Rural Protest on Prince Edward Island in Transatlantic Context: From the Aftermath of the Seven Years' War to the 1840s

Rusty Bittermann



In the summer of 1832, rural inhabitants of Rustico, on the north coast of Prince Edward Island, met to consider a collective problem. Most were tenants, most were in arrears with their rents, and, like tenants elsewhere on the Island, most feared that their landlords might seize their farms and possessions for nonpayment of rent. They questioned the validity of the title deeds on which landlords claimed the right to grant leases and demand rents, and doubted the wisdom of imperial policies that had created a colony where most of the population were tenants, clearing and improving the properties of proprietors who, from a tenant perspective, had done nothing to earn their entitlement to the land. Those assembled at the Rustico meeting drew up a list of resolutions to address the land question on the Island, and to indicate their position regarding a widespread anti-proprietorial movement that was gaining momentum in the colony. Their ten resolutions, which were subsequently published in a local paper, addressed specific grievances concerning the nature of land tenure on the Island and its consequences for settlers. The preamble to these resolutions, however, contextualized them in broader terms, and linked their actions with

developments that spanned the Atlantic. It noted, among other things, that reform appeared "to be the order of the day in almost all parts of the civilized world," and it cast their demands for an end to landlordism as part of these progressive changes.[1]

The history of rural protest on Prince Edward Island in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries provides many examples of activists connecting their struggles on the Island with events occurring elsewhere in the Atlantic world. At times, external developments played an important role in justifying demands for reform, and in providing hope. As well, agrarian leaders in the colony made use of tactics and organizational strategies that had been developed in other struggles. The history of rural protest in this period also reveals connections between the language and rationale of rural protest on Prince Edward Island and broader transatlantic discussions of social justice, though there are many silences in this zone and others. The dangers and difficulties of challenging the status quo do not tend to encourage full disclosure of influences.

While agrarian activists on Prince Edward Island gained strength and inspiration from progressive political developments in other parts of the Atlantic world in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, they also drew opposition because of them. Radical challenges elsewhere buttressed resistance to demands for land reform on Prince Edward Island, as those standing to lose from popular mobilization often perceived Island developments in terms of revolutionary challenges in other areas of the Atlantic world. Events in France, Ireland, and elsewhere in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries helped to make conservatives involved with Island affairs ever vigilant to nip popular stirrings in the bud. As well, revolutionary precedents provided the material with which to label and damn those threatening the status quo on the Island, regardless of whether or not the parallel was apt.

Compared to Britain's other North American colonies, Prince Edward Island, on the inner reaches of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, was a small, relatively insignificant place. Unlike the adjacent, comparably sized island of Cape Breton, Prince Edward Island lacked the year-round ice-free ports that in times of war made Cape Breton strategically important. Although most of the Island was suitable for agriculture, with some of the best agricultural soils in the region, the growth of a European settler population was slow, both during its years as a French colony and in its early years as a British possession following the Seven Years' War. Given Prince Edward Island's position within Britain's Atlantic empire, the external events that

most directly shaped agrarian protest in the colony tended to be those occurring in the imperial center. Certainly this was the case with the most substantial rural protest movement in Island history, the Escheat Movement of the 1830s and early 1840s—the inspiration for the anti-landlord protest meeting at Rustico.[2] The Escheat Movement, which was grounded in half a century of resistance to landlordism in Prince Edward Island, took form and prospered in an imperial context shaped by the successful mass struggles for Catholic emancipation in the 1820s and passage of legislation providing for parliamentary reform and slave emancipation in 1832 and 1833. Indeed, at times, leaders of the Escheat Movement explicitly cast the struggle for agrarian reform on the Island in terms of an extension of the logic and promise of these developments. In the early 1840s, though, when Robert Peel's Conservatives ended a decade of Whig rule, formal politics in Britain swung to the right. These changes in the imperial center dimmed the prospects for agrarian reform on the Island, and the Escheat Movement lost its momentum.

It is difficult to assess the effect that varying currents of change elsewhere in the Atlantic world had on the complex history of rural protest in Prince Edward Island in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In part, this is because it is hard to weigh the impact of developments that were interpreted and used quite differently by different sectors of Island society. In addition, linkages to external developments that provided strength at one moment sometimes became a source of weakness at another. As well, of course, external influences unfolded within the context of the ever-changing specifics of Island society, with its own locally grounded dynamics of change. What is clear, however, is that the actions of those who challenged landlordism on Prince Edward Island—and the responses of those who opposed them—were intimately connected, in many ways, to a broader transatlantic politics that transcended the boundaries of locality, colony, nation-state, and empire that commonly shape and confine contemporary historical analysis.

The roots of the discontent articulated at the Rustico meeting lay with policies the British government established for Prince Edward Island after acquiring sovereignty over the territory in the victory over the French in the Seven Years' War.[3] In the imperial reorganization that followed the war, Ile St Jean—or the Island of St John, as the British called it at that time—became part of a new British imperial frontier, stretching from the Floridas north to the Great Lakes, across the lands to the west of the Appalachians, and east to the Gulf of St. Lawrence.[4] Imperial planners

charged with managing these acquisitions had to secure parts of the frontier with British settlement and, where possible, do so in ways that would not add to British debts, and indeed, preferably, reduce them. The policy eventually adopted for Prince Edward Island sought to privatize the costs of establishing British settlers in the new colony, and as well to provide rewards to prominent Britons who had played significant roles in the successful military struggle against the French, giving private individuals the possibility of reaping profits from many of the potential gains of settlement.[5] The result was the land system that residents of the Rustico region met to protest in the summer of 1832.

In the British colonization plan implemented in 1767, the Island's 1.4 million acres were divided into 67 lots (townships) of roughly 20,000 acres each, and distributed to grantees—usually as a whole or half township.[6] This approach to organizing colonization was consistent with policies adopted by the French in their possessions prior to the war, and with policies the British had previously employed—and continued to employ—both for the northeast coast of North America and more generally, as well as with some of the colonial policies of other European powers.[7] It was not a novel way of proceeding, nor should the problems and tensions that followed have been a surprise. The grantees acquired their lots, or partial lots, subject to conditions: they were required to bring in foreign Protestants—people drawn from Europe or other parts of North America—at a rate of 100 settlers per township. One-third of the grantees' holdings were to be settled in the proper proportions within four years, and all within ten. Grantees were also required to pay annual quit rents to the Crown at a rate of from two to six shillings per acre.[8] At the time that this policy was initiated, Prince Edward Island was part of the colony of Nova Scotia, which had been enlarged by the addition of territory conquered from the French in the Seven Years' War. In 1769 the Island became a separate colony, and the quit rents stipulated in the grants were then earmarked to help sustain the costs of the new colony's government, which came to include a governor, crown officials, appointed executive and legislative councils, and an elected House of Assembly.[9]

As had often been the case with other imperial initiatives of this sort, few grantees attempted to meet the obligations in their conditional grants, and fewer yet succeeded. Although quit rents trickled in from some grantees, most did not pay.[10] Perhaps half a dozen of the hundred or so proprietors who received grants of full or partial lots made attempts in the decade after 1767 to develop their properties as required by their deeds.

Some spent considerable sums and undertook initiatives that brought settlers to the Island, but these efforts focused on advancing commercial and religious projects, rather than fulfilling the conditions of the grants.[11] No proprietors fully complied with the conditions, and few came even remotely close to doing so. In consequence, the property claims of the Island's landlords had a questionable legal basis. Rural protest repeatedly raised this issue in the years of struggle against the proprietorial system. Indeed, the legality of landlords' claims remained a fundamental matter of dispute until 1875, when compulsory land-purchase legislation provided the means to eliminate the last of the large estates.[12]

The first formal land protest within the colony emerged in the years after the American Revolution. The population of the Island at the time was probably around 3,000 and growing.[13] Included were some Micmac aboriginal inhabitants and some Acadians, who had escaped deportation during the Seven Years' War or had returned to the Island after the war.[14] Others were settlers drawn from Ireland and Scotland and England, from adjacent parts of British North America, and from among the Loyalist refugees who moved north in the aftermath of the warfare to the south.[15]

When British officials divided and distributed Island property, they did so as if the Island were uninhabited, ignoring the Micmac and the pre-Conquest Acadian settlers, even though official surveys made note of the improvements left by previous settlement.[16] As a result, Acadian and aboriginal inhabitants of the Island found themselves living in violation of the new imperial property regime from the time it was proclaimed. In theory, these residents might have sought out their new landlord or landlords, if they could have identified them, and arranged mutually acceptable terms for the sale or lease of land that they already occupied. In practice, such a procedure was highly unlikely.

Many of the new settlers arriving in the wake of the Conquest also occupied land outside the property regime established by imperial planners, as they tended to respond to the opportunities of the landscape—taking up good lands where they could, even if there were no landlord or agent with whom to formalize their legal position, or sometimes *particularly* if there were no signs of landlord activity.[17] Settlers who were able to acquire lands by entering into agreements with landlords often assumed burdens more onerous than they had anticipated, as the costs of establishing their farms left them without the means to meet rents or payments for the purchase of land.

The protest movement that emerged in the late eighteenth century was thus grounded in Island problems and articulated preexisting tensions between the needs of Island inhabitants and the property relations favored by imperial planners and landlords; it sought to change the colony's land regime to conform with the needs and wishes of much of the Island's population. In this sense, it was a northern version of a common North American frontier experience of settler resistance to metropolitan organization and domination.[18] It emerged in the aftermath of the American Revolution, in part because with the arrival of new settlers, landlords and government officials paid more attention to the colony.[19] The imperial plan, which formerly many settlers had ignored safely, began to become more than a plan on paper. As landlords moved to manage their Island holdings more actively, there were fewer spaces within the colony where settlers might squat and make a livelihood without troubling with formal property claims. Increasingly, settlers had to choose between acknowledging landlord claims or resisting them in a more or less direct fashion.

Protest against the colonial land regime was also fueled by contemporary developments in adjacent colonies. In Nova Scotia and in the new colony of New Brunswick (carved out of Nova Scotia after the American Revolution), government authorities acted to enforce the terms of conditional deeds similar to those granted on Prince Edward Island. When proprietors of large estates failed to meet the terms of their grants, escheat courts examined the evidence and, where appropriate, reasserted Crown ownership of the lands. In these colonies, escheat actions brought hundreds of thousands of acres back into the public domain, making them available for settlers who received freehold grants directly from the Crown. Nova Scotia's escheat courts were particularly active in the wake of the American Revolution, as the government sought to prepare the colony for the arrival of Loyalist settlers.[20]

The ideas and activism of the new immigrants coming to the Island from elsewhere in the Atlantic world in the years after the war were central to the emergence of a formal protest movement. Of particular importance was the arrival of Joseph Robinson, a Loyalist from South Carolina who had served with distinction as a lieutenant colonel in the Revolutionary War. Robinson was a well-educated man who had once possessed a backcountry plantation. On Prince Edward Island, he became a tenant, holding his lands by lease from Sir James Montgomery, Lord Advocate for Scotland in the years prior to the American Revolution and one of the few proprietors actively involved in managing their Island properties.[21] Robinson

became involved in the struggle against landlordism on the Island when he successfully ran for a seat in the colony's House of Assembly in 1790 as part of a slate of candidates advocating the escheat of proprietorial holdings, such as those belonging to Montgomery.[22] Six years later, he assumed a leading role in challenging landlordism on the Island. Using a tactic fully in keeping with Anglo-American traditions of protest prior to the Revolution, Robinson issued a manifesto in 1796 that described the incompatibility between the views and needs of settlers and those of landlords, and called for an end to the existing land system.[23]

Robinson argued that farm making in a northern wilderness context was too difficult and costly to permit settlers to pay rents. As a consequence, settlers would inevitably fall into arrears and lose their lands and improvements. As well, he challenged the validity of landlords' property claims, arguing that their titles had been forfeited when they failed to comply with the conditions of their grants. Placing Island circumstances in the broader context that he was familiar with, Robinson noted that a similar proprietorial system in the Carolinas had been swept away in the early eighteenth century, and that comparable measures had recently been effected in the adjacent colonies of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The legitimate claims of ownership, he maintained, using an argument that echoed throughout the Atlantic frontier in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, were the claims of those who were investing their labor in the land.[24] Robinson advocated petitioning the House of Assembly for the establishment of a court of escheat that would investigate the status of landlords' grants and set the stage for a redistribution of their lands to those who farmed them, after the Crown had resumed title.

Robinson's closest ally in the land-reform campaign was yet another of the new immigrants who had arrived in the closing years of the eighteenth century. Robert Hodgson, who was an Englishman and a carpenter by trade, organized a campaign to press the House of Assembly to establish a court of escheat. Hodgson worked with other assemblymen and local magistrates to organize meetings about the Island to discuss Robinson's manifesto and draw up petitions. These, ultimately, were sent to the House of Assembly, which in turn prepared a report on the Island land situation. The House sent this to the imperial government, along with a petition for the establishment of a court of escheat. Settlers also initiated plans, never realized, to send Robinson to London to present their case.[25]

The tactics of the escheat movement engendered by Robinson and Hodgson, combining initiatives of the Assembly with public meetings and

petitions, were consistent with British traditions of constitutional protest. Indeed, the role of magistrates in calling public meetings suggests that Robinson and Hodgson, and their allies, acted carefully to ensure that the protest stayed within these limits. Not all of the tactics of protest that emerged in conjunction with Robinson and Hodgson's initiatives, though, were so prudent. Widespread rent resistance developed in the wake of the petition campaign, and so too did resistance to militia service.[26] In the late summer of 1797, militiamen in the east of the colony linked military service with land grievances. After obeying a call to assemble for a militia muster, they refused to form ranks or follow orders. Instead, rank-and-file militiamen held a meeting separate from their officers and then sent delegates to relay their thinking: they would only obey militia laws if they were granted freehold titles to their lands. Similar militia protests followed in other locales, including Rustico.[27]

While those with an interest in challenging landlordism on the Island gained strength from the circulation of peoples and ideas in a broader Atlantic world, their adversaries grounded crucial aspects of their response in a critical reading of unfolding events in the same sphere. The conjunction of direct action with political initiatives calling for an escheat of landlords' lands soon had some of the Island's proprietors, and their allies, linking Island events to a more general pattern of revolution that was unfolding on both sides of the Atlantic. People such as Robinson, one local landlord asserted, were disseminating principles "which may vie with the like which have laid Francè to ruins."[28] They were, another landlord complained, "coniving [*sic*] in the peasantry being invited to discuss so delicate a subject" as property rights and "a division of lands," and in consequence, their tenants were developing "wild ideas about natural rights."[29] The author in the first case was John MacDonald, chief of the cadet branch of Clan Ranald. An Island landlord, MacDonald, like many Highland tacksmen, had been educated in mainland Europe and had firsthand knowledge of contemporary developments there.[30] Even the Island's governor, Edmund Fanning, who had reason to downplay the disturbances in his reports to his superiors in London as they did not reflect well on his administration, suggested that agitators on the Island, as "in many other parts of the world," were "exciting a contempt of constituted authorities."[31] He himself had had direct experience of the consequences of this in North Carolina, where he had been a victim of Regulator attacks.[32]

The most overt manifestations of this post-Revolution rural protest soon died down. Once the House of Assembly's report and petition calling for

the establishment of a court of escheat had been sent to London, the next step was to wait for the imperial authorities' decision. Although few Islanders likely realized it, the report had been drafted in ways that undercut the possibility of sweeping land reform. It did this, in part, by focusing in great detail on the issue of landlord quit-rent arrears and how they might be recovered.[33] Four years later, the colony was still waiting for the imperial response.[34] Meanwhile, the militia revolts had been immediately suppressed both by a show of force and by gentler persuasion. The rural units were confronted with an armed force drawn from among the "principal gentlemen" of the colony's capital, Charlottetown, aided by a detachment of light horse belonging to Charlottetown's militia; but the authorities negotiated a face-saving compromise that allowed the men of the rebellious units to back down and avoid punishment.[35] Landlords quickly moved to dampen rent resistance by initiating legal proceedings against tenants who were in arrears.

In addition to the demoralizing effects of the government's and landlords' displays of power, organized protest may have diminished because of a crisis in leadership after the Assembly took up the land question. In part, the movement seems to have lost momentum because some of those supporting calls for an escheat did so in aid of more limited personal goals. Some achieved their ends by gaining elective office. Others hoped to buy out landlords' grants once the threat of an escheat scared them into disposing of their lands cheaply. And some government officials gained what they wished when imperial attention to recovering quit-rent arrears produced monies that were applied to back salaries owed to them. Given the role played in the late-eighteenth-century escheat movement by members of the elite guided by such commercial and pecuniary motives, recent historical interpretations have suggested that there was never really a popular protest movement at all, just "contending factions of elites" vying "for their own political, economic, and social advantage."[36] There is some truth in this contention, but it misses more than it captures. The tactics of the leaders of the land agitation of the 1790s were predicated on harnessing a preexisting popular dissatisfaction with landlordism which was *not* their creation.[37] And in the event, these popular forces proved hard to control.[38] Joseph Robinson experienced this directly, as he was the commanding officer of the first militia unit to refuse to follow its officers' orders in the summer of 1797. Although he agreed with the concerns of his men, it seems unlikely that he would have approved of their means for agitating them, given the consequences they held for him and the resonance it must have

had with his own bitter experiences of civil war in the American South during the Revolution. Surely, too, as rural protest moved beyond constitutional tactics, Robinson, and other prominent Islanders who had helped to launch the formal challenge to landlordism, must have been troubled by the strident claims of other educated, worldly members of the elite who claimed that they had put themselves at the head of forces similar to those which had brought revolution to other settings. Whether the claim was true or not, it was a warning and an accusation that could not be lightly dismissed, given the transatlantic context in which it was made.

For a variety of reasons, then, formal land protests lost their momentum in the closing years of the eighteenth century. The land question, though, persisted as an issue in electoral politics, and those hoping for land reform remained a latent political force. It was not long before others chose to fill the vacuum left by the escheat leadership of the 1790s. One of the men who came to be most closely associated with the new challenge of the early nineteenth century was yet another recent immigrant, James Bardin Palmer, who attempted to link organizational tactics drawn from elsewhere in the Atlantic world with the challenges he encountered in Prince Edward Island. Palmer was a Dublin attorney who had lived and worked in London before accepting a job as a land agent and emigrating to the Island in 1802. An ambitious man with grand ideas about developing Island resources, he took his ideas to the electorate the year he arrived on the Island. Although he failed to win a seat in the Assembly, he gained insight into the political significance of the land question.[39]

On the eve of the next general election, held in 1806, Palmer helped to found an organization called the Society of Loyal Electors, which in time revived formal consideration of the land question. In this election, Palmer won a seat in the House of Assembly. According to Palmer, the inspiration for the Loyal Electors was the Dublin Society, founded in that city in 1731 to provide a forum for middle-class improvers interested in the new intellectual developments and dissatisfied with the status quo.[40] The Dublin Society served as a model for similar organizations in the British Isles and Europe, as well as for the Society of Loyal Electors on Prince Edward Island.[41] In keeping with the social basis of the Dublin Society, the early membership of the Society of Loyal Electors was drawn primarily from merchants, professionals, and artisans living in the capital, Charlottetown, where it met on a monthly basis. Its urban nature was reflected not just in its membership, but as well in the language of its organization. Its officers

included a "Lord Mayor," "aldermen," and other titles associated with city government.[42]

Although begun as an improvement-oriented urban society that reflected its Old World origins, the Society of Loyal Electors changed its character over time. The shift was propelled, it seems, by a search for issues that would help elect more of its members to the House of Assembly and, correspondingly, by the inclusion of more people from the countryside among its membership. Early in the second decade of the nineteenth century, the society began to establish branches in rural communities, and to translate the writings of some of its members into Gaelic and French to make them more widely accessible.[43] With these changes, the society increasingly became a vehicle for the demands that had been articulated by the escheat movement of the 1790s, although these were never its only concerns. The society's electoral appeal grew as it changed its membership and orientation, and although it failed to gain dominance in the House of Assembly elections of 1812, it doubled its representation.

The election of 1812 was bitterly fought, and in a number of cases, members of the Island's elite who opposed the society's candidates were driven from the hustings by angry mobs.[44] The social and political tensions the election highlighted, coupled with the coming of war between Britain and her colonies and the republic to the south, set the stage for conservative efforts to suppress the Society of Loyal Electors before its challenge could develop further.

From the point of view of the Island's power holders, the activities of the Society of Loyal Electors, like those of the escheat advocates of the 1790s, fit within a broader pattern of revolutionary challenge. The society's activities, though, were even more disturbing than the challenges of the 1790s, as the society was a permanent, formal organization that appeared to be orchestrating a broad challenge to the status quo. According to Island cleric Abbé LeSeuer, the situation in Prince Edward Island in the spring of 1812 was similar to "the state of France in the years 1789 and 1790," when the populace was being inflamed by rhetoric concerning the rights of the poor. When LeSeuer argued that the organization fanning the flames needed to be suppressed, or things would "soon turn out here as they did in my unfortunate country," he spoke with authority, as he and his brother had fled France after witnessing the outbreak of revolution.[45] Chief Justice Caesar Colclough spoke from experience, too, when he suggested that the subversive model for what was happening on the Island lay not with the activities of French Jacobins, but with the United Irish. Reports that the Society of

Loyal Electors were "attempting to gain over the soldiery" who were stationed on the Island resonated with his memories of insurrection at home, when he had assisted in the repression that followed.[46] Others among the Island's elite focused on how the Charlottetown Society of Loyal Electors had organized the establishment of affiliated societies in the countryside, and drew parallels with the activities of British Corresponding Clubs.[47]

No doubt, the Society of Loyal Electors drew from many models. Its repertoire of oppositional tactics included effective use of the Island's new newspaper, the *Weekly Recorder*, monthly meetings at a Charlottetown tavern, the establishment of corresponding branch societies, the circulation of papers and manifestos, celebratory dinners, and election campaigns—all in keeping with broader transatlantic developments.[48] Islanders who were well informed concerning these developments imagined Island possibilities in terms of what they suggested, for better or for worse.

Over time, the Society of Loyal Electors had increasingly become a political organization agitating for a change in the status quo. Even some of those seeking to cast its activities in the most favorable light were willing to acknowledge this. One of these was William Roubel, a British attorney who, like Palmer, had come to the Island as a land agent and became a leading light in the society after joining in 1809.[49] Roubel suggested that the society was an island parallel to the political club which had supported John Archer Houblon's successful election to the House of Commons in 1810.[50] In a time when "party" and "faction" were still negative labels, Roubel's defensive claims conceded a great deal; they also reveal, yet again, the significance of the political traditions new immigrants brought with them.

As with the escheat agitation of the 1790s, conservative forces effectively used negative associations grounded elsewhere in the Atlantic world to assist in suppressing formal protest related to the land question. Letters of alarm from prominent Islanders played a role in inducing the British Colonial Office to remove the governor who had permitted the establishment of the Society of Loyal Electors, and to replace him with a new man who would look closely at its activities. Governor Charles Douglas Smith, who arrived in the colony in 1813, soon decided that the society was a "club" of "very dangerous principles" that must be extirpated. It was, he argued, formed "upon the plan and *principles* of the United Irish and connected I am strongly persuaded with the Irish in the United States of America."[51] In a subsequent dispatch, he emphasized the need to support

landed proprietors "against the attempts of democratic levellers" who kept "stirring up sedition" by agitating the "question of an Agrarian Law."[52]

In the context of the War of 1812 and its aftermath, Smith moved to destroy the society's influence and suppress agrarian protest. This included curtailing the role of the House of Assembly in Island politics. After trying to control the behavior of the House and failing, Smith chose to govern without it for most of his twelve-year regime. The paranoid tone of his administration was in keeping with that prevailing in Britain at the time, and in other British North American colonies as well.[53] In his pursuit of sources of revenue that did not require convening the House of Assembly, Smith promoted rigorous collection of quit rents. As well, he took the radical step of escheating two lots, and would have proceeded against other proprietors had he not been stopped by London. Although Smith intended that his escheat actions would thwart democratic power by enhancing the resources available to the governor, he inadvertently renewed popular faith in the possibility of a general escheat.

By the mid-1820s, the call for land reform through an escheat was beginning to reemerge in the political arena. In part, this was because Smith was removed from office in 1824, and his replacement, John Ready, helped to provide a context that seemed favorable to reform. Ready had served as a government official in Lower Canada in the years after the war, and had developed a sympathy with the positions of politicians such as John Neilson and Louis-Joseph Papineau, who were pressing for democratic reform there.[54] Ready's positions reflected broader changes in imperial policy as well. As governor of Prince Edward Island, he helped to renew reform possibilities by reactivating the House of Assembly and giving it a place of importance in Island politics. Although escheat was an issue in the 1824 election, and there were calls to form a party around the issue,[55] the election victories went primarily to men who had helped to get rid of the previous governor, even though many had little or no sympathy for land reform. It was clear, however, that the land question was not going to fade away. Following the election of 1824, Angus Macaulay, once a prominent member of the Society of Loyal Electors, presented a petition to the House calling for a general escheat.[56] Macaulay was an important rural leader and had been Speaker of the Assembly. The petition he presented carried the signatures of 800 residents, demanding that the Assembly act to eliminate landlords' titles and regrant proprietorial holdings in small tracts to those who worked them.[57]

The 1830s saw these early popular rumblings develop into a powerful Island-wide protest movement that moved well beyond the scope of previous rural protests. Local Island matters were some of what shaped this development. Significant shifts in property distribution occurred in the early nineteenth century as a number of big holdings changed hands, in part because of the threat of escheat. Many of the original grantees sold out altogether, and their lots were acquired by newcomers in the Island property market, as well as by landlords interested in enlarging their existing holdings. One result was an increasing concentration of property ownership. By 1830, the six biggest landlords owned four or more 20,000-acre townships each, and collectively held roughly half of the colony's 1.4 million acres.[58] Although these property transfers did not eliminate landlords with little concern for actively managing their holdings, they helped to generate a greater level of landlord interest in making profits from their Island properties. There were significant changes in settlement patterns as well, as thousands of emigrants from the British Isles made their way to the British North American colonies in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars. This, coupled with natural growth, pushed the Island's population to around 30,000 by 1830.[59] These local-level changes in the ownership and demand for land, which reflected broader imperial shifts in the allocation of capital and labor, heightened land tensions on the Island.

Political developments in the empire and in the Atlantic world more generally helped to set the context for the development of a vibrant rural protest movement on the Island in the 1830s. Daniel O'Connell's successful mass campaigns for Catholic emancipation made it possible for Island Catholics, who represented roughly half of the colony's population, to vote for the first time when new members of the House of Assembly were selected in 1830. O'Connell's successes served as well to demonstrate the efficacy of collective action. So too did the struggle for parliamentary reform in Britain, a cause which Island papers tracked while also paying close attention to revolutionary challenges on the European mainland, beginning with the July Revolution in France.[60] Following passage of the Reform Act of 1832, it became a reference point for judging the pace of political changes on the Island.[61] The momentous 1833 legislation abolishing slavery within the British Empire further broadened the grounds for hope, as it represented an abridgement of the property rights of British citizens, and politically powerful ones at that. If Parliament was willing to infringe on planters' property claims in order to right wrongs elsewhere in the empire,

it suggested a new context in which those struggling against proprietors on Prince Edward Island might also finally succeed in ending landlordism.

The rural protest movement that emerged in the 1830s and came to be known as the Escheat Movement began to take form in the period between passage of the Catholic Emancipation Bill in1829 and passage of the parliamentary reform and slave emancipation acts in 1832 and 1833. The Island's House of Assembly played an important role in its genesis, and the man who was most central to this was William Cooper, an Englishman elected to the House in 1832. Cooper had immigrated to the colony in 1819, after twenty years at sea with the British navy and as a sea captain in the international trades. He moved to the Island to serve as a land agent on the estate of Lord Townshend, one of the Island's many absentee proprietors.[62] Townshend's previous agent had been killed by an angry tenant, seeking to resist the agent's seizure of his horse for back rents, and Cooper's task was to pick up where he left off.[63] Cooper proved remarkably successful in what must have been a difficult task, and ultimately gained the support of Lord Townshend's tenantry, who in time would be central to his electoral success.

Cooper's popularity probably reflected both his personal skills and the appeal of the policies he adopted. His vision of landlord-tenant relations was paternal and grounded in the notion of reciprocity; tenants owed landlords rents, but landlords were responsible for providing services in exchange. As Townshend's agent, Cooper arranged for the construction of a grist mill, found markets for rural products, and accepted rent payments in timber, agricultural goods, or labor. As well, Cooper lived among the tenantry and acted as a local peacemaker, doctor, and sustainer of those in need. Cooper's initiatives involved Townshend in the economic risks of rural industry in ways that simple rent collection did not. When these affected Townshend's rental income in the economically troubled years of the late 1820s, Townshend chose to dismiss him.[64] Subsequently, Cooper ran for a seat in the House of Assembly and used it as a forum to articulate proposals for radical land reform.

Not surprisingly, Cooper's first speeches in the House of Assembly on the land question framed the subject in terms of a failed paternal order. Landlords, he argued, had turned their backs on the "people they ought to support and cherish," and refused to use their property to provide "employment and bread to the industrious."[65] In subsequent declarations, he expanded on these ideas: "In the old fashioned times the lands were considered to be for the use of the people, to give them employment and

subsistence, to raise and maintain a hardy race for the support and defense of the country." This, though, had become a thing of the past in the Old World, as "according to the improved system, the land is not for use of the people, but for the proprietor—and as the lands will yield more if cultivated by a few useful hands, without women or children, the supernumeraries are turned off to the manufacturing towns and the colonies, and villages are turned into sheep pastures and pleasure grounds." The same thinking, he argued, would soon be applied to Prince Edward Island; once its lands were cleared and improved, "the present inhabitants will be turned off to make room for large farms, which will either sell or let at a great advantage."[66] Cooper's arguments were grounded in a transatlantic vision of the erosion of an organic social order, and were a call for Islanders to resist the spread of the logic of clearances from the Old World to the New World. Given that many of the settlers on the Island had been compelled to leave the British Isles because of the agrarian transformation Cooper described, his warnings must have had a powerful resonance.

Cooper argued that the appropriate response to the threats posed by the decline of a paternalistic order was to turn to the state for protection. In Prince Edward Island, this included making use of the possibilities afforded by popular representation in the House of Assembly. One of Cooper's many strengths as a leader was his recognition of the usefulness of his Assembly seat in mobilizing support for radical land reform and maintaining a focused campaign. During the first escheat movement of the 1790s, rural calls for radical land reform were muted, to a large extent, when they were translated into legislative action. A similar dynamic was at work in the House of Assembly in the 1830s, as rural demand for a general escheat that would end landlordism altogether was transformed into a call for the escheat of grants where there had been little settlement.[67] Such a policy, which fit well with the agenda of those interested in promoting economic development or in gaining access to wilderness lands, offered little to redress the grievances of the existing settler population, as escheats would only occur on properties where they did not live. In the early 1830s, the disjuncture between rural demands for sweeping land reform and what in fact the Assembly was doing became a public issue, as Cooper denounced the land policies the House was considering, and published his position in the leading Island paper at the close of the 1832 session. This set the stage for organizing an out-of-House movement to sustain radical land reform.[68]

The rural protest movement that began to take shape at this juncture combined local-level organizing with very effective use of Island

newspapers. Cooper's home community of Bay Fortune, in the east of the Island, provided a model for how other rural communities might use the Island's newspapers to help them agitate for land reform. At the end of the 1832 session, a committee of Bay Fortune residents called a local public meeting—not the first such—to consider the land question. It then sent the resolutions they passed, calling for a general escheat of proprietorial grants, to an Island paper.[69] Its initiatives helped to inspire other communities to do the same. When the residents of Rustico gathered in the summer of 1832, they were following the example established by Bay Fortune and, by this time, half a dozen other communities. These simple tactics of holding community-level public meetings, developing resolutions, and arranging for their publication built on the possibilities afforded by the growth of newspaper publishing in the 1830s and proved very effective in mobilizing the rural population and coordinating the rural activism.

As the conversation on land reform developed in meetings, petitions, reports to the newspapers, and debate in the House of Assembly, so too did the ideological foundation of protest. Joseph Robinson's escheat manifesto of 1796 had challenged the legitimacy of the original township grants, as the landlords had not fulfilled the terms of their deeds, and had suggested that only those who invested their labor in the land were entitled to the rights of ownership. The idea that property rights should be grounded in labor emerges in his manifesto, but Robinson did not push the point, and modified it somewhat with his other observations.[70] Cooper and other leaders of the Escheat Movement that began in the 1830s spoke much more explicitly about the relationship between property and labor, and about the fit between this and a properly organized civic order. Cooper's first major speech on the land issue in the House of Assembly focused on the need for a general escheat in order to protect "the liberties of the people." As well, he argued, an escheat was necessary to secure the property of those who had "planted their labour where the forest grew . . . and made a garden in the wilderness."[71] Citing classical precedents, Cooper extolled the thinking of the Gracchan Law that limited the amount of land a Roman family could hold; similar restrictions were needed on Prince Edward Island.[72] "[T]here cannot," he argued, "be a greater monopoly of the labour of man, than by holding the possession of large tracts of land," and if "the people" were to provide "the bulwark and support of Government," the state needed to intervene to restrict the "injustice" that would emerge from such a monopoly. As he phrased it in a subsequent speech, the

"majority of mankind must have an interest in the soil" if they were to "support and defend" the state.[73]

The language and arguments that Cooper and others employed to sustain the Escheat Movement belonged to a broader transatlantic conversation concerning a just social order.

Like producers elsewhere, Escheat activists argued that the security and independence of the populace, and ultimately the health of the polity, lay in ensuring broad access to the land.[74] The republicanism of their vision of an appropriate ordering of society was often framed, as it was by radicals in the imperial center, in terms of a correct interpretation of British constitutional principles.[75] Like many working people elsewhere around the Atlantic, Escheators drew strength from the notion that producers had a right to the product of their labor, and that a just order would ensure this.[76] And, in keeping with the positions adopted by settlers in other North American locales, they used a labor theory of value to cast their efforts in the land struggle as a defense of property.[77] He who "cultivates a farm by the sweat of his brow," they argued, "is fairly and honestly entitled to it."[78] The Island's tenants had "made all the property out of a wilderness, where there was none before; and all the claim the landlords set up [is] to the property which we have made by our hard labour."[79] It followed that the objectives of the Escheat Movement were consistent with upholding property rights within a just social order, as Escheators sought "to secure to every man the possession of the property made by his labour."[80] Like those elsewhere who viewed the world in similar ways, Escheators expressed these sentiments in an inclusive vocabulary of class. The struggle for land reform pitted, in their words, "the people" against their oppressors, "the many" against "the few," the "labouring class" against "land jobbers," the "productive classes" against parasites, and/or the "working bees" against the "drones."[81]

Escheat leaders drew as well from the language and logic of the struggle to abolish slavery. In their view, Island tenants deserved to participate in the developments that had at last liberated slaves within the British Empire. It was time, they argued, for the state to turn its attention to assisting them to "shake off proprietary fetters."[82] William Rankin, who immigrated to the Island from Demerara in the 1830s, sustained this message in his short-lived pro-Escheat paper, the *Prince Edward Island Times*. The "progress of improvement," he noted, was transforming the lives of slaves in the West Indies while "chains and manacles of oppression" that rivaled slavery continued to persist on Prince Edward Island.[83] The precedent of British

emancipation legislation proved particularly useful for countering the claim that the Escheat Movement's challenge to the property rights of landlords put it outside the realm of legitimate political discussion. After 1833, Escheators could note that, although the antislavery crusaders, such as William Wilberforce and Thomas Buxton, had been vilified for their attack on property rights, their initiatives had ultimately become law, and that they would be remembered as progressive leaders who had contributed to "freeing millions of the human race from bondage."[84] Those who opposed the emancipation of Island tenants, like those who had opposed the emancipation of slaves in the West Indies, were, they argued, "a race of arrogant, upstart gentry" who wished to be supported forever "by the hard labour of the oppressed and degraded Agriculturalists."[85]

The tactics of rural protest on Prince Edward Island in the 1830s and early 1840s focused on formal politics and court challenges, as well as on local resistance. In this they had more in common with the actions which tenants in the Hudson Valley would deploy than with contemporaneous rural protests in the regions of the British Isles where most of the population had originated, and where redress of grievances was most commonly sought through direct action.[86] Prince Edward Island had had its own House of Assembly since 1773, and this, coupled with a relatively broad franchise, created a forum for rural grievances. Electoral changes introduced in 1833, which set the term of the House of Assembly at four years, gave Escheators the opportunity to bring voter pressure to bear on legislative proceedings. This they ultimately did quite successfully by establishing their own political party. The bill which created quadrennial elections was passed in the wake of the British parliamentary Reform Bill, and the member of the Assembly who introduced the bill pressed his case, arguing that it was fully consistent with the political philosophy of "friends and supporters of freedom in Great Britain," as well as with the aspirations of liberals shedding blood for political freedom in Italy, Poland, and Russia.[87]

Direct action in the form of a rent strike was also part of the Escheat Movement's repertoire of resistance from the beginning. When, following the close of the spring session of the legislature in 1832, the citizens of Bay Fortune met to consider the land question, they included a call to stop paying rents in their published resolutions. This was true of other meetings held elsewhere as well in the wake of publication of the Bay Fortune proceedings. In some communities, "bonds" or "agreements" were established at this time to bind tenants to the strategy of rent resistance.[88] Refusal to pay rents soon led to confrontations with land agents and the forces of the

law as tenants moved from resisting payment to blocking attempts to seize property or serve eviction notices.[89] The historical record is, understandably, relatively silent concerning the organization of this resistance and the exact role of Escheat leaders in it, but the scale of the resistance (which at times saw large armed crowds turn back sheriffs and their deputies), as well as its extent and locales point to the intimate connections between the well-documented political initiatives and the direct actions. At various times, direct action effectively halted the collection of rents on much of the Island, and made some areas unsafe for those seeking to collect rents or enforce legal actions relating to the land question.

The formal political challenge, too, came to hold the possibility of a direct confrontation with the forces of constituted authority, as there was no precise demarcation between mobilizing a population to protest an injustice by petition, assembly, and electoral action, and mobilizing a population to gain its ends by force, if necessary.[90] The Escheat Movement, like the movements associated with Mackenzie and Papineau in Upper and Lower Canada that were demonstrating their power in the 1830s—the Reform Bill agitation in Britain, the mass movements orchestrated by Daniel O'Connell, and the Chartist protests—brought large crowds together in mass rallies to, among other things, demonstrate physical power. The rally that would prove to be the largest of the Escheat rallies was held the same week that the first edition of the Chartist newspaper appeared on British streets, and days before reform challenges in the Canadas slipped into insurrection.[91] This mass rally of November 1837, with marching contingents from various parts of the Island and the pageantry of flags and banners and rounds of musket fire, was the expression of a substantial challenge to the authority of the state.

Although the escheat agitation of the 1830s began with the hope that the Island's House of Assembly could be electorally reconstructed to reflect the demands of land reformers, the task proved more difficult than its leaders had first imagined. Frustrated over Assembly policies that seemed to fly in the face of the wishes of the rural populace, Escheat activists in communities around the Island took steps in the winter of 1836 that led to the establishment of what became, in essence, an alternative assembly. Communities selected "delegates" to represent their interests at Escheat "conventions," which in turn assumed leadership in a number of areas concerning the land question. These included raising monies for a legal defense fund and to send delegates to represent their cause with government officials in London and Quebec City, orchestrating electoral campaigns,

hammering out collective policy on the land question, printing pamphlets to send to the British Parliament, exploring the possibility of founding their own newspaper, establishing lists of their foes, and orchestrating what would later be known as "boycotts." Some of these initiatives were handled by community-level Escheat organizations, but a central "Managing Committee" coordinated local efforts and dealt with broader issues.[92]

These initiatives might have provided the organizational basis for armed challenges such as those which developed in Upper and Lower Canada in the winter of 1837. Indeed, one of the main reform leaders in Lower Canada publicly drew the parallels with Prince Edward Island just before the outbreak of violence, and suggested that rural protestors in Lower Canada would do well to emulate the militancy of the activists on Prince Edward Island.[93] The strength of agrarian organization on Prince Edward Island, though, had much to do with why protest there stopped short of armed rebellion. Escheat leaders recognized the futility of insurrection in such a small colony, and they had the authority to persuade their followers not to engage in actions that would, in their words, "expose their dwellings to desolation and themselves to all the horrors of military execution."[94] As well, the Escheat Movement had sufficient strength to deter others from acts of provocation, for, as the Island's governor noted in the winter of 1837, authorities in Prince Edward Island lacked sufficient troops to deal with any "serious tumult," and reinforcements could only be sent at the times of year when the ice was out and shipping possible.[95]

In the aftermath of the bloody suppression of the rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada, conservative forces on the Island sought, as they often had in the past, to damn rural protesters in the colony by association. This time, the tactic proved remarkably unsuccessful, and when elections for the House of Assembly were held in the fall of 1838, the men who had been the leaders of Escheat's alternative assembly shifted over to assume control of the official House of Assembly. Although the Escheat Movement employed a wide variety of tactics in its assault on landlordism, much of its energy had been directed toward formal political mobilization, and a guiding assumption of the movement had been that it was possible to achieve land reform by constitutional means. During the four years following the election of 1838, advocates of a radical land reform had the representation and the leadership to push relentlessly for real reform. The experience revealed the limitations of the political system, which they had believed would respond to strong expressions of the public will. Time and again, the House of Assembly's legislative initiatives were blocked by the appointed

upper house, or by the Colonial Office in London, which ultimately had the final say on all legislation concerning property.

Direct appeals to the imperial government also proved fruitless. Just prior to the 1838 election, the Escheat "convention" had dispatched Cooper to London to present the case for land reform to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Glenelg. Although Cooper met with Daniel O'Connell and Joseph Hume and began to forge relationships with them, he made little headway with the Colonial Secretary, who had been informed by letter from the colony's governor that any claims Cooper might make that he represented the majority of the Island's rural population were "entirely without foundation."[96] With election results that proved the contrary, Cooper returned to London in his capacity as Speaker of the new House of Assembly, but again was rebuffed at the Colonial Office. His fallback plan, which was to bring the grievances of the Island's rural population to the attention of the British Parliament, proved difficult, as by the time Cooper was in a position to do so, Parliament had been dissolved and an election called. Its results brought a decade of Whig rule to an end. The Escheat Movement's main ally, Joseph Hume, lost his seat, and although another vigorous advocate of reform, Dr. Bowring, agreed to act in his stead, the chances of success in the first years of Robert Peel's ministry were not good, to say the least.[97]

Within the year, the Escheat Party too lost its majority, and with it its momentum. The movement that Cooper led had developed energy in the early years of the 1830s, as the struggle for reform seemed to be moving from success to success in the imperial center and elsewhere. It survived the crisis of the winter of 1837–38 in British North America by opting not to challenge the status quo by force of arms. Thus, as the followers of Mackenzie and Papineau went into voluntary and involuntary exile, to prison, and to the gallows,[98] Escheators more clearly defined a constitutional strategy, which permitted them to assume power in the colony's House of Assembly. Ultimately, however, power did not lie there, or with the appointed upper house, or with government officers on the Island, but with the British Parliament. Escheat's strategy had come to entail using political mobilization on the Island, and their position as the elected representatives of the Island's population, to make a moral claim. The changing political context in Britain, though, closed down whatever opportunities there might have been for success by such means.

With the loss of hope, the Escheat Movement began to come undone. "Prince Edward Island's Chartists," as one of their conservative opponents

labeled them, had grappled with the problems of choosing between physical force and moral force, and having opted for the latter, ran out of options when the imperial state said "no" to their demands and showed itself willing to sustain that position by force. In the early years of the Escheat Movement, Cooper had drawn a parallel between the circumstances on Prince Edward Island and those in Ireland, suggesting that the rural residents of both were the victims of insidious land monopolies. He suggested as well that while "bullets and bayonets" might momentarily silence rural protest, force was not a viable long-term state policy.[99] He was right—in the long term. In the short term, however, the imperial government was willing to adopt such policies, both at home and in British North America. "The order of the day," as the Rustico activists had phrased it, was definitely not "reform," and as a result, the possibilities for effective formal rural protest on Prince Edward Island were sharply reduced. As with its rise, the Escheat Movement's demise, like the ebb and flow of rural protest in earlier periods of Island history, was intimately connected with broader patterns of change in the Atlantic world.

Notes

1. John Crisp to the Editor, *Royal Gazette* (Charlottetown), 21 August 1832, p. 2. The *Royal Gazette* functioned as a commercial paper, as well as the record of official news.
2. I use capitals to distinguish the rural protest movement that began in the 1830s—the Escheat Movement—from other calls for an escheat (a process whereby land title is resumed by the state) of some or all of the proprietorial holdings in the colony.
3. To avoid confusion, I refer to the colony as Prince Edward Island throughout this paper. See D. C. Harvey, *The French Regime in Prince Edward Island* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926), 141–60.
4. D. W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History*, vol. 1, *Atlantic America, 1492–1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 267–307; Bernard Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 7–24.
5. J. M. Bumsted, *Land, Settlement, and Politics on Eighteenth-Century Prince Edward Island* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), 12–26. For land policies and the activities of land speculators elsewhere on this new frontier, see Charlton W. Tebeau, *A*

History of Florida (Coral Gables, Fla.: University of Miami Press, 1971), 80; Thomas Perkins Abernethy, *Western Lands and the American Revolution* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1959), 1–58; Matt Bushnell Jones, *Vermont in the Making, 1750–1777* (1939; reprint, Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1968), 40–66.

6. Andrew Hill Clark, *Three Centuries and the Island: A Historical Geography of Settlement and Agriculture in Prince Edward Island, Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), append. B.
7. Harvey, *The French Regime in Prince Edward Island;* Andrew Hill Clark, *Acadia: The Geography of Early Nova Scotia to 1760* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968); Richard Colebrook Harris, *The Seigneurial System in Early Canada: A Geographical Study* (1966; reprint, Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984); Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors: The Revolutionary Settlement on the Maine Frontier, 1760–1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Oliver A. Rink, *Holland on the Hudson: An Economic and Social History of Dutch New York* (Cooperstown, N.Y.: New York State Historical Association, 1986); Michael Kammen, *Colonial New York: A History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975); Sung Bok Kim, *Landlord and Tenant in Colonial New York: Manorial Society, 1664–1775* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978); Reeve Huston, *Land and Freedom: Rural Society, Popular Protest, and Party Politics in Antebellum New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Aron M. Sakolski, *Land Tenure and Land Taxation in America* (New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1957), 18–58.
8. Clark, *Three Centuries and the Island,* 42–50.
9. Bumsted, *Land, Settlement, and Politics,* 27–44.
10. Ibid., 30, 40.
11. Ada MacLeod, "The Glenaladale Pioneers," *Dalhousie Review* 11 (1931–32): 311–24; J. M. Bumsted, "Highland Emigration to the Island of St. John and the Scottish Catholic Church," *Dalhousie Review* 54 (1978): 511–27; J. M. Bumsted, "Sir James Montgomery and Prince Edward Island, 1767–1803," *Acadiensis* 7, no. 2 (1978): 76–102; F. L. Pigot, "Thomas Desbrisay," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 5:249–50; H. T. Holman, "Robert Clark," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 6:152–53; Bumsted, *Land, Settlement and Politics,* 45–64; Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West,* 59–61.
12. Margaret E. McCallum, "'The Sacred Rights of Property': Title, Entitlement, and the Land Question in Nineteenth-Century Prince Edward

Island," in *Essays in the History of Canadian Law*, vol. 8, *In Honour of R. C. B. Risk*, ed. G. Blaine Baker and Jim Phillips (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 365. For the importance that similar questions about the legitimacy of landlord titles held to contemporaneous land struggles in New York, see Huston, *Land and Freedom*, 19–20, 33–35, 83, 97–98, 101, 121, 165, 180, 193; Charles W. McCurdy, *The Anti-Rent Era in New York Law and Politics, 1839–1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 4, 97–100, 275, 282–84.

13. Clark, *Three Centuries and the Island*, 56–60.
14. Earle Lockerby, "The Deportation of the Acadians from Ile-St. Jean, 1758," *Acadiensis* 27, no. 2 (1998): 45–94.
15. Orlo Jones and Doris Haslam, eds., *An Island Refuge: Loyalists and Disbanded Troops on the Island of Saint John* (Charlottetown: Abegweit Branch of the United Empire Loyalist Association of Canada, 1983); Bumsted, *Land, Settlement and Politics*, 98–120.
16. Lockerby, "The Deportation of the Acadians from Ile-St. Jean, 1758," 86–88.
17. These shifts, to find the best land and/or avoid landlords, included moves to adjacent colonies. John MacDonald to Nelly, 6 March 1784, ms. 2664/8/3–4, Public Archives of Prince Edward Island [hereafter PAPEI]; Hill Memorial, [n.d.] Colonial Office Papers (CO) 226/17/143–4; MacLeod, "The Glenaladale Pioneers," 319.
18. Richard Maxwell Brown, "Back Country Rebellions and the Homestead Ethic," in *Tradition, Conflict, and Modernization: Perspectives on the American Revolution*, ed. Richard Maxwell Brown and Don E. Fehrenbacher (New York: Academic Press, 1977), 73–98; Edward Countryman, "Out of the Bounds of the Law: Northern Land Rioters in the Eighteenth Century," in *The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism*, ed. Alfred F. Young (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1976), 39–61; Gregory H. Nobles, "Breaking into the Backcountry: New Approaches to the Early American Frontier, 1750–1800," *William and Mary Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (October 1989): 641–70.
19. A series of questionable land-policy initiatives, beginning in the early 1780s and orchestrated by the Island's first governor, Walter Patterson, left the issue of land titles and ownership even more muddied than they previously had been, and contributed to settlers' land grievances as well. For a discussion of the details of Patterson's initiatives, see Bumsted, *Land, Settlement and Politics*, 83–138.

20. Margaret Ells, "Clearing the Decks for the Loyalists," Canadian Historical Association, *Annual Reports* (1933): 43–58.
21. For Robinson's biography, see J. M. Bumsted, "Joseph Robinson," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 5:720–21; Edward J. Cashin, *The King's Ranger: Thomas Brown and the American Revolution on the Southern Frontier* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989); [John Hill's biographical sketch of Robinson], CO 226/18/215. For Montgomery, see Bumsted, "Sir James Montgomery and Prince Edward Island."
22. John Hill memorandum, [n.d.], CO 226/17/110.
23. "To the Farmers in the Island of St. John, in the Gulf of St. Lawrence," ms. 2702/684. PAPEI.
24. Brown, "Back Country Rebellions and the Homestead Ethic"; Alan Taylor, "Agrarian Independence: Northern Land Rioters After the Revolution," in *Beyond the American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism*, ed. Alfred F. Young (DeKalb: University of Northern Illinois Press, 1993), 221–45.
25. [John Hill's biographical sketch of Robinson], CO 226/18/215–6; J. M. Bumsted, "Robert Hodgson," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 5:424–25.
26. Enclosure, John MacDonald to Portland, 24 November 1798, CO 226/16/142–3; [John Hill's biographical sketch of Robinson], CO 226/18/215; John Hill memorandum, [n.d.], CO 226/17/138.
27. Fanning to Portland, 30 September 1797, CO 226/15/264–7; Joseph Robinson's Report, 25 August 1797, CO 226/15/268–9.
28. MacDonald to Fanning, 15 April 1797, CO 226/15/211.
29. Hill memorandum, [n.d.], CO 226/17/126–7.
30. F. L. Pigot, "John MacDonald of Glenaladale," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 5:514.
31. Fanning to Portland, 30 September 1797, CO 226/15/267.
32. J. M. Bumsted, "Edmund Fanning," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 5:308.
33. Contextualization of this report is provided by J. M. Bumsted, "The Land Question on Prince Edward Island and the Quit Rent Controversy of 1802–1806," *Acadiensis* 29, no. 2 (2000): 3–16.
34. Prince Edward Island, *Journals of the House of Assembly* (*JHA*), 16 July 1801.
35. Fanning to Portland, 30 September 1797, CO 226/15/215.
36. J. M. Bumsted, "The Origins of the Land Question on Prince Edward Island, 1767–1805," *Acadiensis* 11, no. 1 (1981): 45.

37. Arturo Warman has aptly compared the situation confronting the historian in these circumstances to the problems of following a play in which the most important actor says nothing. The persistent influences of a silent peasantry have provided, Warman has suggested in the case of Mexico's development, the essential continuities and determinants of national history. Landlords and the bourgeoisie may have had all the lines, but their behavior reflected the position of the rural masses who physically dominated the stage. Arturo Warman, *"We Come to Object": The Peasants of Morelos and the National State*, trans. Stephen K. Ault (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 4. James C. Scott has suggested a coral metaphor to make the same point. Like the millions of polyps whose actions go into the construction of reefs, peasant actions in aggregate create a political presence which makes some routes possible and leads to the wreck of those attempting others. James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), xvii.
38. Loyalist elites in Saint John encountered similar problems in controlling their followers during the turbulent 1780s. D. G. Bell, *Early Loyalist Saint John: The Origin of New Brunswick Politics, 1783–1786* (Fredericton: New Ireland Press, 1983), 129–33.
39. H. T. Holman, "James Bardin Palmer," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 6:565–59; "Report by Major J. B. Palmer on Conditions in Prince Edward Island," 20 August 1805, DesBarres Papers, MG 23/F1–5/14/2708–17, National Archives of Canada.
40. Palmer Deposition, 16 May 1811, CO 226/28/66; James Meeman and Desmond Clarke, eds., *The Royal Dublin Society, 1731–1981* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1981); J. C. Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland, 1603–1923* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), 175–76.
41. Ulrich Im Hof, "German Associations and Politics in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century," in *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century*, ed. Eckhart Hellmuth (London: Oxford University Press, 1990), 211.
42. Charles Wright deposition, 23 April 1812, CO 226/26/195–6.
43. Holland to Smith, 21 December 1814, CO 226/31/15.
44. Charles Stewart to Montgomery, 20 April 1812, CO 226/26/28; Colclough to Hill, 28 April 1812, CO 226/26/225–6.
45. LeSeuer to Attorney General Charles Stewart, 24 April 1812, CO 226/30/83–5.
46. Colclough to Robert Montgomery, 26 March 1812, CO 226/26/235.

47. Hill and Montgomery, "Statement Relative to Prince Edward Island," [n.d.], CO 226/26/165; Cambridge to Richardson, 9 March 1818, CO 226/34/391. There were parallels here as well with Jacobin modes of organization, as Abbé LeSeuer may have noted. See Michael L. Kennedy, *The Jacobin Clubs in the French Revolution: The First Years* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982), 3–30.
48. Charles Tilly, "Britain Creates the Social Movement," in *Social Conflict and the Political Order in Modern Britain*, ed. James E. Cronin and Jonathan Schneer (London: Croom Helm, 1982), 21–51.
49. J. M. Bumsted, "William Roubel," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 6:662–63.
50. Roubel deposition, 30 July 1813, CO 226/28/63; Gerrit P. Judd, *Members of Parliament, 1734–1832* (Hamden, Conn.: Shoe String Press, 1972), 106.
51. Emphasis in the original. Smith to Bathurst, 29 July 1813, CO 226/29/67–70.
52. Smith to Bathurst, 13 September 1814, CO 226/29/82.
53. Eric Hobsbawm aptly characterizes the second decade of the nineteenth century in Britain as the "hysterical 1810s." E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, 1789–1848* (New York: New American Library, 1962), 251.
54. Elinor Vass, "John Ready," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 7:740–42.
55. *Prince Edward Island Register* (Charlottetown), 4 December 1824.
56. Prince Edward Island, *JHA*, 1825, 1st session, pp. 44, 59; CO 226/43/5–6.
57. Prince Edward Island, *JHA*, 1825, 1st session, p. 44; CO 226/43/5–6.
58. CO 226/47/166–8.
59. Clark, *Three Centuries and the Island*, 66.
60. *Royal Gazette*, 21 September, 19 October, 26 October, 9 November 1830; 15 February, 19 April, 7 June, 14 June 1831; 1 May, 14 August 1832.
61. See, for instance, Dalrymple and Cooper's remarks in *Royal Gazette*, 15 January, 2 April 1833.
62. Harry Baglole, "William Cooper," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 9:155–58; Harry Baglole, "William Cooper of Sailor's Hope," *The Island Magazine* (fall–winter 1979): 3–11.
63. D. A. Sutherland, "1810–1820: War and Peace," in *The Atlantic Region to Confederation*, ed. Phillip A. Buckner and John G. Reid (Toronto and

Fredericton: University of Toronto Press and Acadiensis Press, 1994), 234–35.

64. My description of Cooper's behavior as a land agent draws primarily from "Report of a Select Committee of the Inhabitants of Lot or Township number 56 in Prince Edward Island. Submitted to the Inhabitants at a Public Meeting the 16th of January 1838," CO 226/56/177–88; statement of Archibald Steele et al., from the September 1837 *Colonial Herald* (Charlottetown), CO 226/55/316.
65. *British American* (Charlottetown), 13 April 1833.
66. *Legislative and Other Proceedings on the Expediency of Appointing a Court of Escheats in Prince Edward Island* (1836).
67. Similar shifts emerged in the translation of tenant demands into legislative and gubernatorial initiatives in New York in the 1840s. Huston, *Land and Freedom*, 99, 154–56, 180; McCurdy, *The Anti-Rent Era*, 33.
68. Mr. Cooper's Speech on the Escheat Question, *Royal Gazette*, 3 April 1832.
69. *Royal Gazette*, 24 April 1832. Rural people who were literate in English assumed the task of reading and translating these newspaper reports to others in their communities. See, for instance, John Arbuckle to T. H. Haviland, 25 January 1838, CO 226/55/297.
70. The printed text that historians now have to work with was not the version that circulated in the countryside, and some members of the Island elite claimed that the printed version was altered before publication—perhaps toned down. Hill's biographical sketch of Joseph Robinson, CO 226/18/215.
71. Mr. Cooper's Speech on the Escheat Question, *Royal Gazette*, 3 April 1832.
72. *Colonial Herald*, 10 February 1838. For French and American parallels regarding use of classical agrarian law as a precedent, see R. B. Rose, "The 'Red Scare' of the 1790s: The French Revolution and the 'Agrarian Law,'" *Past and Present* 103 (May 1984): 113–30; Paul Conkin, *Prophets of Prosperity: America's First Political Economists* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 224–25. Apparently conflating the Roman land unit, the *iugera*, with acres, Cooper incorrectly claimed that the limit was 500 acres, rather than approximately 330 acres. The 500-acre figure subsequently became the ceiling that the Escheat Movement used as an appropriate limit for land accumulation. Yet later, it was embodied in the compulsory land purchase legislation of 1875.

73. *British American*, 13 April 1833.
74. Malcolm Chase, *"The People's Farm": English Radical Agrarianism, 1775–1840* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); Jamie L. Bronstein, *Land Reform and Working-Class Experience in Britain and the United States, 1800–1862* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999); Thomas R. Knox, "Thomas Spence: The Trumpet of Jubilee," *Past and Present* 76 (1977): 75–98; Dorothy Thompson, *The Chartists: Popular Politics in the Industrial Revolution* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 299–306; Conkin, *Prophets of Prosperity*, 222–58; Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788–1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 335–43; Huston, *Land and Freedom*, 8, 112–13.
75. John Belchem, "Republicanism, Popular Constitutionalism and the Radical Platform in Early Nineteenth-Century England," *Social History* 6 (1981): 1–32. See, for instance, John LeLecheur's demand for "pure and unadulterated British laws" in the *Colonial Herald*, 3 October 1838.
76. Edward Pessen describes these ideas as the "solid rock" underlying radical labor's "idea of the good society" in Jacksonian America. Edward Pessen, *Most Uncommon Jacksonians: The Radical Leaders of the Early Labour Movement* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1967), 174. Thomas Summerhill notes the parallels between the producer ideology of tenants and small farmers in upstate New York and that espoused by labor radicals, and notes Thomas Devyr's role in trying to build a link between urban and rural laborers. Thomas Summerhill, "The Farmers' Republic: Agrarian Protest and the Capitalist Transformation of Upstate New York, 1840–1900" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, San Diego, 1993), 55, 127. See also Huston, *Land and Freedom*, 111–12; Taylor, "Agrarian Independence"; Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 157–58, 178; Alan Dawley, *Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 63–65; Paul G. Faler, *Mechanics and Manufacturers in the Early Industrial Revolution: Lynn, Massachusetts, 1780–1860* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 175–88; Bruce Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia, 1800–1850* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 75–77, 108–9; Patricia Hollis, *The Pauper Press: A Study in Working Class Radicalism in the 1830s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 203–58; J. F. C. Harrison, *Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America: The Quest for the New Moral Order* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 69–72.

77. Alan Taylor, "Agrarian Independence," 224–25.
78. *Royal Gazette*, 1 May 1832.
79. *Royal Gazette*, 29 March 1836.
80. *Colonial Herald*, 31 March 1838.
81. *Royal Gazette*, 3 April 1832; *British American*, 13 April 1833; *Royal Gazette*, 25 November 1834, CO 226/55/309; "To the Reformers of Prince and Queen's County," *Prince Edward Island Times*, 16 April 1836; "A Native Elector" to "The Electors of the Second Electoral District of Prince County," *Colonial Herald*, 7 May 1842. Asa Briggs, "The Language of 'Class' in Early Nineteenth-Century England," in *Collected Essays of Asa Briggs*, vol. 1, *Words, Numbers, Places, People* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1985), 1:3–33; Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 51–59.
82. *Colonial Herald*, 22 August 1838.
83. *Prince Edward Island Times*, 26 July 1836; J. M. Bumsted, "William Rankin," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 7:734–35.
84. *Colonial Herald*, 5 May 1838.
85. *Colonial Herald*, 3 October 1838.
86. Huston, *Land and Freedom*; Eric Hobsbawm and George Rudé, *Captain Swing: A Social History of the Great English Agricultural Uprising of 1830* (1968; reprint, New York: W. W. Norton, 1975); Eric Richards, "How Tame were the Highlanders During the Clearances?" *Scottish Studies* 17 (spring 1973): 35–50; James Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1976); T. M. Devine, "Unrest and Stability in Rural Ireland and Scotland, 1760–1840," in *Economy and Society in Scotland and Ireland, 1500–1939*, ed. Rosalind Mitchison and Peter Roebuck (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1988), 126–39; Michael Beames, *Peasants and Power: The Whiteboy Movements and Their Control in Pre-Famine Ireland* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1983); P. E. W. Roberts, "Caravats and Shanavests: Whiteboyism and Faction Fighting in East Munster, 1802–11," in *Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest, 1780–1914*, ed. S. D. Clark and J. S. Donnelly Jr.(Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 64–101; David Williams, *The Rebecca Riots: A Study in Agrarian Discontent* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1955); David Jones, *Before Rebecca: Popular Protests in Wales, 1793–1835* (Bristol: Allen Lane, 1973); Pat Molloy, *And They Blessed Rebecca: An Account of the Welsh Toll-Gate Riots, 1839–1844* (Llandysul, Wales: Gomer Press, 1983).

87. *Royal Gazette*, 5 February 1833, p. 2.
88. *Abstract of the Proceedings of the Land Commissioners' Court Held During the Summer of 1860 to Inquire into the Differences Relative to the Rights of Landowners and Tenants in Prince Edward Island* (Charlottetown, 1862), 154; "Report of a Select Committee of the Inhabitants of Lot or Township number 56 in Prince Edward Island. Submitted to the Inhabitants at a Public Meeting the 16th of January 1838," CO 226/56/180–1; *British American*, 27 October 1832.
89. For the role of women in this direct action, see Rusty Bittermann, "Women and the Escheat Movement: The Politics of Everyday Life on Prince Edward Island," in *Separate Spheres: The World of Women in the Nineteenth-Century Maritimes*, ed. Suzanne Morton and Janet Guildford (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1994), 23–38.
90. T. M. Parssinen, "Association, Convention and Anti-Parliament in British Radical Politics, 1771–1848," *English Historical Review* 88 (1973): 504–33; Tilly, "Britain Creates the Social Movement," 44–45; John Belchem, *Industrialization and the Working Class: The English Experience, 1750–1900* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1990), 73–83; J. T. Ward, *Chartism* (London: Batsford, 1973), 111–42.
91. *Colonial Herald*, 25 November 1837, in CO 226/56/141–2; Dorothy Thompson, *The Chartists*, ix; Alan Greer, *The Patriotes and the People: The Rebellion of 1837 in Rural Lower Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993); Colin Read and Ronald J. Stagg, eds., *The Rebellion of 1837 in Upper Canada* (Don Mills, Ont.: The Champlain Society, 1985); Allan Greer, "1837–38: Rebellion Reconsidered," *Canadian Historical Review* 76, no. 1 (March 1995): 1–18.
92. *Prince Edward Island Times* (Charlottetown), 12 July 1836; *Royal Gazette*, 25 April 1837; *Colonial Herald*, 25 November 1837, in CO 226/56/141–2; Petition to Harvey, CO 226/54/95; *Colonial Herald*, 13 January 1838, 10 February 1838, 17 February 1838, 10 March 1838, 4 July 1838.
93. Fernand Ouellet, *Lower Canada, 1791–1840: Social Change and Nationalism*, trans. Patricia Claxton (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1980), 293–97.
94. *Colonial Herald*, 14 April 1838.
95. Fitzroy to Glenelg, 29 November 1837, CO 226/54/304; Fitzroy to Glenelg, 30 January 1838, CO 226/55/76–81.
96. Fitzroy to Glenelg, 6 May 1838, CO 226/55/318–21.
97. Bowring to Macfarlane, 23 November 1841, Prince Edward Island, *JHA*, 1842, append. K; Betty Fladeland, *Abolitionists and Working-Class*

Problems in the Age of Industrialization (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), 98.

98. George Rudé, *Protest and Punishment: The Story of the Social and Political Protesters Transported to Australia, 1788–1868* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 42–51, 82–88, 96–99.
99. *British American,* 13 April 1833, p. 290.