

## **Party Politics and Religious Controversialism in Prince Edward Island from 1860 to 1863**

Ian Ross Robertson

Volume 7, numéro 2, spring 1978

URI : [https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad7\\_2art02](https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad7_2art02)

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The Department of History of the University of New Brunswick

ISSN

0044-5851 (imprimé)

1712-7432 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Robertson, I. R. (1978). Party Politics and Religious Controversialism in Prince Edward Island from 1860 to 1863. *Acadiensis*, 7(2), 29–59.

IAN ROSS ROBERTSON

# Party Politics and Religious Controversialism in Prince Edward Island from 1860 to 1863

At the end of 1859 Edward Whelan, Prince Edward Island's brilliant Irish Roman Catholic journalist and Liberal politician, declared his intention "never, if possible, to take any part in religious disputes".<sup>1</sup> Over the years Whelan and other Island Reformers frequently argued that the land question was the leading public issue in the colony; all other items on the political agenda were to be considered in its light. Indeed, many Reformers advocated responsible government primarily as an instrument for converting leasehold tenure to freehold. The Liberals held office, with one brief interruption, from 1851 and the concession of responsible government through 1859, when the Tories returned to power led by Edward Palmer, at age 49 a veteran of 25 years in the Assembly. Tall, spare, and unsmiling, Palmer was somewhat colourless; Whelan, himself endowed with sparkling wit and eloquence, once wrote of the Tory leader that "no man appears to greater disadvantage in argument. He has a poor command of language — ekes out with apparent pain whatever he has to say, and with a gesture and manner by no means prepossessing". Yet Whelan recognized that Palmer was not without his strengths: "He has, however, keen perception — no small share of cunning — inexhaustible force of character".<sup>2</sup> It was this shrewdness which led Palmer in the latter half of the 1850s, after the Franchise Bill of 1853 had created virtually universal adult male suffrage, to shift the focus of Conservative attack in the House of Assembly. Instead of lamenting the constitutional changes which had put the local oligarchy on the defensive, Palmer sought to divide Liberal supporters. Nonetheless, when he pointed to shortcomings in the government's legislation on the land question, he had only limited political success, no doubt owing to public perception of the leading Tories as pillars of the local "family compact", with a strong material interest in the preservation of the *status quo*. No matter how frustrated Island tenants and squatters might become over the failure of the Liberals' programme to liquidate leasehold tenure, they were unlikely to turn for remedies to Tory politicians like the Havilands, the Yeos, the Popes, and Edward Palmer, who were also proprietors and

<sup>1</sup> *Examiner* (Charlottetown), 26 December 1859.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 April 1854. Also see Ian Ross Robertson, "Edward Palmer", *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, XI (forthcoming), and "Edward Whelan", *ibid.*, IX (Toronto, 1976), pp. 828-35.

### 30 *Acadiensis*

land agents. The land question was clearly not an issue which could bring the Tories back to power.

It was the Bible question which provided the opposition with their opening in the late 1850s. In fact, Palmer's Tories won the election of 1859 largely because of the reaction of militant Protestants to an apparent attempt by the Roman Catholic bishop of Charlottetown to exclude Bible-reading from religiously-mixed public schools.<sup>3</sup> The Tories were able to turn to political advantage the fears of Protestant voters, who deserted the Liberals in large numbers. The Bible question died in 1860 when the new government provided a statutory guarantee for Bible-reading when desired by the parents of students (the minimum demand of ultra-Protestants). The statute also protected against such biblical instruction becoming the basis of controversial discussions or proselytization in the classroom, by stipulating that the reading be "without comment, explanation or remark".<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, while the latter provision calmed the fears of the Roman Catholic population and appeared to remove religion from Island politics, mutual suspicions remained. In a sense, the Tory Party had come to power on an issue based on a misunderstanding by Protestants of Roman Catholic intentions, and vice versa. Prominent Conservatives had not scrupled to take advantage of the situation to excite passions, and their party had ridden into office on the crest of a wave of virtual hysteria in Protestant districts. One result was a lingering sense of grievance among Island Roman Catholics, who had been dramatically reminded that they were a minority regarded with suspicion, if not hostility, by many Protestants, and particularly the Protestant clergy, who had suddenly emerged as a major political force in the colony. Thus as Prince Edward Island entered the 1860s it was anything but a harmonious, tightly-knit community of people who defined themselves simply as "Islanders". The colonists remained intensely conscious of their ethnic and religious identities and between 1860 and 1863 sectarian politics took root in Prince Edward Island to an unprecedented extent.

On 1 May 1860 the Prince of Wales College Act appeared before the House of Assembly for third reading. The Act was innocuous: it raised the Central Academy, a publicly-supported grammar school in Charlottetown, to the status of a college, named it in honour of Edward, Prince of Wales, who was to visit the colony later in 1860, inaugurated new courses of instruction, and provided salaries capable of attracting two first-rate professors. In the matter of religion, the principles of the old Academy were followed, for no religious tests or instruction of any kind were prescribed. As assurance to those who had suspected certain Protestant ministers — particularly the Rev. George Sutherland of the Free Church of Scotland, a consistent

<sup>3</sup> See Ian Ross Robertson, "The Bible Question in Prince Edward Island from 1856 to 1860", *Acadiensis*, V (Spring, 1976), pp. 3-25.

<sup>4</sup> 23 Vic., c.14, s.12.

advocate of the replacement of the Academy by a college — of urging the creation of the College in order to obtain sinecures, the government inserted the following clause into the Act: “No Clergyman, Pastor or Minister of any sect or denomination of Christians, having the spiritual charge of any Parish or Congregation, shall be eligible or be appointed Professor in the said College”.<sup>5</sup> In creating a collegiate institution which offered purely secular instruction, with no “open Bible”, even after class, the “Protestant Government” of Palmer did with impunity what a “mixed” administration might have been incapable of. The secularism of the College aroused no criticism in the Protestant-controlled press. Indeed, the *Monitor*, which less than a year earlier had called for the Bible in the Central Academy, blurted out that “Prince of Wales College is, we are pleased to find, altogether devoted to secular learning . . . This, in a country where every man is free to worship God in the manner he considers right, is as it should be”.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, Roman Catholics were suspicious. Whelan’s *Examiner* referred to the College as “the new sectarian institution”, claimed that the two professors “may be Ministers of any denomination except the Catholic”, and called the Act “a measure eminently calculated to widen the breach between Catholics and Protestants”.<sup>7</sup>

In the House, Liberal Catholic assemblyman Francis Kelly moved that third reading of the bill be postponed until the next session.<sup>8</sup> When this motion failed, Kelly moved a second amendment, which was also in vain:

... whereas the Roman Catholic inhabitants of this Colony number nearly one half of its entire population, and . . . for several years now past, have from their own resources, without any assistance from the Treasury, erected and established a College in the Royalty of Charlottetown for the education of youth, which is now in full operation, and in which are taught the several courses and branches enumerated in this Act, with the exception of the German language, and in which any of the said inhabitants desirous of giving their children education and instruction in the said superior courses and branches of education have every facility for so doing; and it is but just and reasonable that when the said Roman Catholic inhabitants will have to contribute nearly one half of the endowment provided under this Act, as well as the other expences [*sic*] attending the establishment of the Prince

<sup>5</sup> 23 Vic., c.17, s.9. A similar provision was in the Central Academy’s statute; see 10 Geo.IV, c.9, s.5.

<sup>6</sup> *Monitor* (Charlottetown), 16 May 1860; also see *ibid.*, 24 May 1859. This seeming inconsistency might be explained by reference to the diverse associate editors of the publisher, J.B. Cooper: Palmer, Sutherland, the Rev. David Fitzgerald, an Anglican clergyman who had been a leader in the Bible question agitation, and Donald Currie, a former teacher who had been assistant master at the Central Academy from February 1859 to June 1860. See Ian Ross Robertson, “Donald Currie”, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, X (Toronto, 1972), p. 211.

<sup>7</sup> *Examiner*, 1 May 1860.

<sup>8</sup> Prince Edward Island, House of Assembly, *Journal*, 1860, p. 186.

of Wales College, that the said Catholic College should, at least, have a similar provision for the professors therein: Be it therefore enacted, That for and during the continuance of this Act, there shall be paid to the professors of St. Dunstan's College the sum of three hundred pounds, in the way and manner prescribed aforesaid.<sup>9</sup>

This, said the *Protestant and Evangelical Witness*, was "one of the coolest attempts on the part of the Romanists, to thrust their hands into the public chest of a Protestant country of which we have ever heard".<sup>10</sup> Although defeated by votes of ten to five and twelve to four, Kelly's motions, both supported by Opposition Leader George Coles, were highly significant: he was demanding the public endowment of Saint Dunstan's College as a right, on the basis that it was doing similar work to a parallel government institution. The only possible precedent for such a claim had occurred in 1829, when Bishop Angus B. MacEachern wrote to the Governor-in-Council soliciting a salary for a priest to establish a grammar school at St. Andrews, 15 miles east of Charlottetown. The intention announced in the Throne Speech of 1829 to create the Central Academy (which did not open until 1836) had prompted the request, which the Assembly rejected because the proposed public institution would be "quite free and open to the youth of all persuasions".<sup>11</sup> Although St. Andrew's College, founded in 1831, did receive limited encouragement from the colonial government until it closed in 1845, the principle that public and denominational higher institutions had equal claims on the Treasury had never been accepted.<sup>12</sup>

At another level, the year 1860 marked a turning point in the evolution of the Roman Catholic attitude towards the public educational system of the Island. On 8 May Father Peter MacIntyre succeeded Bernard D. MacDonald, who had died in December 1859, as bishop of Charlottetown. Bishop MacIntyre was a different man from his predecessor, whose personality was shy and retiring, and who had no pretensions to political power. An Island native born in 1818, educated at St. Andrew's College, Le Petit Séminaire in St. Hyacinthe, and Le Grand Séminaire in Quebec, the new bishop had been a highly successful parish priest in western Prince County before being called to the episcopate. MacIntyre was proud, energetic, and ultramontane in his views. In 1865 he would warmly recommend the Syllabus of Errors to the attention of the clergy and laity of his diocese, endorsing the attack

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187. In complaining of lack of government support for Saint Dunstan's, Kelly neglected to mention that a small amount (£75) had been granted in 1858; see *ibid.*, 1858, p. 76.

<sup>10</sup> *Protestant and Evangelical Witness* (Charlottetown), 5 May 1860 [hereafter referred to as *Protestant*].

<sup>11</sup> P.E.I., Assembly, Journal, 17 March 1829, Public Archives of P.E.I. [PAPEI]; also see 5 March 1829.

<sup>12</sup> See Robertson, "The Bible Question in Prince Edward Island from 1856 to 1860", p. 17, n. 65.

upon "all these pestiferous doctrines of modern times".<sup>13</sup> At the Vatican Council of 1869-70 it appears that he was the only Infallibilist among the Maritime bishops.<sup>14</sup> On the local scene, MacIntyre did not readily recognize bounds to his own authority. Alexander Mackenzie once described him as "a ponderous political personage",<sup>15</sup> and if the adjective "ponderous" is taken to mean "weighty and unwieldy", it is accurate, for although the new bishop gathered much political power in his hands over the years, he did not learn to use it skilfully. He could control large numbers of votes but was unable to reap proportionate advantages, owing to a personality more suited to dealing with administrative inferiors than with political equals, and to his surprising political naïveté. Indeed, so orthodox an observer as the Roman Catholic priest and historian Father John C. Macmillan wrote that

Bishop MacIntyre . . . was not a politician . . . in matters political he lacked judgment and stability. As a rule he saw only one side of a political issue . . . any other view-point was scarcely worthy of his consideration. When he had set his heart upon a certain object it was practically impossible to convince him that it could not be obtained, for his policy was to look straight at the goal in lofty disregard of the many obstacles that might lie in the way. In matters in which the Church alone was concerned, and in which he had to deal only with members of his own flock, he was eminently successful. His strong personality and undoubted sense of right carried all before him; but when he descended to the political arena . . . the case was widely different, and it is therefore a moot question, whether a man less autocratic than he, might not have achieved more beneficial results in the complicated cause of Catholic Education.<sup>16</sup>

If the bitterness of Island Roman Catholics created an unnecessary issue out of the Prince of Wales College Act, the bellicosity of the evangelical Protestants and their allies was equally responsible for the outbreak of religious polemics in late 1860. The editor of the *Islander*, William Henry Pope, who was also colonial secretary and who had held back during discussion of the College Act, merely

<sup>13</sup> Circular to the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese of Charlottetown (from MacIntyre), 29 August 1865, Bishop Peter MacIntyre Papers, Archives of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Charlottetown [ADC]. Access to this collection was granted by Father Faber MacDonald.

<sup>14</sup> See Lawrence Landrigan, "Peter MacIntyre, Bishop of Charlottetown, P.E.I.", *Canadian Catholic Historical Association Report*, 1953, p. 90; John C. Macmillan, *History of the Catholic Church in Prince Edward Island from 1835 to 1891* (Quebec, 1913), pp. 283-4.

<sup>15</sup> Mackenzie to Richard Cartwright, confidential, 4 September 1873, Richard J. Cartwright Papers, Public Archives of Ontario.

<sup>16</sup> Macmillan, *History of the Catholic Church in P.E.I. from 1835 to 1891*, p. 330. Macmillan had been a parish priest under MacIntyre from 1889 until the latter's death in 1891. Compare the less critical appraisal by another priest-historian: Landrigan, "Peter MacIntyre, Bishop of Charlottetown, P.E.I.", pp. 88-90, 92.

wishing the College well, erupted in an editorial entitled “The Temporal Power of the Pope”. Dealing with the Italian question, the burden of William Pope’s argument was that Englishmen and their colonists should sympathize with Garibaldi and the Italian Nationalists as they had with the Greeks in the time of Byron, for like the inhabitants of the other birthplace of Western Civilization a generation earlier, the Italians were locked in combat with tyranny. Although Pius IX had the “piety, learning, and gentleness of disposition” to exercise the spiritual functions of the Papacy, the days of Canossa were gone forever, and the world regarded the excommunication of King Victor Emmanuel II as “the cursings of an impotent old man, . . . saved from the fury of his revolted subjects only by the presence of a foreign force”.<sup>17</sup>

Far removed as it may seem to have been from the issues of local politics, the Italian question was a subject of warm discussion among Islanders, for the Roman Catholic population regarded Garibaldi and his Redshirts not as romantic patriot-heroes, but as mere brigands. Furthermore, they interpreted English sympathy with the Nationalists as a function of Protestant bigotry. After several weeks Father Angus McDonald, rector of Saint Dunstan’s College and throughout this period the Catholic protagonist in public discussions of inflammatory topics, reminded Pope that Catholics as well as Protestants paid his salary as colonial secretary, and accused him of disrespect for the religious beliefs of Catholics, suggesting that Pope was playing upon Protestant prejudices in order to mitigate the unpopularity resulting from his sale of the large Worrell Estate to the government in questionable circumstances several years earlier.<sup>18</sup> Pope, who was known as an “infidel” (the local generic term for those lacking orthodox religious convictions), retorted that he had not sneered at Catholic beliefs, but only at the “absurd” temporal claims of His Holiness.<sup>19</sup> When the rector replied with a long letter defending the temporal prerogatives of the Papacy, Pope responded that while he had the “highest respect” for the local bishop, he would continue to deny the “monstrous pretensions” of “the poor old Pope”.<sup>20</sup> Other non-Catholics, with more conventional religious beliefs than the colonial secretary, were quickly drawn into the controversy, which dragged on for several weeks, involving such questions as the Eucharist and the immutability of Church doctrines. Pope ceased to reply after McDonald hinted that Pope was “a disciple of Voltaire” and compared him to the Jews who crucified Christ. At that point the colonial secretary stated that “The

<sup>17</sup> *Islander* (Charlottetown), 7 December 1860; also see *ibid.*, 22 June 1860.

<sup>18</sup> See letter of McDonald, 22 January 1861, in *ibid.*, February 1861; Ian Ross Robertson, “Angus McDonald”, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, XI (forthcoming), and “William Henry Pope”, *ibid.*, X, pp. 593-4.

<sup>19</sup> *Islander*, 1 February 1861.

<sup>20</sup> Letter of McDonald, 2 February 1861, and editorial in *ibid.*, 8 February 1861.

correspondence has become too personal to be interesting. The Priest has lost his temper — we our patience — . . . no good can possibly result from further discussion on the matter”.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, the exchange between Pope and McDonald marked the beginning of genuine religious disputation in the press (formerly one side would simply abuse or satirize the other, without receiving a direct answer), and it was the first incident in a long feud between the colonial secretary and the rector of Saint Dunstan’s.

Neither “Father Angus” nor W.H. Pope was a tranquil spirit. In his penchant for controversy, Father Angus was completely unlike Alexander Inglis, the first principal of Prince of Wales College, whose only communication with the press in his eight years on the Island stated that “my motto is, and ever has been, to mind my own business, and nothing else”.<sup>22</sup> Although Inglis, a Scottish elder of the Kirk Presbytery, remained calm in the face of the *Examiner’s* constant provocation, McDonald had no such patience with his tormentors. As a result, he had little peace in the early 1860s, while Inglis was soon able to carry on his work in the absence of controversy. Pope became the *bête noire* of the Liberals, as did the rector for the militant Protestants. Widely regarded — or conceded — to be the most capable and politically influential government official,<sup>23</sup> Pope also came to be more hated than any other figure in Palmer’s administration, although owing to the system of “non-departmentalism” followed by the government, the colonial secretary was not a member of either branch of the Legislature.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps the most infuriating thing about Pope, who was brilliant intellectually and reputedly an acquaintance of such figures as Dickens and Thackeray, was his calm and deliberate manner in contemptuously dismissing those who differed with him, after disposing of their arguments. Utterly audacious and fearless, he was more literate and learned than most of his contemporaries (and therefore more effective), he had a strong logical mind, and he was well aware of his own abilities.

In this atmosphere of resurgent denominational bickering over the winter of 1860-61, even military matters which would normally have little or nothing to do with religion were sucked into the whirlpool of sectarian controversy, and in turn became causes of further recriminations.<sup>25</sup> The rising level of sectarian ill will did not correspond with the wishes of at least three leading Tories; Palmer, Lt.-Col.

<sup>21</sup> Letter of McDonald, 26 February 1861, and editorial in *ibid.*, 8 March 1861.

<sup>22</sup> Letter of Inglis, 15 December 1862, in *Examiner*, 15 December 1861.

<sup>23</sup> See Whelan’s comment in *ibid.*, 11 April 1859.

<sup>24</sup> On “non-departmentalism”, see D.C. Harvey, “Dishing the Reformers”, *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 3rd ser., vol. XXV, sect. II (1931), pp. 37-44.

<sup>25</sup> See Ian Ross Robertson, “Religion, Politics, and Education in Prince Edward Island from 1856 to 1877” (unpublished M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1968), pp. 82-91, for the McGill-Dundas affair and the Volunteer question.



John Hamilton Gray (who became Leader of the Government in the Assembly after Palmer went to the Legislative Council in January 1860), and William Pope all appear to have been anxious to effect a reconciliation with the Roman Catholic population. Pope was a clear-headed political strategist and his primary objective, whether as colonial secretary or as editor of the *Islander*, was to maintain the dominance of his class and his party, not to resolve the question of the Papacy's place in the modern world. His career, time and again before and after this period, offers clear proof that his attitude to the Roman Catholic Church was determined by circumstance and political opportunism.<sup>26</sup> Thus he, like Palmer and Gray, was concerned to find common ground with the spiritual leaders of 45 percent of the electorate, at least in the absence of an obvious means of mobilizing the other 55 percent. Initially, this relaxation of tensions between the government and the Roman Catholic population was to take two forms: placing Catholics on the Board of Education (which was then composed entirely of Protestants) and easing restrictions on the licensing of teachers. Having enlarged the Board in number from seven to nine, the government hoped to seize this opportunity to appoint two Roman Catholic members without displacing any Protestants.<sup>27</sup> Palmer and Gray, in the expectation that either the Rev. George Sutherland, who belonged to the Free Church, or the Rev. Robert S. Patterson, who adhered to the Secession Presbytery, would retire upon union of the two churches, appointed the Rev. Thomas Duncan to the Board. But when the union did take place in late 1860, it did not include the Charlottetown congregations and neither Sutherland nor Patterson resigned from the Board.<sup>28</sup> Gray, a prominent Kirk layman, lost courage when faced with the task of telling his own minister, Duncan, that his appointment was cancelled, and decided to honour the commitment. Thus only one seat was left for the Catholics. To sweeten the pill, the Executive Council also offered chairmanship of the Board to Bishop MacIntyre, but he refused both membership and presidency.<sup>29</sup>

The attempt to place Roman Catholics on the Board seemed reasonable, and so

<sup>26</sup> See Mary K. Cullen, "Robert Hutchinson", *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, IX, p. 404; Robertson, "William Henry Pope", *ibid.*, X, p. 597.

<sup>27</sup> See 24 Vic., c.36, s.2. In the course of giving his version of these manoeuvres a year and one-half later Father Angus McDonald claimed, without being contradicted, that securing Catholic representation without removing Protestants already on the Board was the reason behind the expansion of its membership. During the discussion of the measure in the Legislative Council, Palmer did not mention this consideration. See McDonald to the Editor, 4 October 1862, in *Examiner*, 6 October 1862; P.E.I., Legislative Council, *Debates and Proceedings*, 1861, pp. 35-6.

<sup>28</sup> On the union of 1860, see John A. Johnston, "Factors in the Formation of the Presbyterian Church in Canada 1875" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, McGill University, 1955), pp. 17-20; John M. MacLeod, *History of Presbyterianism on Prince Edward Island* (Chicago, 1904), p. 140.

<sup>29</sup> See McDonald to the Editor, 4 October 1862, in *Examiner*, 6 October 1862; P.E.I., Executive Council Minutes, 2 April 1861, PAPEI microfilm.

did the plan to liberalize the granting of licenses to teachers. The existing regulations obliged anyone desiring to teach in the district schools of Prince Edward Island to spend five months at the Normal School to learn the Stow System of pedagogy. In early 1860 the Board had suggested that qualified persons be granted an exemption, and on 19 April 1861 Gray moved in the Assembly that anyone holding a certificate from the professor of a British or colonial "collegiate institute" be permitted to apply for a teaching license without attending the Normal School. A confused debate followed, in which Kelly, apparently unaware of Gray's intentions, moved that persons who had graduated from Prince of Wales, Saint Dunstan's, and Notre Dame Convent (a Catholic girls' school in Charlottetown) within the two years previous to their application for licenses be specifically named as exempted.<sup>30</sup> Gray objected to naming the denominational institutions; he evidently would have preferred to have the Board specifically exempt Saint Dunstan's and Notre Dame students, so that the "Protestant Government" could not be accused of bestowing favours upon Roman Catholic seminaries. Moreover, as soon as Gray had presented his motion, Coles had pointed out that the *raison d'être* of the Normal School was the inculcation of uniform methods of teaching; if future teachers were allowed to follow other avenues into their profession, the work of the Master would be in vain, and the School should be abolished. T. Heath Haviland Jr., a Tory executive councillor, agreed with Coles, and said that if Kelly's amendment were carried, "they might as well lock up the Normal School". A vote was taken, and the amendment lost, fifteen to six, with Coles and five Roman Catholic assemblymen in the minority. It was then moved and carried that Gray withdraw his resolution.<sup>31</sup> In fact, Gray voted for the withdrawal of his own resolution. The attempt to exempt Saint Dunstan's and Notre Dame graduates specifically was probably decisive, for the Tories were anxious to carry out their reconciliation with the Roman Catholics as surreptitiously as possible. As Stanislaus Perry, the sole Acadian assemblyman, admitted, Kelly "went a little too far".<sup>32</sup>

When Gray withdrew his motion, Father Angus McDonald immediately called upon Premier Palmer and charged him with "bad faith", as he had understood that the exemption of Saint Dunstan's graduates "was . . . to be the small end of the wedge". According to McDonald, Palmer "appeared surprised and wrote a letter to the Colonel on the subject. He said that he would bring forward in the [Legislative] Council a resolution something similar to Colonel Gray's". The rector bore the letter to Gray, and the two had a "long conversation" on educational issues. Gray agreed with the justice of McDonald's complaint and promised to support his

<sup>30</sup> See John MacNeil (Secretary to the Board) to the Legislature, 23 February 1860, in P.E.I., Assembly, *Journal*, 1860, appendix J; P.E.I., Assembly, *Debates and Proceedings*, 1861, p. 126; McDonald to the Editor, 4 October 1862, in *Examiner*, 6 October 1862.

<sup>31</sup> P.E.I., Assembly, *Debates*, 1861, pp. 126-7.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

demands after the next election, but advised him to wait until the results of the next census were known, before publicly advocating his claims. As for the motion in the Legislative Council, it appears to have been introduced by a Tory member, Alexander Anderson, and defeated.<sup>33</sup>

While these two attempts to bridge the gap between the Conservative Party and the Catholics of the Island miscarried, William Pope came by chance upon a third avenue towards reconciliation.<sup>34</sup> Sometime in late March or early April 1861 a friend of the bishop, probably assemblyman Nicholas Conroy, a close political associate of the bishop whose niece he had married in 1851, mentioned to Pope that MacIntyre was not visiting Government House because of an imagined slight during the visit of the Prince of Wales in the previous year. Anxious for the government to improve its relations with the bishop, the colonial secretary proceeded to the Episcopal Residence and assured MacIntyre, a stickler for protocol, that the slight was entirely unintentional. Pope and MacIntyre apparently had several conversations about this time, and during one of them, to Pope's surprise, MacIntyre mentioned that a petition for the endowment of Saint Dunstan's College was in preparation. While Pope emphasized that "any views or opinions that he might express were to be taken as his individual opinions, and not regarded in any way or manner as indicating the views or opinions of the Government or its members", he stated that he would support the petition, on condition that Saint Dunstan's become "no more a Roman Catholic College than the Prince of Wales College was a Protestant one". Pope warned the bishop that the "Protestant Government" could not afford to create the impression that it was succumbing to Catholic pressure. Any acquiescence in Roman Catholic views on education would have to be graceful, and apparently spontaneous. The government had to cultivate, and this required time. If the bishop would postpone presentation of his petition, Pope agreed to approach the government, its supporters, and the Protestant ministers.<sup>35</sup>

Pope reported this conversation, along with the others, to Palmer. While Palmer and Gray (with whom Bishop MacIntyre intervened personally) appear to

<sup>33</sup> McDonald to the Editor, 4 October 1862, in *Examiner*, 6 October 1862; the motion arose in the committee-of-the-whole, and there is no record of it in P.E.I., Legislative Council, *Journal*, 1861. It received the support of the sole Roman Catholic Legislative Councillor; see Patrick Walker in P.E.I., Legislative Council, *Debates*, 1861, p. 40.

<sup>34</sup> For the way in which this controversial sequence of events, for which there are no contemporary written sources, has been reconstructed, see Robertson, "Religion, Politics, and Education in Prince Edward Island from 1856 to 1877", Note A, pp. 150-2.

<sup>35</sup> See Ian Ross Robertson, "Nicholas Conroy", *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, X, pp. 194-5; Conroy in P.E.I., Assembly, *Debates*, 1863, p. 42; letter of Conroy, 3 June 1863, in *Monitor*, 11 June 1863; the signed editorial of Pope in *Islander*, 3 October 1862; *Examiner*, 11 May 1863; Macmillan, *History of the Catholic Church in P.E.I. from 1835 to 1891*, p. 247. Pope appears to have advocated a grant of £300; see Daniel Brennan to McDonald, 4 October 1862, in *Examiner*, 6 October 1862.

have agreed in principle with the colonial secretary,<sup>36</sup> the three men failed to convince other Tories of the wisdom of their design. In writing of his own role, Pope later said that

He did all he could; as is well known to many, but . . . his exertions were not successful. No member of the Government would consent to advocate the grant, unless every one of their supporters in the Assembly would declare in favour of it, and that the Protestant Ministers would consent to it. The majority of them would not listen to such a thing, under any circumstances. The Speaker of the Assembly, and the majority of the members spoken to expressed themselves adverse to it.<sup>37</sup>

It proved impossible to obtain the unanimity which the executive councillors wanted before making any commitment, and the Protestant clergy, with Sutherland playing a conspicuous role, refused to co-operate.<sup>38</sup> The reasons for the adamant refusal of the government and its supporters, both lay and clerical, to agree to Pope's scheme were probably two-fold: they did not want to support two colleges instead of one, when they believed too much money was already being drained from the Treasury by reason of the Free Education Act bequeathed to them by their Liberal predecessors,<sup>39</sup> and they feared that Bishop MacIntyre, once in possession of the grant, would attempt to alter its conditions.<sup>40</sup> Hence, said Pope, "all but two members [of the Palmer Government] were adverse to such a grant".<sup>41</sup> When MacIntyre was informed of the opposition of the supporters of the government and the anticipated opposition of the Protestant constituencies to any request for financial support for his educational projects,

His Lordship exhibited much warmth of temper, walked across the room, and declared, with emotion, that he had no hesitation in stating that, in consequence of the gross injustice done to Catholics he would, at the next election, use his utmost influence to overturn the present party. That it had been said that Catholics, at the last election, were united, but at the next election, a difference would be seen. He would do the utmost in his power to defeat the Government.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>36</sup> See signed editorials of Pope in *Islander*, 3, 10 October 1862; *Monitor*, 8 October 1862; McDonald to the Editor, 4 October 1862, in *Examiner*, 6 October 1862; letter of Pope, undated, in *Protestant*, 25 October 1862.

<sup>37</sup> Signed editorial of Pope in *Islander*, 10 October 1862.

<sup>38</sup> See *Examiner*, 20 October 1862, which cites a letter written by Conroy (never published in its entirety); also McDonald to the Editor, 4 October 1862, in *ibid.*, 6 October 1862.

<sup>39</sup> See Robertson, "Religion, Politics, and Education in Prince Edward Island from 1856 to 1877", pp. 143-5.

<sup>40</sup> Pope makes this point in his undated letter in *Protestant*, 25 October 1862.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*; the two were Palmer and Gray.

<sup>42</sup> Signed editorial of Pope in *Islander*, 3 October 1862. Bishop MacIntyre never denied having made this statement, although invited several times by Pope to do so.

Pope reminded MacIntyre that this course of action would only serve to unite the Protestant majority of the Island. Whatever the bishop thought of this political advice, he apparently was not angry with the colonial secretary, for when Pope was leaving, he “shook him by the hand, . . . and declared ‘that he would never forget his kindness’.”<sup>43</sup>

Thus failed the attempt to mollify Roman Catholic opposition to the Palmer regime by finding a compromise solution to the college question. Unlike the miscarriages concerning Catholic membership on the Board of Education and the licensing of teachers, this effort to obtain a grant for Saint Dunstan’s represented no settled policy on the part of the government. William Pope was not a member of the cabinet, and only Palmer and Gray, among the executive councillors, appear to have exhibited any sympathy with the idea. Yet in the broader perspective it deserves to be lumped with the other failures, for the three sequences of events represent attempts by leading Catholics and leading Tories to arrive at a *modus vivendi*. Whether owing to inherent weaknesses in the plans, to chance, or to ill fortune, each came to naught, and the fruit of the three was hostility, not accord. Each side was left believing it had been mistaken in giving the other the benefit of the doubt.

These failures to effect an accommodation represent a watershed in Catholic-Protestant relations. From early 1861 onwards there is virtually a linear progression: verbal violence and personal feuds increased in intensity, almost without cessation, through early 1863. On 15 May 1861 the *Monitor*, under the heading of “Expendiency versus Principle”, revealed that a proposal to endow Saint Dunstan’s College had been made to the Palmer Government, “But they stood the trial under no ordinary temptation, — for the reward of the betrayal was political support at the coming election”. Whelan indignantly replied in an editorial entitled “Catholic Support and its Price”: “they [the Roman Catholics] have asked nothing from the present Government”. He belittled any overtures that had been made as “delusive promises” by “one of the head officials” to “a certain high dignitary of the Catholic Church in this community”.<sup>44</sup> William Pope simply denied that any “delusive promises” had been made, and remarked that “no party the support of which can be *purchased*, can be relied upon”.<sup>45</sup> The *Monitor* added that “Any alliance with Romish priests or their agents must be the most hollow and uncertain possible”.<sup>46</sup> By this time Bishop MacIntyre and his Vicar General, the Very Rev. James MacDonald, had refused a belated offer of two seats on the Board of Education.<sup>47</sup> William Pope had also changed his mind about the prospects for

<sup>43</sup> Signed editorial of Pope in *ibid.*, 10 October 1862.

<sup>44</sup> *Examiner*, 20 May 1861.

<sup>45</sup> *Islander*, 7 June 1861.

<sup>46</sup> *Monitor*, 19 June 1861.

<sup>47</sup> P.E.I., Executive Council Minutes, 16 May, 1 June 1861, PAPEI.

reconciliation between the Conservatives and the Roman Catholic population and had apparently concluded that the Tories would have to appeal solely to the Protestant majority to be re-elected. He expressed this change of attitude in no uncertain terms in the summer of 1861, through a series of public letters "To the Protestants of Prince Edward Island". His central point was simply put: "*as parties now stand, ANY GOVERNMENT OTHER THAN AN EXCLUSIVELY PROTESTANT ONE, MUST OF NECESSITY BE VIRTUALLY A ROMAN CATHOLIC ONE*".<sup>48</sup> Although the first letter abstained from abuse or ridicule of Catholic beliefs or institutions, after Whelan replied with an editorial in which he said that Pope was as much a "Mohametan" as a Wesleyan, the colonial secretary became unrestrained in his invective and his choice of targets.<sup>49</sup> He dwelt particularly upon the political power displayed by Bishop J.T. Mullock in Newfoundland earlier that year, and denounced as "trash" the belief in the Real Presence.<sup>50</sup>

"Pope's Epistles Against the Romans", as Whelan labelled the letters, set the tone for, and provided the theme of the Protestant journals for the next 18 months. Catholic doctrines and "Catholic Ascendancy" became constant fare. David Laird, editor of the *Protestant*, was not to be outdone. In the midst of the dispute over the temporal power of the Papacy, he had declared his belief that "the Rector of St. Dunstan's College venerates the Pope as God".<sup>51</sup> The graduate of a Presbyterian theological seminary and at one time a fellow student of McDonald at the Central Academy, Laird had an obvious relish for controversies which provided him with the opportunity to make liberal use of terms like "Popery" and "Romanism". Many years later William Pope would describe him as being "very influential among the Scotch Presbyterians . . . narrow-minded . . . however a clever, hard-headed fellow, intellectually of the stamp of [Alexander] Mackenzie".<sup>52</sup> But the complimentary part of this description did not fit Laird in the early 1860s, when his editorials were distinguished more by bombast than by logic or artistry. Laird was something of a pawn in Pope's game, a fact which he later came to resent deeply. In any event, with characteristic verve he initiated a lengthy public dispute

<sup>48</sup> Letter of Pope, 18 July 1861, in *Islander*, 19 July 1861; the other three letters are in *ibid.*, 26 July, 2, 9 August 1861. Pope later stated that he had written the letters in the belief that Coles and Whelan were already claiming to have the Catholic population absolutely united behind the Liberal Party; see signed editorial of Pope in *ibid.*, 3 October 1862.

<sup>49</sup> *Examiner*, 22 July 1861. Pope had been born into a Wesleyan family.

<sup>50</sup> Letter of Pope, 25 July 1861, in *Islander*, 26 July 1861. Also see the third letter in the series, undated, in *ibid.*, 2 August 1861; Frederick Jones, "John Thomas Mullock", *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, IX, p. 584.

<sup>51</sup> *Protestant*, 9 February 1861.

<sup>52</sup> Pope to Sir John A. Macdonald, private and confidential, 23 September 1873, Sir John A. Macdonald Papers, vol. 119, p. 48255, Public Archives of Canada [PAC].

by his editorial of 30 November, concerning the "Index Prohibitory". The article opened with the statement that "There is no charge more confidently preferred against the Roman Catholic Church than that she has exerted her influence to repress freedom of thought, and the expression of private opinion". Laird went on to discuss the history and contents of the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, and taunted Saint Dunstan's College and the Catholic Young Men's Literary Institute with the existence of these limitations upon their libraries.<sup>53</sup> Father Angus McDonald replied that the Index was not in force on Prince Edward Island and that his college contained many of the books Laird had listed. He closed by citing Voltaire on the necessity for curbs upon the press.<sup>54</sup> Through December 1861 and the first half of 1862, Laird continued to write editorials in support of his views, and accepted the assistance of abusive anonymous correspondents.

Father Angus' replies were published in the *Examiner*, where he wrote letters in defence of the intellectual achievements and role in education of the Church.<sup>55</sup> While Father Angus eschewed abuse and concentrated on the subject under discussion, the anonymous writers in the *Protestant* were not so fastidious: they excoriated indulgences as licenses to sin, sneered at the Real Presence, and denounced the "tyranny of priests".<sup>56</sup> Finally, in February, Father Angus lost his temper. He accused William Pope of writing under *noms de plume* letters obviously composed "by some low rabid character who holds the same position in the literary world, that a rowdy, blackleg, or pimp does in the social one".<sup>57</sup> Stung into action, Pope in the next *Protestant* proceeded to heap invective on the Roman Catholic Church and its dogmas. Under one of the *noms de plume* in question, he also published a pricelist of indulgences and dispensations, dated 1514.<sup>58</sup> This was quenching the fire by adding more fuel. But then Pope appears to have retired from the quarrel, leaving Laird to take up the slack. The editor of the *Protestant* did not lack enthusiasm, and in an editorial "To the Rector of St. Dunstan's", he warned that "We are prepared, when the proper time comes, to show that the fundamental

<sup>53</sup> *Protestant*, 30 November 1861.

<sup>54</sup> Letter of McDonald, 10 December 1861, in *Examiner*, 16 December 1861.

<sup>55</sup> See letters of McDonald, 31 December 1861, 21, 28 January 1862, in *ibid.*, 13, 27 January, 3 February 1862.

<sup>56</sup> See letters of "Onlooker", "An Orangeman", and "A Protestant" in *Protestant*, 4, 18, 25 January, 1, 8 February 1862.

<sup>57</sup> Letter of McDonald, 12 February 1862, in *Examiner*, 24 February 1862; also see his letter, 8 February 1862, in *ibid.*, 17 February 1862. Father Angus was correct: Pope at a later date admitted that he had written under the pseudonym of "A Protestant". See open letter of Pope to McDonald, 3 October 1862, in *Protestant*, 4 October 1862.

<sup>58</sup> See Pope to McDonald, 28 February 1862, and letter of "A Protestant", 20 February 1862, in *ibid.*, 1 March 1862.

principles of your Church are false".<sup>59</sup> Father Angus, for his part, regained his composure, and resumed his series of letters on "Education and the Church", which continued through the end of March, when he commenced a new series, which lasted until the end of May, on the "dreadful ignorance" and "moral degradation" in Protestant countries like England, Sweden, and Prussia. Laird's editorials "To The Rector of St. Dunstan's" did not cease until after 7 June 1862.

The controversy, which had begun in the previous November, appeared by early June of 1862 to have burned itself out. The over-wrought editorials of Laird and essays of Father Angus no longer filled the columns of the *Protestant* and the *Examiner*. But the rector simply opened a new front. Disturbed that William Pope, while abusing or having abused Roman Catholics through the press, should remain in receipt of a salary which was partially paid by them, Father Angus appealed, directly or indirectly, to three agencies to remove Pope from office: Lieutenant-Governor George Dundas, the Palmer Government, and the Colonial Office in London.<sup>60</sup> Dundas and the government refused to act and although the Duke of Newcastle, secretary of state for the colonies, had no intention of becoming officially involved in such an affair, he was absolutely appalled at Pope's behaviour. In a private communication to Dundas on 22 August, Newcastle made it clear that he expected the lieutenant-governor to advise, if not order, Pope to cease his attacks on Roman Catholic beliefs. "If these discussions continue", he wrote, "those who tolerate them will have much to answer for".<sup>61</sup> Thus, by his private letter, he seemed to have effected one of Father Angus' goals: the silencing of Pope. The rector, apparently aware of Newcastle's unofficial letter, seized upon the Duke's official and rather non-committal reply to Dundas (which had been forwarded to him) and publicly declared that "the answer of his Grace [Newcastle] is much more satisfactory than I thought it would be . . . [He] all but designates [Pope] *unscrupulous and presumptuous*".<sup>62</sup>

Resumption of the feud was occasioned by an editorial in the *Islander* of 19 September, in which Pope declared that "The grand aim of the Roman Catholic Clergy of this Island is to obtain a grant for their College of Saint Dunstan. This they

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 March 1862.

<sup>60</sup> For a detailed account, see Robertson, "Religion, Politics, and Education in Prince Edward Island from 1856 to 1877", pp. 109-20, and Note A, pp. 121-2.

<sup>61</sup> Newcastle to Dundas, private, 22 August 1862, Duke of Newcastle Letterbooks, Letterbook B-4, pp. 230-2, PAC microfilm.

<sup>62</sup> McDonald to the Editor, 27 September 1862, in *Examiner*, 29 September 1862. Also see Newcastle to Dundas, 23 August 1862, Colonial Office [CO] 266/96, pp. 300-2, PAC microfilm; Robertson, "Religion, Politics, and Education in Prince Edward Island from 1856 to 1877", p. 119 and p. 124, n. 4.



cannot procure unless the present Government can be ousted''.<sup>63</sup> The need to stand firm against proposals for such a grant and to defend the use of the Bible in the schools at the next general election was rapidly becoming the central theme of the Conservative press and Pope's words began a carnival of recriminations and *exposés*. Whelan, apparently on the basis of incomplete information (probably passed from the bishop to Father Angus to Whelan), announced that "in the Session of 1861, William H. Pope . . . informed certain Catholic clergymen that it was the wish and intention of the Government to give a grant of the public money in aid of St. Dunstan's College; . . . This proposal came unasked and unexpected".<sup>64</sup> In the next five weeks Pope drove his accusers, who included Whelan, Conroy, McDonald, MacIntyre, and Daniel Brennan, a leading Roman Catholic layman, from the field.<sup>65</sup> On 25 October he closed the controversy by challenging MacIntyre to answer directly four crucial questions about the negotiations of 1861 concerning Saint Dunstan's College: did the bishop initiate discussions on the Saint Dunstan's grant, or not?; did Pope in the first conversation stress that the views he expressed were his alone, or not?; did Pope say that he would support a grant to Saint Dunstan's only if secularized, or not?; and did the bishop say after learning that the government had rejected Pope's plan that he would do his utmost to defeat them, or not? Only a reply from the bishop or someone authorized by him would satisfy Pope, for no one else had been present during their discussions.<sup>66</sup> No reply was forthcoming. It had been a devastating display of Pope's polemical abilities, and it meant that the Palmer Government retained the confidence of Island Protestants: no attempt had been made by "their" government to endow a Roman Catholic institution, and the Executive Council had even spurned its own colonial secretary's plan to endow a secularized Saint Dunstan's College.<sup>67</sup>

In the context of Island politics, the consequences of the exciting five weeks of revelations were momentous. On 17 October 1862 Edward Reilly, a young printer who had worked in the offices of both Laird and Whelan, founded the avowedly

<sup>63</sup> *Islander*, 19 September 1862.

<sup>64</sup> *Examiner*, 22 September 1862.

<sup>65</sup> For details on the revelations of September and October 1862, see Robertson, "Religion, Politics, and Education in Prince Edward Island from 1856 to 1877", Note A, pp. 150-2.

<sup>66</sup> See letter of Pope, undated, in *Protestant*, 25 October 1862; and Pope's signed editorial in *Islander*, 10 October 1862.

<sup>67</sup> Concerning the unreliable nature of Macmillan's account of the Saint Dunstan's negotiations of 1861 and their exposure in 1862 in *History of the Catholic Church in P.E.I. from 1835 to 1891*, pp. 231-5, see Robertson, "Religion, Politics, and Education in Prince Edward Island from 1856 to 1877", Note B, pp. 153-4 and p. 125, n. 9. A briefer and more recent account unfortunately resembles that of Macmillan in many essentials; see Sister Mary Olga McKenna, "The History of Higher Education in the Province of Prince Edward Island", Canadian Catholic Historical Association *Study Sessions*, 1971, pp. 34-5.

Catholic *Vindicator*, as an alternative to reading matter “of a dangerous character, filled with moral poison”. Its policy would be “to overcome prejudice by moderation, good example and reason, rather than by exasperating polemical disputations”. In politics, Reilly’s paper would be “independent”: “we purpose to defend the cause of justice and to vindicate the rights of Catholics . . . . Should our acting thus ruin the Liberal cause, we avow that we do not much fear being troubled with many qualms of conscience for having hastened its destruction”. To those who said that Whelan was already accomplishing the ends of the new journal, the *Vindicator* replied that “the *Examiner* is not a Catholic paper . . . [although] its publisher is a Catholic, and . . . its columns have been open for the maintenance of the rights of Catholics against the assaults of religious and political proscriptionists”.<sup>68</sup> Father Angus McDonald was a very substantial contributor, if not the editor, of the ultramontane *Vindicator*. Whelan would write in 1865 that “The *Vindicator* could not have lived six weeks without the Reverend Rector”, and in later years Reilly explicitly denied having been its “responsible editor”.<sup>69</sup> Father Angus no longer sent signed correspondence to other papers, and most Island journalists simply assumed that he was acting as editor. He never denied or confirmed it, but many of the articles resembled his former contributions to the *Examiner*: essays on Protestant morality, attacks on Garibaldi, satires on Protestant enthusiasm, and references to Prince of Wales College as “the Protestant College”.<sup>70</sup> There was even a series on the Confessional, with William Pope as the imaginary penitent. The *Vindicator* was more faithful to its pledge to pursue relentlessly its conception of Catholic rights than to its declared policy of eschewing “polemical disputations” in favour of “moderation, good example and reason”. Its penchant for personal abuse soon led to its being called “the Vilifier”.<sup>71</sup>

Protestants were not slow to take up the challenge. Citing rash words uttered by Whelan and the bishop, they professed to fear a solid front of Roman Catholics at the next election.<sup>72</sup> For example, at the Young Men’s Christian Association, Protestant lecturers dwelt upon such themes as “the antagonism between Romanism and Protestantism, and the necessity of guarding against the encroachments which

<sup>68</sup> *Vindicator* (Charlottetown), 17 October 1862; Ian Ross Robertson, “Edward Reilly”, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, X, pp. 612-3.

<sup>69</sup> *Examiner*, 24 July 1865; P.E.I., Assembly, *Debates*, 1870, p. 41. Also see McDonald to the Editor, 7 January 1865, in *Examiner*, 9 January 1865.

<sup>70</sup> Bishop MacIntyre himself used this term with reference to Prince of Wales College; see MacIntyre to Mr. Certes (Treasurer of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith), 8 January 1861, MacIntyre Papers, ADC.

<sup>71</sup> Throughout this period, Protestants when abusive usually vented their spleen upon institutions, Roman Catholics upon persons.

<sup>72</sup> See *Examiner*, 14 July 1862; signed editorial of W.H. Pope in *Islander*, 3 October 1862 (in which MacIntyre is quoted).

the former seems yet intent upon making on the rights of conscience''.<sup>73</sup> The answer, of course, was an equally united Protestantism. On 14 October 1862 the United Presbytery (Free Church and Secession) endorsed the Rev. George Sutherland's violently anti-Catholic "Pastoral to the Presbyterians of Prince Edward Island" and six weeks later ordered the publication and distribution of 1,000 copies of that document.<sup>74</sup> The language used by Sutherland was so intemperate that in the early months of the new year it led to a public controversy between him and the ministers who dissented.<sup>75</sup> Even David Laird admitted after the election that "the Pastoral had not our entire approval".<sup>76</sup> It began by asking the rhetorical question, "What, stript of all prejudice from birth or education, is Popery?", and went on to declare that

Like the apocalyptic beast, it has two horns like a *lamb*, but speaks as a *dragon* . . . its peculiar teachings are absolutely soul-destroying . . . they are wholly opposed to the teachings of the Word of God. If the Bible is true, they are not . . . Popery, while professing to educate, fetters, enfeebles, and destroys . . . We presume not to dictate for whom you are to vote; but . . . let the day of trial see you ranged in undivided ranks in favor of a free, independent, and unfettered Protestant Government.<sup>77</sup>

The Orangemen also took action. Between 1859 and 1862 the number of primary lodges had increased from one to fifteen, and in February 1862 the Grand Orange Lodge of Prince Edward Island was founded to establish common policies for, and co-ordinate the activities of, the scattered primary lodges.<sup>78</sup> This striking growth in Orangeism led to alarm among Island Roman Catholics, but many Protestants adopted the attitude of an anonymous correspondent of the *Protestant* in 1861: "the more we hear popish legislators and priests cry out against Orangemen, the more we feel the necessity and efficiency of their organization".<sup>79</sup> On 6

<sup>73</sup> Minutes of the Young Men's Christian Association of P.E.I., 11 December 1862, PAPEI; also see *ibid.*, 18 December 1862, 26 February 1863. These records, acquired by the PAPEI in July 1976, also indicate that the Y.M.C.A. played an active role behind the scenes in the Bible question agitation; see *ibid.*, 22 December 1856.

<sup>74</sup> Minutes of the United Presbytery of P.E.I., 14 October, 26 November 1862, Archives of Pine Hill Divinity Hall, Halifax [APH]. The author wishes to acknowledge the courtesy of the Rev. E. Arthur Betts in allowing him access to the collections at Pine Hill.

<sup>75</sup> See Robertson, "Religion, Politics, and Education in Prince Edward Island from 1856 to 1877", Note C, pp. 155-7.

<sup>76</sup> *Protestant*, 24 January 1863.

<sup>77</sup> From the *Vindicator*, 26 December 1862.

<sup>78</sup> See Grand Orange Lodge of P.E.I., Records, First Annual Report, 1862, pp. 6-7, in the possession of the Executive of the Grand Orange Lodge of P.E.I., who granted access to the author; W.H. Spencer, "Loyal Orange Association", in D.A. MacKinnon and A.B. Warburton, eds., *Past and Present of Prince Edward Island* (Charlottetown, [1906]), p. 231.

<sup>79</sup> Letter of "Scrutator" in *Protestant*, 4 May 1861.

December 1862 Grand Secretary Thomas J. Leeming wrote to fellow-members of the Grand Lodge and called a special meeting to discuss the general election scheduled for January 1863.<sup>80</sup> At the meeting, held on 12 December, the Grand Lodge adopted a "Platform for the Orange Body at the coming Election", containing four questions to be addressed in writing to candidates. The Orangemen desired that prospective legislators pledge to resist public endowment of Saint Dunstan's or any other sectarian institution, to resist disendowment of Prince of Wales College, to standardize regulations for all district schools (a reference to the special relationship of the Roman Catholic Church to French Acadian schools), and to support a petition to incorporate the Grand Orange Lodge of Prince Edward Island. Orangemen in each district were to require answers in writing, and the Grand Lodge resolved that voting for the candidates giving the correct responses was an "absolute necessity".<sup>81</sup> In addition, the Grand Lodge sent out a circular letter enjoining the brethren to "unite as one man" and to "stand 'shoulder to shoulder' in the coming struggle with the enemies of our creed and country".<sup>82</sup>

George Coles was dead wrong when, early in the campaign, he wrote that "Bigotry does not flourish in the land to anything like the extent it did four or five years ago. The so-called 'religious question' has happily not taken root".<sup>83</sup> On the one side were the Liberal Party, the *Examiner*, the *Vindicator*, and the Roman Catholic clergy, and on the other the Tories, the *Protestant*, the *Islander*, the *Monitor*, and various Protestant ministers. James Yeo Sr., the only sitting Tory to contest a Roman Catholic constituency, was the man the Liberals wished to defeat, and defeat him they did. Two days before the election, the *Examiner* declared that "any Catholic, be he French, Irish, or Scotch, who votes for Mr. Yeo, unquestionably disgraces himself, and will have the finger of scorn pointed at him as long as he lives".<sup>84</sup> Of the two Liberal incumbents representing Protestant districts, one lost to David Kaye (who in February became Grand Master of the Orange Association of Prince Edward Island), and the other survived only by moving to a Catholic constituency.

William Pope was in the field, and in the company of Colonel Gray he successfully contested Belfast, the most Presbyterian constituency on the Island. On 7 November he outlined, complete with statistics, how the bishop would attempt to divide Protestants, gerrymander the electoral districts, and then eliminate the Liberal Protestants. "His Lordship the Bishop would be the absolute ruler of Prince

<sup>80</sup> Leeming to an unnamed Orangeman, 6 December 1862, published in *Examiner*, 19 January 1863.

<sup>81</sup> See Grand Orange Lodge of P.E.I. Records, Second Annual Report, 1863, appendix, p. 23, in private possession; *Examiner*, 22 December 1862.

<sup>82</sup> It was published in the *Monitor*, 24 December 1862.

<sup>83</sup> Letter of Coles, "To the Electors of Prince Edward Island", 20 December 1862, in *Examiner*, 22 December 1862.

<sup>84</sup> Editorial in *ibid.*, 19 January 1863.

Edward Island". The lesson was clear: "Let Protestants forget their differences, whatever they are; they are not worthy to be remembered at such a crisis as the present, — let them unite to procure the return of the present party in power". The alternative was "an end to Protestant ascendancy in the Colony".<sup>85</sup> Pope found ready supporters: Laird declared that "the endowment [of Saint Dunstan's] . . . is the PRIESTS LAND QUESTION", and that "So far as priests and bishop are concerned, the whole contest is about St. Dunstan's and the Nunnery".<sup>86</sup> On the Roman Catholic side, Whelan recalled with bitterness the days when no serious friction existed between the religious denominations of Prince Edward Island, and when "no small-souled hypocrite named Sutherland infused his poisonous breath to inflame the pretensions of the one, and to add to the miseries of the other".<sup>87</sup> Relentlessly, he reprinted the Presbyterian Pastoral (in part), the Orange Platform, and the letter from Leeming to the members of the Grand Orange Lodge.<sup>88</sup> Two days before the election he wrote: "thank God, the Catholics *are* thoroughly, closely united . . . to check the proscriptive policy which the Government would fain pursue with regard to the civil rights of the Catholics".<sup>89</sup> For its part, the *Vindicator* professed to believe that the government was arming Orangemen for election day.<sup>90</sup> In vain, *Ross's Weekly*, a paper with a policy of scrupulously abstaining from all political and religious partisanship, appealed for sanity, and a united effort against "the one great evil", namely leasehold tenure.<sup>91</sup>

Despite the level of verbal assaults, there was no physical violence on election day, 21 January 1863.<sup>92</sup> The Conservatives maintained their 18-to-12 margin in the House, but the electorate split totally along religious lines, each Protestant district returning two Conservatives, and each Roman Catholic one, two Liberals. The only Catholic Tory to run lost to a Liberal Protestant by a margin of five-to-two in a Catholic riding.<sup>93</sup> On 11 February the first election for the Legislative Council (which had been made elective in the previous year) gave the Conservatives a resounding nine-to-four victory. Religious lines were as rigid as they had been in January, and again the only Roman Catholic Tory lost. For the Conservatives, the

<sup>85</sup> *Islander*, 7 November 1862.

<sup>86</sup> *Protestant*, 20 December 1862 and 17 January 1863.

<sup>87</sup> *Examiner*, 15 December 1862.

<sup>88</sup> In *ibid.*, 15, 22 December 1862, 19 January 1863, respectively.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 January 1863.

<sup>90</sup> *Vindicator*, 9 January 1863.

<sup>91</sup> *Ross's Weekly* (Charlottetown), 18 December 1862.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 January 1863; Dundas to Newcastle, 31 January 1863, CO 226/98, p. 57. These are the closest we have to impartial observers.

<sup>93</sup> See Ian Ross Robertson, "Emanuel McEachen", *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, X, pp. 472-3; *Examiner*, 26 January 1863.

election was followed by a struggle over the leadership of the government, which lasted from 17 February until 2 March, when Colonel Gray became premier. The change probably had more to do with personalities than with profound differences over public matters, at least concerning religion and education, for in 1861 the two most powerful and influential members of the new government, Gray and William Pope, had been identified with Palmer's moderate position. Aside from the colonial secretary, the leading new member of the Executive Council was David Kaye, who had four days earlier become Orange Grand Master.<sup>94</sup>

The session of 1863, which opened on the day after the formation of the new government, was turbulent throughout. One of the items on the agenda of the first day was the replacement of the Rev. Louis C. Jenkins, an Anglican who apparently had voted Liberal at the recent election, as chaplain to the Assembly and Legislative Council. Both new appointees, Sutherland and the Rev. David Fitzgerald, a Deputy Grand Chaplain of the Grand Orange Lodge, had played leading roles in the politico-religious disputes of the past several years. On the day following the votes on the chaplaincies, Dr. John T. Jenkins, son of the deposed chaplain, became embroiled in an argument on the steps of the Assembly which led to his assaulting the mover of Sutherland's appointment.<sup>95</sup> It was a stormy beginning, and almost typical of the session, during which a group of Liberals walked out whenever Sutherland started to pray.<sup>96</sup> Meanwhile, the *Vindicator* spelled out its educational programme: the endowment of Saint Dunstan's and the removal of the Bible from the schools, the latter on the grounds that "over-familiarization" with some "improper" sections might lead to "outrageous abominations" in the classroom.<sup>97</sup> Father Angus McDonald pursued his personal quarrel with William Pope by writing twice more to the Duke of Newcastle requesting Pope's removal from office. While these letters did not produce the desired result and were not published, they did become known to the government. Father Angus became a thorough *persona non grata* at the Colonial Office and Pope, although forbidden by Dundas to discuss publicly Father Angus' new round of correspondence, intensified his attacks upon Roman Catholic doctrines and institutions.<sup>98</sup>

In such an atmosphere, the legislative debate on Orange incorporation could scarcely be anything but stormy. On 17 March, St. Patrick's Day, Pope introduced a

<sup>94</sup> See Grand Orange Lodge of P.E.I. Records, Second Annual Report, 1863, in private possession. With the new government, "non-departmentalism" became a thing of the past, as elected politicians were once again allowed to hold offices of emolument.

<sup>95</sup> P.E.I., Assembly, *Journal*, 1863, pp. 12-32.

<sup>96</sup> *Examiner*, 16 March 1863.

<sup>97</sup> *Vindicator*, 20, 27 February 1863.

<sup>98</sup> See Robertson, "Religion, Politics, and Education in Prince Edward Island from 1856 to 1877", Note D, pp. 157-9.

bill to incorporate the Grand Orange Lodge of Prince Edward Island. He led the government throughout the debate, which, in the legislative history of the Island, set a new and probably unequalled standard for acrimony. The native-Irish members interpreted the Grand Orange Lodge Incorporation Bill as public endorsement of the principles of Orangeism, and hence a declaration of war. The incorporation of the Order thus became in their minds the ultimate insult, to be prevented at all costs. Pope, on the other hand, opened the debate by asking rhetorically why the Orangemen should be denied the privileges of incorporation if "even the Romish Bishop in this City" could be incorporated. He provocatively referred to the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre and the Gunpowder Plot; he raked up the ashes of John Huss and the martyrs of Smithfield; and, in reference to the Confessional, he declared that "I had rather see my children drowned in the Hillsborough [River] than subjected to such polluting influences".<sup>99</sup> The Opposition replied in kind. Two assemblymen attacked Pope's personal irreligion, and Coles pictured the Orangemen as libertines: "It was a well known fact that Orangemen upon the Island would not, and did not hesitate to seduce Catholic girls, and afterwards refused to marry them".<sup>100</sup> Pope countered with references to "lecherous old Popish priests". Personal and institutional abuse crossed the floor, the extreme point coming when George Howlan, an Irish Roman Catholic, accused Pope of having said outside the Assembly "That a Catholic woman going to confess to a priest was the same as taking a mare to a stallion". The colonial secretary replied that his remark had been meant as a reflection upon the mind of the priest and the institution of the Confessional, not as a slur upon Roman Catholic ladies. He then read aloud in Latin a tract by a saint on the alleged obscenities involved.<sup>101</sup>

The Bill passed on straight party votes, Premier Gray stating the principle that "when a large body of Her Majesty's subjects desired legislation to enable them to manage certain property, their request was entitled to consideration by this House".<sup>102</sup> Yet the Orange Incorporation Bill never became law. An 11,500-name petition was raised and sent to Newcastle, praying for disallowance. The Duke, at one time chief secretary to the lord-lieutenant of Ireland, was known to dislike Orangeism, and indeed in 1860 had advised the Prince of Wales not to land at Kingston, Upper Canada, so as to avoid walking under an Orange arch. In September 1863 he informed Dundas that he could not recommend the giving of

<sup>99</sup> P.E.I., Assembly, *Debates*, 1863, pp. 39, 46, 50, 57; 25 Vic., c.16. Ironically, in 1875 Pope would see his elder son, Joseph, converted to Roman Catholicism at the age of 21; Maurice Pope, ed., *Public Servant: The Memoirs of Sir Joseph Pope* (Toronto, 1960), p. 25. According to one of Joseph's sons, this caused no breach between Joseph and his father; private interview with Lt.-Gen. Maurice Pope, Ottawa, 20 May 1968.

<sup>100</sup> P.E.I., Assembly, *Debates*, 1863, p. 51; also see pp. 40, 43, 55.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 55-6.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53; P.E.I., Assembly, *Journal*, 1863, pp. 52, 138, 168.

the royal assent, since Orange Lodges belonged to "a class of institutions which all experience has shown to be calculated (if not actually intended) to embitter religious and political differences, and which must be detrimental to the best interests of any Colony in which they exist".<sup>103</sup> Island Roman Catholics naturally interpreted disallowance as a victory, while to Orangemen the denial of incorporation reinforced their conviction that Catholics would not give their loyal and Protestant association fair play, and that "the same persecuting spirit that formerly characterized the Romish Church remains unchanged".<sup>104</sup> Since the Orangemen of Prince Edward Island had a record of eschewing physical violence, they saw no reason that they should be denied the right of collectively holding and disposing of property if, as Pope said, the Roman Catholic bishop could do so. This claim of persecution helped rather than hurt Orange membership: over 1863-64 the number of primary lodges increased from 22 to 29.<sup>105</sup>

Overshadowed by the uproar concerning Orange incorporation were several changes in the educational system of the Island. Grammar schools were established, a second school visitor was to be appointed, and "free education" was abolished, which meant that local school districts would be expected once again to contribute a portion of teachers' salaries.<sup>106</sup> But the change with most denominational significance was the decision to abolish the "French Acadian" schools as a separate category. Under the existing law there had been several exceptional aspects to the French Acadian schools, the most important of which (aside from the status of French as the language of instruction) was that the teacher, albeit subject to the inspection of the school visitor, was in effect licensed by the local parish priest, "of whose congregation the said Teacher shall be a member".<sup>107</sup> It was the priest, rather than the Board of Education, who was to certify the teacher's ability to conduct classes in French and to read and write English. The existence of these schools, with their particular sectarian privileges, had provoked criticism from the Board of Education in 1860 and from the Orangemen in 1862.<sup>108</sup> In the wake of the bitterly-fought election of 1863 the criticism was renewed. The *Monitor* complained that £980 were being spent to teach children

<sup>103</sup> Newcastle to Dundas, 26 September 1863, CO 226/98, pp. 375-6. Also see Donald G. Creighton, *John A. Macdonald: The Young Politician* (Toronto, 1952), pp. 301-3; Donald Swainson, "John Hillyard Cameron", *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, X, pp. 121-2.

<sup>104</sup> See address of Grand Master Kaye, Grand Orange Lodge of P.E.I. Records, Third Annual Report, 1864, p. 7, in private possession.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>106</sup> These changes are discussed in Robertson, "Religion, Politics, and Education in Prince Edward Island from 1856 to 1877", pp. 143-7.

<sup>107</sup> 15 Vic., c.13, s.39; also Robertson, "Religion, Politics, and Education in Prince Edward Island from 1856 to 1877", Note F, pp. 161-2.

<sup>108</sup> MacNeill to the Legislature, 23 February 1860, in P.E.I., Assembly, *Journal*, 1860, app. J; Grand Orange Lodge of P.E.I. Records, Second Annual Report, 1863, app., p. 23, in private possession.



from books “essentially ‘Romish’ in character”, and the *Islander* declared that “the French inhabitants of this Island have no right to expect to be educated in the French language”.<sup>109</sup>

The exceptional legal position of the schools in French-speaking areas was terminated by the Education Act of 1863. Under its provisions the teacher could presumably be of any denomination, needed no certification of his ability to teach in French, and was required to attend the Normal School. At least in theory, he was fully integrated into the existing system. Yet no mention was made of the language of instruction, either in the legislation or in the Assembly debate on it.<sup>110</sup> Although the French Acadians who desired to teach under the Act would have to attend the Normal School, which was conducted entirely in English, French was not proscribed as a medium of instruction. The new Act would simply mean better-qualified and better-paid teachers in the Acadian districts, and the end of the denominational privileges enjoyed under law by the Roman Catholic Church since 1852.<sup>111</sup> The only problem was the apparent anomaly that future teachers would have to prove their competence in English at the Normal School before being licensed — to teach in French. Coles and Howlan, the only two Liberals whose words on the subject are recorded, fully agreed with the decision to abolish the distinctive “French Acadian” category of schools.<sup>112</sup> There would be no struggle over the principle of the Act. Such language problems as were generated by the Education Act of 1863 were of an apparently unanticipated bureaucratic nature, and were dealt with in a reasonably satisfactory way by amendments in the following year.<sup>113</sup>

There are several reasons for the lack of public controversy in 1863 over the changed status of Acadian schools. In the first place, the frenetic atmosphere generated by the debate over Orange incorporation tended to drive underground other issues with sectarian content, particularly since the most vocal Roman Catholic assemblymen were natives of Ireland. But perhaps more importantly, the changes made in the Acadian schools left each side with half a loaf. The Tories could legitimately claim to be removing the sectarian privileges granted by law to the Roman Catholic Church by the Liberals in 1852. Yet the Acadian schools were not suppressed. As in the case of the “Bible Clause” of 1860, men like Palmer,

<sup>109</sup> *Monitor*, 5 March 1863; *Islander*, 13 March 1863.

<sup>110</sup> 26 Vic., c. 5, s. 6 provided that “the branches of an ordinary English education, as taught in district schools” be taught in the Acadian schools, but not that they be taught in English.

<sup>111</sup> A move in this direction had already been made in 1860, when it was provided that Acadian teachers receive only £35 (compared with £45 to £60, depending upon classification, for other teachers) unless they wrote and passed a Board of Education examination (23 Vic., c.14, ss.2, 3, 4). It is not recorded how many of the 25 to 30 Acadian teachers successfully attempted to gain a Board license, although the *Vindicator* stated on 27 March 1863 that “many” had done so.

<sup>112</sup> P.E.I., Assembly, *Debates*, 1863, pp. 77, 78. Howlan’s constituents included many French Acadians. There was no Acadian assemblyman in 1863.

<sup>113</sup> See Robertson, “Religion, Politics, and Education in Prince Edward Island from 1856 to 1877”, pp. 168-71.

Gray, and William Pope did not let campaign rhetoric lead them into a policy of thorough-going oppression of the Roman Catholic and Acadian minorities. In the final analysis, the changes of 1860 and 1863 came close to being minimal in terms of day-to-day practice. This was certainly the case with the Acadian schools, for future investigations would prove beyond doubt that sectarian books had not been removed. In North America, finding non-sectarian French textbooks was no easy task, and in Prince Edward Island the first serious effort to obtain such books would not be made until the passage of the Public Schools Act by the coalition government of Louis Henry Davies in 1877. Given this inertia (however masked it might be on occasion by anti-French or anti-Roman Catholic outbursts in print or on the hustings), the Acadians and their political sympathizers were not about to raise serious protests and possibly provoke close scrutiny of their schools, especially since the Tory government had just won a renewed mandate. The rhetoric of the Tories in matters of religion and education had once more proven much more menacing than their actions; and like the Roman Catholic population as a whole in 1860, the Acadians must have felt some relief at the outcome. As for the Tory leadership, their lack of interest in following through with the forces they had set in motion suggests, once again, that their real concerns and commitments lay in stabilizing the political environment in which the "family compact", the local ruling class, operated. Indeed, the case of the Acadian schools is further evidence of a certain cynicism on the part of Tory strategists, a willingness to manipulate rather primitive emotions which they themselves might not share.

The religious question lost its fervour over the summer of 1863. During the session it had reached a peak in intensity from which a decline was inevitable. The ebb in tension was rapid. No issues remained to become excited about. The Acadian schools had been brought under the same regulations as other district schools and John Arbuckle Sr., the controversial Orange and Tory school visitor whom Whelan described as the Grand Orange Lodge's "Pimp, Tattler, Travelling Agent, and General Flunkey",<sup>114</sup> had been relieved of one-half of his authority. The Orange Order still lacked incorporation, but everyone knew it would be futile to raise the issue again in the near future. Saint Dunstan's College was not yet endowed, but neither the bishop nor the rector planned to ask Premier Gray or William Pope for aid, as they had in 1861. Dialogue had become unthinkable and thus the chance of friction developing had dwindled. There would be no election in the next four years and, as Whelan put it, "no man will be knave or fool enough to raise an alarm about Catholic ascendancy, when the Catholics are politically trampled underfoot".<sup>115</sup> The fire had burned itself out.

The politico-religious struggles of the early 1860s in Prince Edward Island had resulted in a reaffirmation of the *status quo ante bellum* in education, with minor modifications. The principle beneficiaries of the heated controversies were the Tories, basically a minority party, who once again had profitted from the religious divisions among Islanders, and ridden to victory fervently defending policies which had scarcely been challenged in a fundamental way. The dominant political figure

<sup>114</sup> *Examiner*, 4 May 1863.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 February 1863.

of these years was William Henry Pope, a truly enigmatic man of rare intellectual power, yet also endowed with a strong dose of cynicism, if not outright unscrupulousness. Gray, the Tory leader in the Assembly, had little force and both he and Palmer, the prime minister, were quite willing to follow where the younger, more aggressive William Pope led in 1861-63. Reflecting several years later upon the role Pope had played in the early 1860s, one of his bitterest critics, Edward Reilly, wrote that "For the wicked and intemperate policy which he then pursued he had not even the poor excuse of sincerity to plead. Every act he did and every word he wrote was done and written coolly and deliberately to accomplish certain ends which he had in view. He possesses neither the zeal of an enthusiast nor the bigotry of a fanatic".<sup>116</sup> Indeed, it can be argued with reasonable assurance that Pope had cynically manipulated a large segment of the Island electorate over issues concerning which he in all probability lacked conviction. Within five years of the Orange Debate, he would be publicly advocating a grant to Saint Dunstan's College (without mentioning any conditions to be met), warning of the tendency of the age to infidelity, and recommending that Roman Catholics press their claims for public aid to denominational schools they had established.<sup>117</sup> There is no evidence that William Pope altered his personal beliefs in the intervening years; rather what had changed was the political alignments of the Island, and hence the opportunities for Island Tories. Of seven elections between 1854 and 1872 the Tories won only two (those of 1859 and 1863), both over matters concerning religion and education. In the manipulation of these issues in the early 1860s, within a society which took religion very seriously, men like Bishop Peter MacIntyre and Father Angus McDonald were no match for the erudite, polished, and self-confident "infidel", William Henry Pope.

Although many hard words passed between Protestant and Roman Catholic in the Prince Edward Island of the early 1860s, few bones were broken. Certainly there were no scenes to compare with the communal violence between English Protestant and Irish Roman Catholic in Newfoundland which continued for a generation. This lack of resort to physical force can be traced at least in part to the very sobering experience of 1 March 1847, when during an electoral affray involving several hundred Scottish Protestants and Irish Roman Catholics, subsequently known as the Belfast Riot, at least three men were killed and large numbers wounded in a battle fought with the utmost intensity.<sup>118</sup> Whatever the precise explanation for the riot — and this is by no means certain — one ingredient was sectarian animosity, and one of the lessons Islanders drew from the tragedy was that religious quarrels should be

<sup>116</sup> *Herald* (Charlottetown), 5 February 1868.

<sup>117</sup> See Robertson, "Religion, Politics, and Education in Prince Edward Island from 1856 to 1877", pp. 184-5.

<sup>118</sup> See the description of the wounds sustained, in Dr. W.H. Hobkirk to Sir Henry Vere Huntley, 1 April 1847, enclosure dated March 1847, Lieutenant-Governors' Papers, RG 1, PAPEI.

confined within verbal bounds.<sup>119</sup> A new consensus about violence at the polls, over any issue, also emerged from the experience at Belfast in 1847. Violence, although on a much smaller scale, had been frequent at elections in the colony throughout the 1830s and 1840s, and just three weeks before the Belfast Riot, during discussion of a disputed return, Palmer had warned his fellow assemblymen that an imminent danger existed that "we shall witness here the same butcheries as once occurred in Newfoundland".<sup>120</sup> When his prophecy came true, the prevailing sentiments in the Assembly were shock and sorrow. No one wanted a repetition of the event, and on 1 April when Palmer introduced a resolution to ensure that elections throughout the colony be held concurrently (in order to discourage the roving of strong-arm bands from poll to poll), he was supported even by Whelan, who in February had made light of the whole subject of electoral violence.<sup>121</sup> Voting remained open, and with it the path to retribution, but intimidation of voters became more subtle, involving "ledger influence", "rent-roll influence", or "bishop's influence". There was an unwritten agreement that elections should no longer provide the occasion for the physical settling of scores.<sup>122</sup>

The desire of Islanders in general to avoid the social consequences of physical confrontations along religious lines was probably decisive in restraining any impulse to violence over the college question or related issues of the early 1860s. In the final analysis the colonists did not want their mixed community to be divided into two denominational camps ready to do battle on 12 July or any other day. Islanders had had a tradition of joint effort, regardless of religious affiliation, embodied in such activities as raising money for Irish and Scottish relief in 1847 (a project commenced a few days after the Belfast Riot), and in such organizations as the Benevolent Irish Society and the Mechanics' Institute. It would appear from surviving evidence that Islanders as a whole were proud of that tradition; yet there can be no doubt that it withered in the late 1850s and early 1860s. Joint activity became less frequent, the place of the once-flourishing Mechanics' Institute was taken by the Young Men's Christian Association and the Catholic Young Men's Literary Institute (both founded in 1856),<sup>123</sup> and the officially non-denominational Benevolent Irish Society became overwhelmingly Roman Catholic in orientation, indeed acting on occasion as a Roman Catholic organization. There was at least

<sup>119</sup> For a brief analysis of the causes, context, and consequences of the riot, see I.R. Robertson, "Highlanders, Irishmen, and the Land Question in Nineteenth-century Prince Edward Island", in L.M. Cullen and T.C. Smout, eds., *Comparative Aspects of Scottish and Irish Economic and Social History 1600-1900* (Edinburgh, 1977), pp. 234-6.

<sup>120</sup> Summary report of Assembly debates in *Royal Gazette* (Charlottetown), 9 March 1847.

<sup>121</sup> Summary reports of Assembly debates in *Islander*, 20 March 1847, and in *Royal Gazette*, 6 April, 2, 16 March 1847.

<sup>122</sup> It might be noted, however, that in the 1860s physical force continued to be employed by tenants resisting rent collection, distraint, etc.

<sup>123</sup> See Annual Report of the Charlottetown Mechanics' Institute in *Monitor*, 14 December 1859.

one conscious effort to reverse this trend towards splitting the institutional life of the community along denominational lines. In early 1860 a Young Men's Literary and Scientific Association was founded because the Young Men's Christian Association, dominated by such well-known ultra-Protestants as Fitzgerald, Sutherland, and Captain John Orlebar, was too sectarian. But, given the prevailing climate of opinion, the new organization could not prosper. Thus the religious disputes of the years between 1856 and 1863 did mark a turning point in Island history. After this period there were fewer places where Islanders of different religious persuasions could meet on a voluntary basis for common objectives.

To a certain extent this change in the quality of sectarian relations can be accounted for by such local factors as the search by the Tory Party for an effective political strategy. But to focus exclusively on local considerations would be to overlook an essential characteristic of Island society. Although by the census of 1861 more than three-quarters of Islanders were native-born,<sup>124</sup> their mental universe was still very much that of the Old World. Among Roman Catholics a man like Bishop MacIntyre was finely attuned to the concerns and ideological position of the Vatican; over the years, in harmony with trends in Rome, his own attitudes would harden and his commitment to separate Catholic institutions would become more intense. The negotiations of 1861 were but a muted echo of what was yet to come. Nonetheless, in the 1850s and early 1860s it was among Island Protestants that the impact of external developments was most discernible. At mid-century the entire English-speaking Protestant world was worried. In Britain the Oxford Movement, the conversion of Newman, the increase in public assistance to Maynooth Seminary, and the re-establishment of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England by Pius IX led directly to a spate of books, pamphlets, lectures, and public meetings on the menace of "Popery". In 1851 the government led by Lord John Russell replied with the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill, which forbade Roman Catholic clergymen to assume titles bearing the name of any territory or place within the British Isles. The response in the United States to Catholic immigration, Catholic schools, and Catholics in public office was the "Know Nothing" or Nativist Movement. Given the belief that Catholicism was on the march everywhere in the world that was familiar to the Britisher, the only hope seemed to lie in "Protestant unity". In British North America counter-offensive missionary crusades were launched for the conversion of the "benighted" Lower Canadians and Acadians, and in the colonies as well as in the Mother Country Garibaldi was the supreme Protestant hero of the age. Many Canadian Protestants enthusiastically received his associate, the former Father Gavazzi.<sup>125</sup> Prince Edward Island was no exception:

<sup>124</sup> See Andrew Hill Clark, *Three Centuries and the Island* (Toronto, 1959), p. 121, Table V.

<sup>125</sup> See Neil G. Smith, "Religious Tensions in Pre-Confederation Politics", *Canadian Journal of Theology*, IX (October, 1963), pp. 248-62; John S. Moir, *The Church in the British Era: From the British Conquest to Confederation* (Toronto, 1972), pp. 177-80.

collections were taken up for the ex-priest Charles Chiniquy, colporteurs were hired to sell and give away Bibles in Catholic districts,<sup>126</sup> and when the Free and Secession Churches of Nova Scotia and the Island joined in 1860, "The spectre of the Roman Catholic church was acknowledged to be a most important reason for union".<sup>127</sup> The typical Protestant clergyman of this period on the Island was British-born and -educated and tended to associate Roman Catholicism with foreign countries, sedition, and the reactionary views of Puis IX. Thus, wittingly or unwittingly, the Protestant clergy prepared the ideological ground for the political offensives of Island Toryism in the late 1850s and early 1860s.

It is the Protestant sense of alarm at the apparent aggressiveness of the Roman Catholic Church at home and abroad which explains the sudden and dramatic growth of Orangeism in a colony largely devoid of Protestant Ulstermen. The first meeting of Orangemen in Prince Edward Island took place in 1849, and it was a full decade before a second primary lodge was established. But by the end of the 1850s Island Protestants apparently felt the need for a loyal and Protestant organization, and by the early 1860s Orangeism was a flourishing mass movement. The reaction of Irish Roman Catholics was extreme. During an Assembly debate in 1861 Whelan denounced the Orange Association as "the most hellish which ever disgraced God's earth",<sup>128</sup> and when Orange incorporation became an issue, Irish Catholics made it clear that they would go to great lengths to prevent it. Yet it is questionable whether Island Orangemen deserved to be lumped with Orangemen elsewhere. The local Orangemen were non-violent in their behaviour and after the supposed danger from Catholicism had passed, commitment to the association waned. On 9 February 1865 Orange Grand Master Kaye and Grand Secretary Leeming both noted a decline in enthusiasm among the brethren and a corresponding growth of interest in other societies (for example, the Sons of Temperance and the Tenant League). By 1886 three dormant primary lodges were reported.<sup>129</sup> Island Orangeism clearly represented a variant of the generalized sense of alarm among Island Protestants, not the transplantation of a para-military organization. Like the Protestant clergymen who were prone to find a sinister side to almost every aspect of

<sup>126</sup> See Auxiliary Bible Society of P.E.I. Records, Annual Reports for 1850 and 1860, in the possession of the Auxiliary Bible Society of P.E.I.; Minutes of the Free Church Presbytery of P.E.I., 26 January, 11 May, 31 August 1859, APH; Minutes of the United Presbytery of P.E.I., 11 August, 28 September 1864, APH. Access to the Records of the Auxiliary Bible Society of P.E.I. was kindly granted by the Rev. Thomas Humphrey.

<sup>127</sup> Johnston, "Factors in the Formation of the Presbyterian Church in Canada 1875", p. 17; see also Moir, *The Church in the British Era*, pp. 148-9.

<sup>128</sup> P.E.I., Assembly, *Debates*, 1861, p. 40. Also Robertson, "Religion, Politics, and Education in Prince Edward Island from 1856 to 1877", Note A, pp. 92-3.

<sup>129</sup> Grand Orange Lodge of P.E.I. Records, Fourth Annual Report, 1865, pp. 6-7; Fifth Annual Report, 1866, p. 5, in private possession.

Roman Catholic activity in the colony, Irish Catholics had been over-vigilant. This too was an ingredient in the bitter disputes of the early 1860s.

The demography of Prince Edward Island — which was certainly not the result of anyone's master plan — also played a part. The almost equal numerical division between Roman Catholic and Protestant could only add to the Old Country Protestant clergyman's sense of alarm; if there was danger in Protestant Britain, surely the danger must be greater in a society almost one-half Catholic.<sup>130</sup> The peculiar distribution of the population, which featured many districts virtually homogeneous in religion and national origin, tended to sustain stereotypes once attitudes began to harden. In such circumstances, social intercourse in rural areas could easily be restricted to one's own ethnic and religious group, and the stereotypes reinforced without being mitigated by any significant amount of personal contact.

The local press and the turbulent, abrasive personalities associated with it certainly inflamed sectarian suspicions. Most of the time, the *Islander*, the *Protestant*, the *Vindicator*, and the *Monitor* were more than willing to do battle over religious and quasi-religious issues. Among the politically partisan journalists, an exception was Whelan who, although combative by nature, was only drawn into religious disputes with extreme reluctance (his one great blind spot in this regard was Orangeism). He seems to have been thoroughly familiar with the pitfalls involved, to a large extent because of his consciousness of Irish history, and he deeply regretted the founding of the ultramontane *Vindicator*. Indeed, his lack of enthusiasm for ultramontane clericalism and all that went with it would be a leading factor — he believed *the* leading factor — in his political demise in 1867.<sup>131</sup> Nonetheless, despite his reluctance, Whelan did become involved in sectarian and ethnic recriminations.<sup>132</sup> Given the overcharged political atmosphere of the early 1860s, it would have required more than human restraint for him, as an Irish Catholic, to have stood aloof.

The sectarian struggles of the early 1860s should also be seen as what they represented to many members of the local "family compact" — a diversion from the land question. Whelan and George Coles, the Liberal leader, undoubtedly understood clearly the thrust of Tory strategy and the role played in it by religious contention. In the final analysis, they were out-manoeuvred by the Tories, particularly William Henry Pope, who succeeded in mobilizing and turning to political advantage the elemental forces and ancient prejudices of Island Protestantism. The problems Coles and Whelan were committed to resolving —

<sup>130</sup> See Minutes of the Free Church Presbytery of P.E.I., 26 October 1859, APH, for the concern of one denomination about the need to promote Protestant immigration to the colony.

<sup>131</sup> Robertson, "Edward Whelan", *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, IX, pp. 831-4.

<sup>132</sup> See *Examiner*, 23 February 1863, for his comments on the Scottish Presbyterians of the Belfast area.

notably the land question — would have to wait until the wave had passed. In the meantime, while the Tories remained in power, popular discontent and frustration in the countryside grew to the point that by 1865 troops would be summoned from Nova Scotia to support the civil authorities in dealing with the militant Tenant League. The fundamental divisions in Island politics would once again be over the land question, although in the mid-1860s Coles and Whelan would find the struggle taking a form they could not control.