post-secondary level. In the 1950s, numerous groups, led by the Federation of Agriculture, the Women's Institutes, the Catholic Women's

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<sup>13</sup> Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 4-5.

<sup>14</sup> Smitheram, "School Consolidation", 200.



League, and the Home and School Association led campaigns to push the government to reform the system and provide better access to high school for rural students. In the 1960s, citizen groups again led the push for PWC to gain degree granting status, and later for the two institutions to be amalgamated. The formal political system also provided citizens with a direct voice in the reform of the education system. Shaw won in 1959 partially because of his promise to pay education supplements, viewed by many rural districts as the means to equalize the system by addressing their inability to compete with urban districts for quality teachers. His second election win can be viewed as a referendum on his first term performance. His defeat in 1966 was narrow, suggesting that voters were not opposed to Shaw's general direction but rather opted for the more aggressive approach and fashionable style promised by Campbell. Campbell's massive wins in 1970 and 1974 suggests that this approach met the voters' approval.<sup>15</sup>

While David Milne provides a detailed description of Island politics, labelling it the "sport of politics," he missed a critical point. Politics was, and still is, intensely personal as most people knew the candidates and met them on a regular basis through their daily life. In 1966, only one riding of sixteen had more than 5,000 voters and there were ten ridings with less than 2,500 voters. There was ample opportunity to provide your local member with your views on any subject.<sup>16</sup> Politicians had to be well aware of general trends and the possibility of actions that directly affected one group or one family. In the close 1966 election, if fewer than one hundred voters switched from the

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<sup>15</sup> In 1970, Campbell won 27 of the 32 seats and in 1974 he won 26 seats. (<http://www.electionspei.ca/index.php?number=1047269>)

<sup>16</sup> Elections Prince Edward Island, Historical Election Results, 1966 Results, <http://www.electionspei.ca/pdfs/ceoreports/results/1966Report.pdf> Downloaded Nov. 11, 2014. My mother bemoaned her choice in 1966 because she had to choose between her brother and her next door neighbour. In the end, her neighbour Earle Hickey won. I have no idea who she voted for.

Liberals to the Conservatives in the appropriate ridings, there would have been a convincing win for Shaw with an eight seat majority.<sup>17</sup> Even today, with dual ridings eliminated, the twenty-seven ridings are exceptionally small with approximately four thousand eligible voters each. Any government that is too far ahead, or too far behind, the wishes of the electorate will soon suffer the wrath of the voters.

And Shaw lagged too far behind. His philosophy of relying on voluntary action to consolidate the local districts and elementary schools left too much discretion to those authorities. There was a need for state direction as clearly shown by the subsequent actions of Alex Campbell: to establish proper boundaries; to adequately deal with those areas that were being left behind through the negligence or complacency of their local authority; and to push against the existing power structures that resisted needed change as in the case of PWC and SDU.

Labelling an administration a success or a failure is a dubious task because the choice of criteria is constantly shifting and never truly reflective of the era in question. Walter R. Shaw and his government achieved much in the seven years of power. A comparison to his contemporaries in the Maritimes, Robert Stanfield and Louis J. Robichaud provides a starting point for an evaluation. Geoffrey Stevens writes that Stanfield implemented an impressive list of reforms and progressive measures in Nova Scotia, but that none of those measures were revolutionary and most other provinces made similar advances. Stevens considered Stanfield's greatest contribution to be psychological as he convinced Nova Scotians that they were in control of their future, that it was within themselves and the province as whole to discard the label of "a

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* See the results for Councillor 5<sup>th</sup> Kings, Councillor and Assemblyman 4<sup>th</sup> Queens, Assemblyman 3<sup>rd</sup> Queens, and Assemblyman 4<sup>th</sup> Prince.

backwater, retarded and depressed.”<sup>18</sup> Shaw on the other hand, while he implemented many of the same programs, clung to the belief that Ottawa was needed to haul P.E.I. out of its disadvantaged position, whether that was a causeway or a magical plan for development. Robichaud’s introduction of the Equal Opportunity Program could be labelled revolutionary. Della Stanley refers to Robichaud’s “audacity and courage to rush in where others feared to tread” as he reformed the delivery of government services in New Brunswick.<sup>19</sup> Other provinces watched closely as all struggled with similar issues, but while they eventually moved ahead with comparable programs and more centralization of services, they did so on an incremental basis rather than adopt Robichaud’s approach of everything at once.<sup>20</sup> Shaw could never be termed a disciple of Robichaud’s approach.

It may be more appropriate to compare him to an earlier premier, Angus L. Macdonald. From the same generation and with a similar love of their Scottish heritage, they both had an abiding faith in the power of infrastructure to improve an area’s economy. Stephen Henderson uses the term “infrastructure liberalism” to describe Macdonald’s belief that government had a role in promoting economic development through the provision of strategic infrastructure, with the Halifax bridge and the Canso causeway two prime examples, reminiscent of Shaw’s unrealized causeway project.<sup>21</sup> Macdonald was reticent about direct investment by government for the promotion of industry, although he did so in certain cases. His preferred approach was “to create conditions under which citizens should work out their own salvation,” in many respects

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<sup>18</sup> Stevens, *Stanfield*, 138-140.

<sup>19</sup> Stanley, *Louis Robichaud*, 227.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 225-227.

<sup>21</sup> Henderson, *Angus L. Macdonald*, 212.

similar to Shaw's failed attempt to use adult education, modelled on the Antigonish Movement, as a means of developing the Island's rural economy.<sup>22</sup> Macdonald attended St. Francis Xavier University during the years when Father James Tompkins was the vice-president and would have been exposed to many of his concepts which later led to the Antigonish Movement, even if he did not accept Tompkin's more radical view of class struggle. Certainly, he left St. Francis believing that "all members of society had a common interest and that the state could help elicit their mutual potential."<sup>23</sup> Shaw, especially in his second term, was more willing to extend Macdonald's version of liberalism by supporting direct investment to individual industry but both placed their faith in the modernization of physical and intellectual infrastructure.<sup>24</sup>

However, Leonard Cusack's assessment that "Shaw virtually transformed – kicking and screaming – the Island's agrarian traditional lifestyle into a twentieth century modern lifestyle" needs to be disputed.<sup>25</sup> While the transformation at that time was massive, Shaw did not drag the people of P.E.I. into the modern age, especially in the education sector. It is closer to the truth to say that the people of the Island dragged Shaw into the modern age. There is no doubt that his government did much to contribute to the Island's modernization, but he remained essentially a traditionalist. He viewed the Island as a rural society and his education reforms were geared to maintaining that rural quality. In 1975, he recorded his bitterness at where the program of consolidation led:

The new educational program has now closed the older institutions and new centralized schools have been erected accommodating numbers of pupils who are transferred for miles from their gateways by bus to their respective units of learning. As a result, children do not enjoy the close personal attention of former

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 188-189.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-17.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>25</sup> Cusack, *A Party for Progress*, 160.

years; the intimate contact of the teacher with the scholar and the home has substantially disappeared. The small schools under the jurisdiction of the parents, the community, and its local school board provided a means of community development, neighbourliness and good will that were a distinctive feature of community life. Under the new philosophy, these fine associations are rapidly disappearing and community organization has almost been destroyed.<sup>26</sup>

The Shaw regime is difficult to label because it lacked an overarching philosophical basis; rather, it was a series of unconnected initiatives with the goal of improving life on the Island, especially life in rural P.E.I. In education, Shaw consistently followed an approach based on facilitation rather than direct intervention in the consolidation of schools and their administrative districts. But in industrial promotion and development planning, he abandoned his principles of grass roots, community development in favour of a more directive, top-down approach. His seven years can be best viewed as guiding the Island through a tumultuous transition period from the reactionary times of the immediate post-war period to the Alex Campbell era, with all the inherent difficulties. Without the reforms that Shaw implemented, even if most of those in education were initiated by civil society, Campbell would not have been able to move as quickly as he did. Shaw's evolutionary approach allowed citizens the time to debate and reflect on those critical social and economic issues that needed to be addressed, conditioning Islanders to the extent of the change that would eventually come. In essence, he prepared the way for the next government of Alex Campbell. Shaw, who loved Biblical allusions, was John the Baptist to Campbell's Messiah. That Shaw remained loved and respected by Islanders is a testament to his political skill but even more to his deep understanding of Islanders' wishes and their fears.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Walter R. Shaw, *Tell Me The Tales* (Charlottetown: Square Deal Publications, 1975), 48-49.

<sup>27</sup> "An Island Giant Passes Away" *The Guardian*, 30 May 1981, 1.

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## Appendix 1 –Selected Statistics

| Item  | 1931         | 1941         | 1951        | 1956         | 1961        |
|---|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| PEI population  | 88,038       | 95,047       | 98,429      | 99,285       | 104,629     |
| Farm Population   | 55,478       | 51,067       | 46,855      | 43,296       | 34,753      |
| Canadian Population   | 10,376,786   | 11,506,655   | 14,009,429  | 16,080,791   | 18,238,247  |
| Cdn farm Population   | 3,289,140    | 3,152,449    | 2,911,996   | 2,746,755    | 2,128,400   |
| NS Population   | 512,846      | 577,962      | 642,584     | 694,717      | 737,007     |
| NS Farm Population  | 177,690      | 143,709      | 115,414     | 98,944       | 58,020      |
| NB Population   | 408,219      | 457,401      | 515,697     | 554,616      | 597,936     |
| NB farm Population  | 180,214      | 163,706      | 149,916     | 128,978      | 63,334      |
| # Farms - PEI   | 12,865       | 12,230       | 10,137      | 9,432        | 7,335       |
| # Farms - Canada  | 728,623      | 732,832      | 623,091     | 575,015      | 480,903     |
| Acreage - PEI total   | 1,191,202    | 1,168,868    | 1,095,304   | 1,065,463    | 960,157     |
| Acreage - Canada total  | 163,114,034  | 173,563,282  | 174,046,654 | 173,923,691  | 172,551,051 |
| Acreage - PEI improved  | 765,772      | 737,400      | 645,795     | 645,492      | 579,558     |
| Acreage - Canada improved                                     | 85,732,172   | 91,636,065   | 96,852,826  | 100,326,243  | 103,403,426 |
| Distribution by Total Acreage PEI                             |              |              |             |              |             |
| 50 or less acres  | 3,742        | 3,428        | 2,114       | 1,848        | 1,020       |
| 51-100  | 5,071        | 4,696        | 3,806       | 3,437        | 2,413       |
| 101-200   | 3,418        | 3,412        | 3,447       | 3,293        | 2,837       |
| >200  | 634          | 694          | 770         | 854          | 1,065       |
| Distribution by Total Acreage - Canada                        |              |              |             |              |             |
| 50 or less acres  | 123,811      | 110,546      | 89,872      | 79,263       | 53,560      |
| 51-100  | 148,255      | 159,159      | 123,411     | 109,652      | 77,837      |
| 101-200   | 233,306      | 230,298      | 173,895     | 154,803      | 125,672     |
| >200  | 223,251      | 232,559      | 235,913     | 231,297      | 223,834     |
| # of farms with electric power delivered by power line PEI    | not reported | not reported | 2,152       | 3,678        | 5,698       |
| # of farms with electric power delivered by power line Canada | not reported | not reported | 294,740     | 405,396      | 409,882     |
| # of farms with Truck PEI                                     | 356          | 465          | 1,614       | 3,089        | 3,011       |
| # of farms with tractors PEI                                  | 169          | 570          | 2,714       | 4,588        | 5,116       |
| # of farms with combine PEI                                   | nil          | 4            | 18          | 238          | 644         |
| # of farms with milking machines PEI                          | 27           | not reported | 445         | not reported | 1,335       |
| # of farms with Truck Canada                                  | 46,365       | 72,976       | 182,255     | 248,474      | 255,428     |
| # of farms with tractors Canada                               | 97,262       | 152,607      | 342,658     | 388,816      | 384,633     |
| # of farms with combine Canada                                | 8,750        | 18,303       | 86,631      | 130,384      | 147,144     |
| # of farms with milking machines Canada                       | 6,410        | not reported | 70,883      | not reported | 106,119     |
| # of farms by Value of Products sold - PEI                    |              |              |             |              |             |
| \$10,000 and more   |              |              | 72          | not reported | 315         |
| \$5000-9999   |              |              | 440         | not reported | 895         |
| 2,500-4,999   |              |              | 1,844       | not reported | 1,676       |
| 1,200-2,499   |              |              | 2,898       | not reported | 1,644       |
| under 1,200   |              |              | 4,883       | not reported | 2,805       |
| # of farms by Value of Products sold - Canada                 |              |              |             |              |             |
| \$10,000 and more   |              |              | 21,243      | not reported | 49,841      |
| \$5000-9999   |              |              | 69,019      | not reported | 90,419      |
| 2,500-4,999   |              |              | 144,828     | not reported | 118,777     |
| 1,200-2,499   |              |              | 151,290     | not reported | 94,256      |
| under 1,200   |              |              | 236,711     | not reported | 127,610     |
| # of farms reporting off farm work PEI                        |              |              |             |              |             |
| more than 6 months or 127 days                                |              |              | 2,988       | 2,016        | 2,470       |
| # of farms reporting off farm work Canada                     |              |              | 172,092     | 129,633      | 153,675     |
| more than 6 months or 127 days                                |              |              | 72,973      | 72,181       | 81,814      |

Data for 1931, 1941, 1951 taken from "Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Department of Trade and Commerce, Ninth Census of Canada 1951, Vol. VI Agriculture Part 1; Queen's Printer, Ottawa, 1953.

Data for 1956: "Census of Canada 1956, Agriculture, Canada" Bulletin 2-11, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Queen's Printer, Ottawa, 1957.

Data for 1961: 1961 Census of Canada, Agriculture, Canada, Bulletin 5.1 -1, Queen's Printer, Ottawa, June 1963 (Dominion Bureau of Statistics) and 1961 Census of Canada, Agriculture, Prince Edward Island, Bulletin 5.1 -3, Queen's Printer, Ottawa, June 1963 (Dominion Bureau of Statistics)