

## Angus MacLean and the ‘Rural Renaissance’ – Shadow or Substance

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September 23, 1976. Gathered at the Provincial Vocational Institute in Charlottetown are more than one thousand members of the Prince Edward Island Progressive Conservative Party. United with the common goal of electing a new leader, the delegates have sacrificed a beautifully sunny day to accomplish this task. Having seen their party spend the last decade in the provincial legislature’s opposition benches, it is their distinct hope that whoever emerges triumphant from this contest will be able to end their electoral losing streak.

A two-way contest, the convention pits a young party insider named Jim Lee against a grandfatherly war veteran, Angus MacLean. During his speech to those assembled, MacLean outlines his disgust at what has befallen the province since the Liberals assumed control in 1966. Taking direct aim at the Alex Campbell-initiated Comprehensive Development Plan, MacLean lambasts its “change for the sake of change,” the “expenditures of vast sums of money,” and an “ever-increasing dependence on Ottawa.”<sup>1</sup> Shortly thereafter, with bated breath, crossed fingers, and mounting tension, the result of the first ballot is announced: 589 votes for MacLean; 437 for Lee. The party has a new leader; the province a new Leader of the Opposition.

In 1978, and again in 1979, provincial elections were contested. In each, Angus MacLean’s Conservatives ran campaigns that were

highly critical of the direction in which the Liberal government had taken the province. In its place, the Tories offered what they believed was a distinct vision of what Prince Edward Island should look like: whereas the Liberals allegedly stood for heedless tampering with tradition, the Conservatives stood for caution; whereas the Liberals stood for consolidation, the Conservatives stood for decentralization; whereas the Liberals stood for urbanization of the province, the Conservatives stood for strengthened rural communities.

While the Conservative vision under MacLean, popularly known as the “Rural Renaissance,” has been much discussed, many misconceptions about it exist.<sup>2</sup> To begin with, Rural Renaissance was a phrase rarely used by MacLean and his supporters, who preferred to discuss the need for a rural renewal. This said, the phrase still appeared in official party literature. Likewise, although the rural renewal discussed what seemed to be a revolutionary view of the Island’s future, in the end it amounted to little more than rhetoric. The rural renewal, an articulation of protest against rapid change on Prince Edward Island, was a successful platform insofar as it was utilized in the Conservatives’ 1979 electoral victory. In reality, however, it appears to have been a tertiary reason behind their win. While MacLean’s actions once in government were consistent with this rural strengthening principle, a combination of his caution, a marked lack of support from both the party and senior levels of the provincial bureaucracy, and his short tenure as Premier ultimately prevented it from being much more than an attitude.

From the time of its initial occupation by Europeans in the eighteenth century, the economic survival of Prince Edward Island has been based on farming and fishing. While other industries, such as shipbuilding in the mid-1800s, and fox ranching in the early 1900s, generated tremendous income for the Island, these tended to be relatively short-lived sources of revenue. Such cannot be said of the primary industries, which remain the backbone of the province’s economy.

While farming and fishing continued their dominance of the Island economy well into the twentieth century, their relative value declined in comparison to other industries. With an emphasis placed on providing food for the marketplace as inexpensively as possible, the province's farmers and fishermen were struck by dwindling incomes when compared against national averages. This resulted in comparative poverty for those working in these areas.<sup>3</sup> The predominance of these low-wage industries on Prince Edward Island led to economic stagnation. With all of the province's major economic indicators, such as per capita income, employment, and Gross Domestic Product lagging far behind the national average, questions soon arose about how this situation could be rectified.

On March 7, 1969, the provincial and federal governments announced their proposed solution. A fifteen year agreement, known as the Comprehensive Development Plan [CDP], was signed by Premier Alex Campbell and Jean Marchand, the federal Minister Responsible for Regional Economic Expansion.<sup>4</sup> Valued at \$725 million, the Plan aimed to drag Prince Edward Island into the twentieth century, kicking and screaming if need be. Primarily funded by the federal government,<sup>5</sup> the CDP was designed to modernize the province's economy through fundamental restructuring.

For Prince Edward Island to escape its economic doldrums required an overhaul of its economic foundation. To become financially viable, it was assumed that the province would have to become more competitive with neighboring jurisdictions. Increased competition, in turn, meant a need to raise productivity. Given that the established industries on the Island were small-scale in nature, this meant that fundamental social change would have to occur. This was most clearly evident in the Plan's farming and fishing strategies. Seeking to maximize yields while minimizing the labor involved, a move from small family-run farms and small-scale fishing was promoted. While attempting to increase the total acreage harvested, the CDP aimed to decrease the number of farmers working the land through a series of land purchases and pension offers. Fishers were enticed to leave their boats at the docks through license buy-outs and port closures. While these actions

would result in job losses, it was believed that they would be replaced by the emerging fields of tourism and manufacturing, both of which were to be nurtured by CDP-funded infrastructure work.

Islanders' reactions to these reforms are difficult to gauge. The provincial Liberals, espousing the CDP as the major plank in their electoral campaigns, were re-elected in 1970, 1974, and 1978. This suggests that Islanders were not outraged by the Plan's course of reform. On the other hand, a 1970 poll indicated that two-thirds of Islanders were unhappy that non-Islanders were hired to oversee the Plan's implementation.<sup>6</sup> This leads one to conclude that Islanders, while not opposed to change, were suspicious of the unelected officials who were controlling their economic fate.

The measure of CDP-inspired anxiety increased as the pace of change accelerated and the scope of its effect widened. As such, opposition to the Plan finally came to a head in 1973 with the formation of the Brothers and Sisters of Cornelius Howatt [BS-CH]. Founded by Harry Baglole and David Weale, this group was concerned with the widespread social and cultural change occurring during the era. Using the hoopla surrounding the province's Centennial celebrations as a foil, the Brothers and Sisters set out to attack the perceived erosion of Prince Edward Island's autonomy.<sup>7</sup> Since decisions regarding the province's future were being made by non-Islanders, with little or no public consultation, the CDP was a natural enemy for the BS-CH.

One of the most objectionable acts proposed by the CDP's planners, according to the Brothers and Sisters, was their intention to consolidate the province's subsistence-level family farms into 2,500 commercial ventures.<sup>8</sup> The Brothers and Sisters' stated belief was that "the Island's unique cultural character, based as it is on the family farm as the main component of the economy,"<sup>9</sup> should be preserved and encouraged. The group took issue with the seemingly unquestioned rush to modernity that was sweeping the province. Through a number of publicity stunts, including a wheelbarrow relay from Borden to Charlottetown, a steady stream of letters printed in local newspapers, and submissions to bodies such as the 1973 Royal Commission on Land Use, the BS-CH

garnered much local and national attention. While only in existence from January 1, 1973, to January 1, 1974, the group, which had in excess of one hundred members, managed to articulate popular concerns about the province's future, especially in relation to the CDP-inspired changes.

Another matter of concern for the Plan was the education of Islanders. In the modern economy that was being developed, a society in which one-half of the population did not go beyond grade eight was considered unacceptable.<sup>10</sup> As such, while school consolidation was well underway by the time the Development Plan arrived, it provided the impetus necessary to finish the task. Between 1966 and 1978 the number of schools in the province was reduced from 412 to seventy.<sup>11</sup> A tremendous outcry arose over this. As the parents contended, not only were these small schools integral to the survival of their communities, but the control local people once held over their children's education was stripped away by the consolidation of school boards.<sup>12</sup> Despite significant opposition, and arguments against the presumption that larger schools would provide improved learning conditions, these changes went ahead as planned.<sup>13</sup>

Interestingly, as Phase I of the Development Plan wrapped up, a dramatic transformation overtook Premier Campbell's rhetoric. The *de facto* champion of consolidation and all things large-scale began speaking publically about the merits of smallness. This "Small Is Beautiful" transition not only suggests that the Premier had listened to those who expressed concern with the CDP-fueled changes overtaking the province, but that he was also swayed by their arguments. While cynical observers may accuse Campbell of abandoning a program that was missing most of its intended targets and seemingly alienating a segment of the province's voters, the move appeared to be a sincere one.<sup>14</sup> Not only did Campbell establish programs to support small-scale farmers, but he also promoted alternative energy research and usage through the 1975-created Institute of Man and Resources.

The once-revolutionary zeal behind the Comprehensive Development Plan was all but gone by the time Phase II came to

fruition. In its place stood a watered-down, less controversial approach to development. Whereas the first phase of the Plan aimed to streamline the traditional industries of Prince Edward Island, and thus was met with much dissatisfaction, the second part of its three five year periods aimed to diversify the provincial economy. This resulted in an attempt to establish a manufacturing sector on the Island that was unrelated to agriculture or the fisheries. The ensuing effort, which saw the CDP-funded creation of industrial parks outside of Charlottetown and Summerside, combined with a series of tax incentives and subsidies, managed to attract no less than twenty-three new companies to the Island in the following five years. The success of this strategy is open to debate. The value of Island manufacturing exports quadrupled to \$212.5 million annually in the decade following 1969. This apparent success, however, is tempered by the fact that seventy percent of manufacturing in the 1980s was food processing, and as such was linked to the primary industries that planners had sought to diversify away from.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, many of the imported manufacturing ventures failed to establish permanent residence on the Island, often lasting little longer than the government subsidies used to attract them.

As all of this unfolded on Prince Edward Island, the federal phase of the province's most successful politician was drawing to a close. Angus MacLean, a ten-term representative of the Progressive Conservatives in the House of Commons, was growing weary of politics. With twenty-five years of politicking under his belt, MacLean was beginning to tire of the hectic lifestyle. In fact, shortly after his 1974 electoral victory, he made a private commitment to leave public life come the next election.<sup>16</sup>

Born on May 15, 1914, MacLean was raised on the family farm in Lewes. At age twenty-five, upon completion of his chemistry degree from Mount Allison University, he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force. A recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross, he turned his post-war attention to public service. Born into a staunchly Conservative family, MacLean was keen on the

prospect of serving his party. Still enlisted in the military, he was nominated in 1945 to run in the federal riding of Queens County. His unsuccessful third-place result was replicated in 1949.<sup>17</sup> In 1951 MacLean won a by-election in Queens County, which commenced his incredible winning streak.<sup>18</sup> As Horace Carver, a personal friend of MacLean noted, the secret of MacLean's electoral success was his ability to garner the public's trust. "He had attached to him an aura of service. He was a war hero, and he was a man of unquestioned integrity and principle."<sup>19</sup>

MacLean was less than enthused with the course of change on Prince Edward Island under the Development Plan. Perhaps because of his own humble origins in the countryside, he was firmly opposed to the idea that consolidation would improve the province's fortunes. As he noted in his memoirs: "The watchword of the day was 'amalgamation.' The government seemed bewitched by the notion that 'bigger' meant 'better' — bigger farms, bigger schools, bigger public institutions."<sup>20</sup> Like the Brothers and Sisters of Cornelius Howatt, MacLean was concerned with the effect the CDP was having on the province's self-determination. Not surprisingly, he was an admitted supporter of the BS-CH. As David Weale recalls of their initial meeting in 1974:

I was working in the yard when an old Mercedes...came up the lane, and Angus MacLean stepped out, introduced himself, and said that he was a big fan of the Brothers and Sisters of Cornelius Howatt, and that he just was in the neighborhood and wanted to stop in to meet me and congratulate the Brothers and Sisters for the good work they were doing, and to let me know that he was pretty much in agreement with everything that the Brothers and Sisters stood for.<sup>21</sup>

As it turns out, MacLean's planned return to Prince Edward Island was closer than he realized, although it was to take on an unexpected form.

The importance of the Development Plan as an historical epoch cannot be overstated. As could be expected of any program of such magnitude, it sparked anger among segments of traditional Prince Edward Island. That said, it did not significantly dampen the governing Liberals' support. In fact, the 1970s was a period of Liberal dominance on the Island. Having won three straight elections under Alex Campbell, including overwhelming victories in 1970 and 1974, the party was firmly entrenched in the provincial legislature's government benches.<sup>22</sup>

While the Liberals were in good spirits, such could not be said for the province's Progressive Conservatives. Out of power since 1966, they were reduced to just six seats in the 1974 election. Party leader Mel McQuaid had failed to excite Island voters, and the party's electoral strategy in the 1974 campaign, arguing that the CDP could be better run by the Tories, failed to differentiate them from the government in the electorate's eyes. Aggravating their problems was the fact that the party was suffering severe financial woes. Going into the late 1970s, the outlook for Island Tories was bleak.

Party fortunes began to shift in 1976 when McQuaid stepped down as leader in order to accept a judgeship with the Island Supreme Court. With a leadership convention announced for September 23, 1976, a search for someone that could alleviate the Conservatives' electoral dry-spell was initiated. Attempts began almost immediately to coax Malpeque Member of Parliament Angus MacLean to leave his federal post for a run at the leadership of the Conservative party. Those lobbying MacLean were frequent and persistent. As he notes in his memoirs, "When I went home to the Island for the parliamentary recess, groups of Conservatives started coming to our farm and [when parliament recommenced] to my office in Ottawa to urge me to run for the provincial party leadership."<sup>23</sup>

For a party attempting to reinvigorate itself in the polls, the selection of Angus MacLean as their new leader may sound questionable. After all, the sixty-two year old sheep-farming politician was hardly an electrifying personality. Rather, he was a slow-talking, often stodgy individual reputed to prefer deep thought



over dramatic action. It was not his superficial traits, however, that appealed to his supporters. Leone Bagnall had the following to say about his attraction: "He came across, and he was, an extremely honest man.... People looked at him and liked him, and almost instinctively trusted him I think.... He said it many times, 'I don't believe in making a whole lot of promises that we're not sure we can keep.'"<sup>24</sup>

MacLean's situation was ideal for an aspiring politician. Not only was the position of party leader vacant, but he had a vocal and sizeable group supporting him. However, MacLean had other priorities. At sixty-two years of age, he had already vowed to retire upon the next federal election call.<sup>25</sup> For a man wanting to return full-time to his family farm in Lewes, taking over the struggling party must have had all the appeal of captaining the *Titanic*. As Douglas Boylan, former Clerk of the Executive Council recalls, "He told me once, very bluntly, 'I really didn't want to come back.' He had had a full life in Ottawa."<sup>26</sup>

While this lack of allure would have been the end of matters with many politicians, such was not the case with MacLean. As those who knew him can attest, MacLean was a fiercely loyal man. Chief among his loyalties was the Progressive Conservative party. "He would do anything for the Conservatives,"<sup>27</sup> notes Boylan. Convinced that his leadership could deliver the Tories from the political wilderness, he made the decision to seek the nomination at the September 23, 1976 convention. "Being premier was never a job he aspired to," remembers Leo Walsh, a longtime party insider. "It was his sense of duty [to the party] that made him respond to the call."<sup>28</sup> MacLean's response, however, was not without its conditions. While he told his supporters that he would lead the party, should he win the nomination, for a limited time, privately, he vowed to retire after five years.

Having resigned his federal seat, MacLean's leadership bid began in earnest. A campaign committee, under the management of Charlottetown lawyer Horace Carver, was quickly established. Comprised of many of the party stalwarts who had urged MacLean

to enter the provincial arena, this group included Marion Reid, Leone Bagnall, Enid MacKay, and Lowell Johnston. The committee was rounded out by Harry Baglole and David Weale, two ideological supporters of MacLean whose party involvement stemmed from Weale's friendship with Carver.<sup>29</sup> While his campaign admittedly looked "amateurish" in comparison to the one employed by fellow leadership aspirant Jim Lee, his low-key approach was successful nonetheless. Amid much party hoopla, by a 589 to 437 margin, MacLean emerged from the convention victorious.

At the helm of a battered party, MacLean was now assigned the task of orchestrating its resurrection. This process began with winning a seat in the provincial legislature. While another provincial election was not expected for two years, Premier Campbell announced a November 1976 by-election in order to fill four vacant seats. Citing opposition to the Development Plan and the need for Island self-sufficiency in an increasingly dependent time, MacLean and two of his fellow Conservatives won their ridings. Whether this electoral success can be attributed to a changing political tide on the Island, or was simply a matter of a public desire to shore up the weak Opposition, is a matter of opinion. Regardless, it provided a boost in morale for the Conservative party, which was eager for any positive signal amid its general disarray.<sup>30</sup>

MacLean's next task was to seek quality individuals across the province who would serve, not only as candidates in the upcoming election, but also as behind-the-scenes workers within the party. He strongly believed that after a decade in opposition, the party required rejuvenation. One of these young recruits was Pat Binns, a Saskatchewan native who had come to the Island as a community development worker for the Rural Development Council. To this point Binns was politically non-partisan, but this did not deter MacLean, who sensed potential for a strong candidate. Binns recalls:

I was making a change in terms of my own life,  
establishing a farm and intending to leave public

service, at least working in the provincial bureaucracy. About that time an election seemed in the offing, and the Conservatives were looking for a candidate down our way, and local people in the party asked me if I might consider nominating. Initially, I was intrigued by the idea but really didn't make my mind up. Then Angus came to see me at home and even though he didn't live too far away I really didn't know him too well at that time.... He encouraged me to put my name up for nomination. He, as I recall, didn't make any kinds of promises. He said he was trying to build a slate of candidates and would like me to consider it... I was attracted to what I thought he represented and that was a commitment to a certain lifestyle that valued the inherent characteristics of PEI, sort of a combination of strong rural communities with the urban centres, where both had important roles in the development of the province. For me that was important, and I could identify with that, and I guess, if anything, I was attracted to what I thought he stood for, and which I came to realize he really did believe in strongly.<sup>31</sup>

In a similar manner of visitation, MacLean was able to convince such candidates as Marion Reid, Leone Bagnall, Fred Driscoll, and Prowse Chappell to seek nomination.<sup>32</sup> This ability to get people involved in the party did not go unnoticed. As the Conservative party's then-Executive Director, Ken Yeo, recalls:

His ability to seek out talent right across the province — he was just a master at that. He gathered in a lot of people that had real abilities and were able to be part of the overall putting together of not just the campaign, but the lead-up to it as well. It was very much a strong point of his.<sup>33</sup>

Political observers expected a general election to be called in 1978. Few, however, expected it to be announced during the government's Speech from the Throne. It was in this manner that the governing Liberals informed Islanders that they would be hitting the polls on April 24. Given the party's three straight electoral victories, few observers expected any deviation from this trend. The local media, expecting yet another Liberal victory, preferred to focus their attention on the coming federal election, dismissing the provincial one as "a rather bland affair."<sup>34</sup>

The contrast between the Liberal and Conservative campaigns was as stark as their leaders' personas. Whereas Premier Alex Campbell exuded charisma, urbanity, and still-youthful exuberance in front of the cameras, MacLean often appeared uncomfortable and stodgy, gaining recognition from the *Globe and Mail* as having "all the charisma of another Prince Edward Island product, the potato."<sup>35</sup> As for campaigns, while the Liberals offered an ambitious sixty-seven point "platform of action,"<sup>36</sup> the Tories ran on a humble series of ten principles that enunciated what they stood for. As MacLean noted in his memoirs, this strategy was based on his cautious approach to governance. "In previous elections, both parties had made many promises, which the winning side often found itself unable to fulfill. I did not want to be in that position."<sup>37</sup>

The driving force behind the Progressive Conservative platform was Harry Baglole and David Weale. While the campaign committee also consisted of party faithful, including Leo Walsh, Ian MacQuarrie, and its chair, John McQuaid, these two relative outsiders saw much of the platform-shaping power fall into their hands. As Weale recalls:

They were going to do the usual thing and turn the campaign over to some kind of election ad agency, but very early on they ran into trouble. It was almost like an SOS that went out, like, "we need help here." We got the call from, I think, John McQuaid...[asking] would we come in and help. We did, and I'd say pretty much controlled the

agenda from there on in terms of content because Harry was doing an awful lot of the work with regards to newspaper and media ads, and I was writing all of Angus' speeches, which he would be giving every second or third night in all kinds of little places.<sup>38</sup>

Part of the problem with the party's campaign early on was the result of difficulties in expressing ideas within the Conservative office.

There was a guy named Bob Nutbrown who was around at the time. He had been working in the PC office, so he was the one who should have been running the show. Bob had certain affinities with what we [Baglole and Weale] were saying, but his language was all over the place and it was difficult to know what he was saying — I'm not sure he knew himself. You see, that was the advantage that Angus had...he had ideologues, people that had sharpened their point of view, [and] considered the issues already. We weren't all of a sudden trying to think 'what do we think about this?' We already knew what we thought about it, and when we articulated it Angus said 'thank you very much, that's what I think too.'<sup>39</sup>

The platform that emerged from the campaign committee was one based on ten commitments that MacLean's Conservatives would govern by. These points appeared in the *Guardian* under the title of "P.C. Commitment To Islanders":

1. **The Individual.** We are opposed to a system in which individual enterprise is thwarted by excessive government regulations and a discriminatory tax system. A P.C. Government would commit itself to establishing a climate in

which individuals are allowed to do things for themselves and [are] encourage[d] to participate more actively at all levels of society.

2. **The Community.** As much as possible, decisions should be made at the local level by the people most affected by them.... A P.C. Government would commit itself to strengthening the social and economic fabric of existing Island communities.

3. **Provincial Autonomy.** Islanders are concerned that the manner in which federal funds have been procured and administered by the present government has led to a significant loss of our provincial autonomy. We believe that Prince Edward Island has the capability of becoming a more productive, independent and self-reliant province.

4. **Education.** A P.C. Government would commit itself to... supporting a moratorium on further school consolidation until a thorough reassessment of the results and effects of consolidation has been carried out...emphasizing programs which better prepare students for living and working in Prince Edward Island, and which make a greater use of local community resources....

5. **Rural Renaissance.** We believe the prosperity of our rural areas to be fundamental to the economic well being of all Islanders, since our urban centres depend on the strength of the rural community they service. A P.C. Government would commit itself to revitalizing the Island's rural economy by building wisely on our province's natural advantages. It would put a major emphasis on programs to develop our primary resources of farming, fishing, tourism and forestry.

**6. Employment.** At present, the per capita income of Islanders is the lowest in Canada, while our unemployment rate is among the highest.... A P.C. Government would commit itself to working in co-operation with the private sector to establish industries which are...appropriate to Prince Edward Island,...based on our primary industries,...locally initiated, wherever possible,...[and] fairly distributed throughout the province.

**7. Transportation And Energy.** Islanders are handicapped by the highest energy costs in Canada and an inadequate and expensive transportation system.... A P.C. Government would commit itself to working in co-operation with the Federal Government to...reduce our energy costs...improve and modernize our highway, railroad and ferry systems...[and] research and promote the use of alternate energy sources.

**8. Government Management.** We maintain that the financial resources available to our government can and must be administered more efficiently.

**9. Health And Lifestyle.** We believe that the health of individuals reflects the health of the society in which they live. Good health is dependent on involvement in productive work, participation in vital community life, and the shared expression of a rich local culture.... A P.C. Government would commit itself to...emphasizing preventative medicine and community health care...[, as well as] encouraging the expression of Island music, literature and folklore.

**10. The Island.** The Island is a special place. A P.C. Government would commit itself to working with all Islanders to preserve and enhance the beauty of our landscape, the integrity of our communities, and the character of our people.<sup>40</sup>

As mentioned earlier, this platform is widely known by a generation of media and academics as the Rural Renaissance. This term, penned by Bob Nutbrown, rarely appeared in the party's official campaign literature.<sup>41</sup> To describe the Conservatives' dedication to stemming the deterioration of rural communities, the campaign committee preferred to speak of the need for a rural renewal. While some party members note with amusement that "the media gaffled onto"<sup>42</sup> the Rural Renaissance tag line, to others, including Horace Carver, the popular usage of the term is a point of contention:

I would be amazed if you can find one or even more than one articles that were ever put out by Premier MacLean or the Conservative party that uses the word Rural Renaissance. I don't think you can find it. It doesn't exist. It exists in the minds of the media, some academics, and so forth, but Angus MacLean never used those words.<sup>43</sup>

What did the rural renewal stand for? It enunciated a belief that "the prosperity of our rural areas...[is] fundamental to the economic well-being of all Islanders."<sup>44</sup> According to Marion Reid, this was a favorite theme of MacLean's. "It's like Angus said, 'If the rural economy is strong, that's when the urban people flourish.'"<sup>45</sup> The commitment noted that a Tory government would attempt to improve the rural economy with an "emphasis on programs to develop our primary resources of farming, fishing, tourism, and forestry." Other commitments addressed the rural situation, such as suggesting a moratorium on further school consolidation, and by addressing the need for "community health care" services.

Besides the campaign's unique promise-free platform, it also broke tradition in another way. As noted earlier, when the Conservatives prepared for the anticipated election call, they began negotiations with off-Island advertising firms to handle their



campaign. Upon learning of this, MacLean demanded that the work be handled locally. As he wrote in his memoirs, he felt the Conservatives “should be using Island talent to create our advertising, since our party espoused the principle of self-sufficiency for Islanders in every possible way.”<sup>46</sup> This aspect of the campaign is a source of great pride for Harry Baglole:

We produced our own propaganda. We produced our own brochures that were produced in PEI. The layout for the ads was done locally. It was a little rough in [19]78, but in [19]79 we got the best local design firm to do the work and they did it to a very high professional level. But up until then it had been the custom for both political parties to...bring in a public relations firm from off-Island.... They would sort of somehow work with the party to come up with a platform. In some cases you had the feeling that the party didn't have a lot of input in the platform and it wasn't really thought through clearly.<sup>47</sup>

While MacLean was a tremendously successful politician, he was not a natural campaigner. Baglole remembers witnessing this first hand during an electoral swing through Prince County:

We'd stop in at any little place where there was three or four people working at something and...he'd sort of stand around and wait for someone to notice him and come up to him. [Laughter] He wasn't [one] to rush in with his hand out. He'd sort of amble in and wait to be noticed.<sup>48</sup>

MacLean's unease with campaigning carried over to speech making. As his team soon discovered, he was very uncomfortable speaking when a podium was not available. The result was the creation of a customized wooden podium that followed him along the campaign trail.

As April 24 neared, expectations for another Liberal walkover were replaced by predictions of a close result. When the final tally was announced, this proved to be correct. By the barest of margins — seventeen seats to fifteen — the Liberals emerged victorious. Given the fact that the Liberals would have to nominate one of their members for the non-voting position of Speaker of the House, their majority was effectively reduced to one.

In one sense Campbell's government had come full circle with the 1978 results, which mirrored the 1966 vote that first brought the premier into power. While Campbell successfully guided his party with such a bare majority in 1966, twelve years of leading the province through widespread change had left him physically and mentally sapped, seemingly reluctant to contemplate replicating such a difficult task.<sup>49</sup> Expecting an appointment to the Island Supreme Court, he retired in September.<sup>50</sup> When the Liberal majority vanished following Campbell's retirement, his successor, former finance minister Bennett Campbell, did the inevitable and declared a general election for April 23, 1979.

If pundits were taken back by the close outcome of the 1978 general election, none were surprised by the results one year later. As Frank MacKinnon bluntly wrote in the *Canadian Annual Review*, "With almost no expectation that the government of Premier Bennett Campbell would be returned, the campaign was dull. Both sides acted as if the outcome was inevitable — the Liberals resigned and the Conservatives confidently cautious."<sup>51</sup> The Tories, with their now experienced electoral apparatus in place, ran a campaign based on the same ten commitments to Islanders that they utilized a year earlier:

1. Making the Island a more independent and self-reliant province.
2. Supporting decision-making at the local level and strengthening the social and economic fabric of Island communities.

3. Reassessing the educational program with a view to providing more parent and community involvement.
4. Revitalizing the Island's rural economy by developing our primary resources of farming, fishing, tourism, and forestry.
5. Creating more jobs by working in cooperation with the private sector to establish industries appropriate to Prince Edward Island.
6. Developing a balanced road, rail, and water transportation system for the efficient marketing of Island products.
7. Decreasing our dependence on imported energy by encouraging conservation and the development of local, renewable energy sources.
8. Providing competent government and sound fiscal management.
9. Enhancing the lifestyle of Islanders by pursuing a humane social service policy, supporting preventative medicine, and encouraging active participation in sports, recreation, and the arts.
10. Working with all Islanders to protect and enhance the natural beauty of the Island and the character of our people.<sup>52</sup>

In fact, the only apparent deviation from the previous campaign pursued by the party was MacLean's stated support for legislating an eighteen-month moratorium on shopping mall construction.<sup>53</sup> When the ballots were counted on April 23, few were surprised that the Conservatives won by a twenty-one to eleven margin.

The obvious question that arises is why the Progressive Conservatives won the 1979 election. Put another way, why did the Liberals not continue their domination of the provincial

legislature? There are a number of factors that seem to have influenced this governmental changing of the guard.

To begin with, it must be recognized that the Island Liberals had been in power for thirteen years. One of the effects that extended rule has on a government is a gradual weakening of the talent pool involved. In 1966, for example, the Liberals were on the rise. Led by a thirty-three year old Alex Campbell, the party had a talented roster of candidates that were ready for the task of governing. As their decade-plus rule progressed, however, members of the caucus, as well as members of the party's organizational structure, began abandoning politics to pursue other interests. Those that left provincial politics during this era included such key cabinet ministers as Gordon Bennett, Elmer Blanchard, John Maloney, and Daniel Joseph MacDonald, as well as Campbell's one-time principal secretary, Andy Wells. The result was a noticeably weaker party apparatus that was not "quite as smooth a machine as...in the past two elections."<sup>54</sup>

Just as lengthy stays in government often lead politicians to lose interest in the process, the public often begins to savor change. As Jim Lee opined of the Liberals' loss of power:

I think it was nothing more than Island politics. There's nothing that the Campbell government did. I mean they weren't disgraced or anything like that, to be thrown out. It was just the fact that people felt they were there long enough and we were going to be looking somewhere else, and they felt the alternative was something they could live with, so they changed the government.<sup>55</sup>

This desire for change is partly based on a tendency of Island voters to view governments that have long maintained their power as being complacent and arrogant. Indeed, come the later years of their rule, the Liberals were frequently portrayed in the media as secretive<sup>56</sup> and disrespectful of the electorate.

While the Liberals were losing strength as a political force, the electorate would not have voted them out of office had a viable

alternative not existed. This is where the public's support of Angus MacLean became a factor. As his twelve consecutive electoral victories indicate, MacLean was highly respected for his capabilities. "I don't think a lot of leaders could have won that election," notes Ken Yeo, "but because of his aura he could."<sup>57</sup> Likewise, Leo Walsh agrees that the Conservatives were able to make significant electoral gains "in large measure because we were able to convince Angus MacLean to come home and take over leadership of the party:

There was an aura around Mr. MacLean. You [have] got to remember that people from the Kings County line to Summerside had been voting for Angus MacLean in federal elections for over twenty-five years. They knew him, or knew about him, and they knew his reputation and trusted him. And he came back and he was able to convince the public that PEI was changing too rapidly and that our institutions were being destroyed and change for the sake of change is not good enough — there's got to be reasons, and he was able to convince people he was a man who would best represent the interests of Islanders. That was a challenge to Alex Campbell and his vision put forward under the Development Plan. So after twelve [or] thirteen years there was a contrast between the two leaders and people by and large felt comfortable with the trust they had in Angus MacLean. It was almost a draw with Alex Campbell [in 1978]. It was so close that Alex figured the best thing to do was escape to a judgeship and he did that. So after Alex Campbell was gone it was just a matter of waiting for the people to have another chance to vote to get the man they wanted.<sup>58</sup>

MacLean realized that attracting votes from partisan Conservatives would not be enough to emerge victorious in the

1979 election. He knew that in order to form a Conservative government he would have to gain the backing of voters who traditionally supported the Liberals. He believed that his party had to avoid alienating those “who consider themselves Liberals”<sup>59</sup> and instructed his candidates to always refer to their electoral adversaries as “opponents,”<sup>60</sup> rather than by their political name. This approach, designed to avoid rousing latent party loyalties, worked. “He got a lot of support, not just from traditional Conservatives, but from people who would normally vote Liberal but were also feeling it was time for change,”<sup>61</sup> notes Pat Binns. In fact, MacLean’s appeal and his message won over a number of electoral candidates who were previously of a different persuasion. As Leone Bagnall recalls: “Prowse Chappell was never known as a Conservative. He was [Liberal] traditionally, and so was I.”<sup>62</sup>

Another important factor in the Tories’ electoral success is that, under MacLean, they provided a distinct vision from that of the Liberals. Since the advent of the CDP in the late 1960s, it had been the focal point of debate for both major parties. With the Liberals in control of the CDP, all the Conservatives could do was argue that it could be better implemented under their rule. By 1978, however, the CDP was a decade old, and as a platform it had lost much of its electoral power.

With MacLean at the helm, the Progressive Conservatives could not be accused of lacking a distinct vision for the Island. As he noted in his opening speech of the 1978 campaign, MacLean sought to provide Islanders with “a viable alternative to the present administration.”<sup>63</sup> In the eyes of the electorate, MacLean’s vision of rural pride and decentralization contrasted sharply with the Campbell government’s urbanization and consolidation. It did not occur to the electorate that the platform espoused by the Tory leader was much akin to the philosophy promoted by Alex Campbell in the later stages of his political career.

How effective was the rural renewal as a platform? Was it a major factor in the Conservative victory, or was it important only insofar as it differentiated the two parties in the eyes of the electorate? This question is difficult to answer. Tory insiders

suggest that their victory had more to do with MacLean's personal popularity, his well-run campaign, and growing dissatisfaction with the governing Liberals. A survey of Island newspapers during this period suggests likewise, given the lack of references to the platform in their coverage.

An outright dismissal of the rural renewal platform, however, would be hasty. Could it be that the message MacLean presented was so closely associated with him that the two were inseparable? Unlike many politicians, who would be willing to adopt any strategy that would secure electoral victory, MacLean was an ardent believer in his own message. A farm operator who, despite high profile jobs in the government, chose to continue living in such a manner, he epitomized the way Islanders had lived before the onslaught of change that characterized the Development Plan years. MacLean embodied the rural Islander that his platform aimed to attract. So intertwined was he with his message that it could easily be argued that his success in attracting support was attributable to the rural renewal ethos that he personified.

The Conservatives' victory on April 23, 1979 marked the end of twelve years of Liberal rule. No longer confined to the watchdog role of the Official Opposition, Tory supporters on Prince Edward Island were euphoric over the thought of forming the government. "You have this notion of winning an election and the next day...bright and early having a cup of coffee, and you sit down and savor it, and you talk about what you're going to do," notes David Weale.<sup>64</sup> This feeling was widespread among loyalists, who wanted to quickly get to the task of correcting the perceived wrongs of the previous administration. As Weale remembers, however, "It didn't work that way."

From the outset of MacLean's tenure as premier, it was obvious that he would not rush into any drastic action. After a brief appearance at the election night celebration held in the Charlottetown Hotel, MacLean escaped the throngs of well-wishers in order to return to the family homestead in Lewes. A shy man, his unease was aggravated by an illness that struck him late in

the closing days of the campaign. As Weale recalls: "I don't know whether it was the result of the campaign that he had been through, or the prospect of what he was going to go through, but perhaps together they combined to give him a few rather distressing days right after the election."<sup>65</sup> Discomfort with the process of electioneering, combined with the impending demands of a job he did not truly aspire to, apparently led MacLean to seek solitude in the days following the election. He would not reemerge publically until shortly before his May 3 swearing-in ceremony.

At first MacLean's low profile following the election did not concern his supporters, but as the days following the electoral breakthrough mounted without contact from their leader, many Conservative insiders began to get anxious. Assuming that Weale's close working relationship with the premier-elect would keep the two in close contact, they pressed the equally puzzled Weale, and he had to field many questions. Weale remembers:

He rather disappeared from sight. Everyone was asking me where he was because they figured I would know what was up, but he simply wasn't in contact [with me]. You know, this is the man that is the new premier — you feel a little presumptuous calling up and say[ing] 'what are you doing?' But that's what I had to do, [be]cause the people involved in the campaign said, you know, somebody's got to call him and find out what's going on.... So I called him up and I said 'Angus, we're just kind of wondering here, you know, have you got any plans, or are we going to talk about it?' And he said he was going to come into town [in] the next day or two and that he'd meet with some of us then.<sup>66</sup>

This slow-moving approach to government foreshadowed what was yet to come.



The Tories' electoral success prompted a number of important decisions by MacLean. First of all, who would comprise the staff of the Premier's Office? While some choices were natural, such as the rehiring of his longtime secretary Rosemary Trainor,<sup>67</sup> the selection of his principal secretary was more daunting. Choosing an appropriate individual was paramount, given the three essential tasks of the position: writing the premier's speeches, advising him on policy initiatives, and serving as a liaison with the public.

MacLean's choice for principal secretary, David Weale, was contrastingly obvious and curious. Having fulfilled the role of speech writer and policy advisor during the 1978 and 1979 campaigns, Weale had proven his ability. According to observers, the ideological similarities between the two were remarkable. "The meeting of the minds was uncanny," remembers Leo Walsh. "David was a wordsmith, a very romantic and philosophical individual. He was able to put words and paragraphs to articulate the vision that Angus could inspire."<sup>68</sup> According to MacLean, Weale's ability "to sense the core thoughts I have often groped to put into words"<sup>69</sup> was a much valued asset.

Two major factors could have marred Weale's chance for appointment, and made his consequent hiring somewhat surprising. First of all, he was a relative neophyte when it came to politics. In such a position, the fact that he had only three years active participation in party politics meant that he was inexperienced in handling certain matters, especially when individuals came to him looking for favors. Recalls Weale:

I was pretty naive when it came to...the small 'p' politics and the politics of patronage...which are part of life here. I didn't know the...old-time Tories who had been around forever. I didn't know them to see them, I didn't [even] know them by name, except for a few.<sup>70</sup>

Eventually, Weale's admitted shortcomings as a liaison led the premier to hire Leo Walsh as executive assistant, charged with handling the office's daily business. Secondly, Weale's hiring was surprising because his service within the party was based more on a sense of ideological kinship with the premier than on partisan allegiance to the Progressive Conservatives. "I don't think he felt he [MacLean] had my complete loyalty," notes Weale. "He probably knew that I wasn't there for him exclusively. I was there for him, but there was something else I had in mind, and that was the actual platform."<sup>71</sup>

The most important step for MacLean was the selection of his Cabinet. While many governments are dominated by the premier, this was not the case with MacLean. "Once he was elected, he gave his cabinet ministers a lot of rope,"<sup>72</sup> notes Doug Boylan. "He watched what they were up to." But these tabs were aimed at keeping the ministers out of political trouble. Part of the rationale behind this freedom was that he was building a party for the future, and so, wanted his ministers to gain the experience necessary to govern upon his impending retirement.<sup>73</sup> It was a move partly based, however, on an unwillingness to impose his personal agenda on his fellow legislators. "He had a very high regard for the elected caucus,"<sup>74</sup> notes Horace Carver. "He allowed people to discuss and re-discuss issues over and over. Some people got tired of all the announced discussions, but the net result was that nobody could ever accuse him of railroading an issue."

The process of building a Cabinet is an often arduous one. While the premier-elect had twenty members from which to select what would eventually be nine positions, there were many factors involved. Such variables as geographic and religious representation on the Executive Council often outweighed the candidates' abilities. In the end, MacLean's choices disappointed his principal secretary:

He had some good people to choose from, but there were a lot of expectations, especially from some of the old guard, you know, the people who had been around forever. I can remember putting it forward that, if it was possible, to leave some of those

people off the Cabinet, if he really wanted, because my concern...was, if this was really to be the beginning of something new...you didn't appoint every old Tory that had been elected. But he was too much a party man to consider that. I remember he didn't dismiss me when I brought this up to him — he didn't say 'that's dumb' or anything. I kind of knew that he understood that maybe I had a point but he couldn't go there because he had these loyalties to people like Leo Rossiter and Lloyd MacPhail.<sup>75</sup>

If the selection of the Cabinet was the first test of MacLean's intentions, it was not the overwhelming vote of confidence Weale had been hoping for. Besides the premier and the afore-mentioned Rossiter and MacPhail as Ministers of Fisheries and Labour and Finance, respectively, the Executive Council was comprised of ex-leadership rival Jim Lee as Minister of Health and Social Services, George McMahon as Minister of Highways and Public Works, Pat Binns as Minister of Community Affairs, Horace Carver as Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Prowse Chappell as Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Fred Driscoll as Minister of Education, and Barry Clark as Minister of Tourism, Industry, and Energy. While Binns was clearly a supporter of the rural renewal platform, and other members were known to be sympathizers with the cause, MacLean had failed to create a body primed for action on that front. "It's just the truth of it, a lot of them didn't care about that [rural renewal] platform,"<sup>76</sup> states Weale:

They cared about being elected, they cared about their constituencies, they cared about doing things that would be pleasing to their constituencies. There weren't very many visionaries in Angus' team. There were a few who shared the vision, but not many. For instance, in Cabinet he didn't have a cadre of ministers — he had these people working for him like me — but he didn't have in Cabinet a

group who were solidly committed to this thing the way he was. It showed really, I think, because it was difficult for him to move in these areas because he didn't have the energy of the other cabinet ministers.

Jim Lee exemplified this lack of interest. Looking back at that era, he reflects:

These [the rural renewal and the Small is Beautiful approach that marked the latter phase of Alex Campbell's reign] were theories that caught the attention of the voters, and they could identify with it. To say that I was locked into it, I would say no....I guess what I saw, and others as well, was that the world was changing, and we couldn't remain where we wanted to be fifty years ago. We had to catch up with what was happening in the real world, and what was happening in commerce and finance and development. And if we're going to make a go of it and keep our people here on the Island — you know our biggest export was brains. I mean, people were leaving left and right, and if we're going to stay back there years ago we're asking nothing more than to continue the brain drain of people leaving the Island.<sup>77</sup>

To Lee, then, the rural renewal meant a return to the past, rather than carrying traditional principles into the future. It is doubtful Weale would have agreed with his perception of the Tory platform's essence.

During this time, Weale was becoming increasingly frustrated with the lack of implementation on his government's behalf.

I wrote him [MacLean] a couple of...memos expressing my concern that nothing was happening, and expressing my concern...that his vision of things was not being communicated to

people on the ground [provincial bureaucracy] who were actually running the province, and that there would have to be something done to bring them onside to make them feel like they were part of a team.<sup>78</sup>

In one of these memorandums, dated December 3, 1980, he wrote that “the present government...has failed to establish a coherent policy or sense of direction within the province,” and that “something needs to be done.”<sup>79</sup> As was the case when Weale addressed MacLean about leaving members of the Tory old guard out of the Cabinet, the response he received was somewhat understanding, but fell short of action.

While the commitment of his ministers can be questioned, the legislative record of MacLean's government, consisting of 129 Acts, also indicates that the focus was not on rural renewal. Rather, attention was focused on the province's finances. With annual budgetary deficits ranging from four million dollars in 1979 to 7.2 million dollars in 1981,<sup>80</sup> efforts to curb the ballooning debt took precedence over other matters. Rather than cutting the services offered to Islanders, Finance Minister Lloyd MacPhail announced a bevy of tax initiatives. These included such measures as increasing the Provincial Sales Tax from eight to ten percent, a hike of 2.5 percent in personal income tax rates, and a ten percent jump in liquor taxes.<sup>81</sup>

Despite the financial priorities confronting Prince Edward Island, a number of government initiatives did emerge in the spirit of the rural renewal. The “Act to Control the Development of Shopping Centres and Retail Stores” was one such piece. This legislation arose in the context of many concerns about the effect large shopping centres were having on the Island. With five malls in Charlottetown, and three more in Summerside, by 1979 the province hosted double the national average of retail space per capita, despite high vacancy rates.<sup>82</sup> Opponents of further expansion included the Greater Summerside Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Business Association of Charlottetown, which feared that these “big box” stores on the

outskirts of town were syphoning off their clientele and destroying the downtowns; business owners, who feared the economic implications of greater competition; the Charlottetown Christian Council, which feared that increased competition would lead to relaxation of the laws prohibiting Sunday shopping; and small community advocates, who linked the increase in urban malls to the dwindling number of rural stores.<sup>83</sup> It is worth noting that, of the arguments put forward by the anti-mall lobby, only the latter was explicitly rooted in the rural renewal ideal.

Sharing many of the same concerns expressed by the anti-mall lobby, MacLean announced during the 1979 campaign that he was in favour of instituting a moratorium on shopping mall construction. This, he argued, would be necessary in order to allow for impact studies on their effect on the Island. The resulting legislation, which gained Royal Assent on August 1, 1979, enacted a two-year halt to the creation or expansion of any retail outlet with a gross floor area beyond six thousand square metres.<sup>84</sup> Initial offenses warranted a maximum fine of \$5,000 and up to one year imprisonment.<sup>85</sup>

Electricity rates on Prince Edward Island have traditionally been well above the national average. In 1976, the average family in Charlottetown spent \$480 a year on electricity, compared to \$225 in Halifax, \$180 in Vancouver, and just \$140 in Toronto and Montreal.<sup>86</sup> Citing this as a strain on personal finances, as well as a prohibitive obstacle to business expansion, the Liberal government had entered into an agreement in 1978 to purchase nuclear power from a plant at Point Lepreau, New Brunswick. The agreement sparked a furor among groups within the province, who cited a host of environmental and economic concerns. Unconvinced that nuclear energy was as reliable as its proponents intimated, Angus MacLean had promised to scrap the deal with the New Brunswick Power Corporation if elected. He explained his rationale in his memoirs:

The previous government had sold this idea on the basis that this was cheap electrical power with no strings attached. In fact, what they did was to buy

into 5 percent [of the Point LePreau project], which meant the Island government would be stuck with 5 percent of the cost of decommissioning it and 5 percent of the cost of any accidents. After the accident at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant in the United States during the 1979 election campaign, we believed the risks involved were much too great for a small place like the Island, especially since no insurance company would insure anyone against the risks involved with nuclear power.<sup>87</sup>

As with the mall moratorium, MacLean's government made good on their promise to withdraw from the nuclear agreement. The 1979 Speech from the Throne announced that the government "would not be involved in the support of nuclear energy production."<sup>88</sup> Subsequently, the provincial government entered into negotiations with New Brunswick Power Corporation. The ensuing months showed that the government's anti-nuclear stance was not cosmetic; by the time the province formally withdrew from its contractual obligations on February 17, 1981, it had paid \$100,000 in legal fees.<sup>89</sup> This figure, they reasoned, was well worth the cost of removing the province from any future financial obligations. However, it is worth noting that MacLean's rationale for withdrawing from the power agreement was based as much on fiscal prudence as his environmental concerns and philosophical objections.

The rural paving program is another Conservative initiative often linked to the rural renewal. While paving the Island's major roads began in earnest during the 1950s, many rural communities continued to be served by unreliable clay roads. Residing in an unpaved section of the province, MacLean fully understood the frustrations that winter thaws and rain storms presented to rural Islanders.<sup>90</sup> Consequently, the 1980 budget committed \$13 million to a rural paving program, which aimed to pave one hundred kilometers of rural roads annually.<sup>91</sup>

Concern over the ownership of Prince Edward Island's land is as old as its colonial status. In 1767 the land was divided into sixty-seven townships, with each given to a British noble via a lottery. For the next one hundred years, Island residents struggled to regain this land from the absentee landlords. While this problem seemed to be resolved following the Island's entry into Confederation,<sup>92</sup> the concern crept back into the public eye in the 1970s when it was revealed that over 100,000 of the province's 1.4 million acres was owned by non-residents.<sup>93</sup> As huge tracts of land were bought up, concern also arose over the concentration of massive quantities of land in the hands of local residents. This led Premier Campbell to implement the Real Property Act [1972], which forbade the transfer of tracts of land greater than ten acres to non-residents without the permission of government. Many Islanders were concerned that this legislation was ineffectual, noting that by 1973 just thirty-eight of 261 non-resident applications had been rejected under the act.<sup>94</sup>

According to certain members of MacLean's caucus, the strongest statement of his premiership was his initiation of the Lands Protection Act. Ironically, this piece of legislation was not passed until April 1982, by which time Jim Lee had replaced MacLean as head of government. This act was sparked when Cavendish Farms, an Irving-owned corporation, approached the provincial government for permission to purchase 6,000 acres of farmland.<sup>95</sup> Potato farmers, fearful of the negative impact such a move could have on the market, joined those already protesting the land situation. The ensuing legislation attempted to address this situation by placing a limit on land ownership of one thousand acres per person, and a maximum holding of three thousand acres per corporation.<sup>96</sup> Legal loopholes soon mitigated the legislation's strictures, but the act did make a strong philosophical statement.

From the outset of his provincial career, Angus MacLean made it clear that his was a limited tenure. Noting that "I have a small, mixed farm that has kind of been on hold for the last 25 years,"<sup>97</sup> the premier announced at an August 17, 1981 news conference that



he would step down as premier as soon as the Conservatives could select a new leader. While exuding confidence that his successor would continue with the rural renewal ideals, MacLean nonetheless refused to publically support any of the candidates. The ensuing leadership contest pitted Cabinet members Barry Clark, Fred Driscoll, Pat Binns, and Jim Lee against one another, with the latter emerging triumphant at the November 7 leadership convention. On November 17, 1981, MacLean, the voice of the rural renewal, resigned as leader of the Progressive Conservatives.<sup>98</sup>

Many observers, including the national press, claimed a similarity in Lee and MacLean's approach to politics.<sup>99</sup> Beyond a mutual adherence to low-key politicking, this comparison is largely superficial. Whereas MacLean was renowned for his philosophical approach to life and politics, Lee was much more pragmatic in his conduct of affairs. A Charlottetown native, Lee was born on March 6, 1937. Trained as an architectural draftsman, in 1970 he started his own real estate and development company. After many years of working from within the Conservative party, Lee ran unsuccessfully in 5<sup>th</sup> Queens in the 1974 general election. First elected in a 1975 by-election, he ran against MacLean for the Tory leadership. While a logical choice for Cabinet, he could hardly be described as a member of MacLean's inner circle. Lee's approach to governing, heavily influenced by his entrepreneurial background, was akin to managing a business. "Economic development has always been big with me,"<sup>100</sup> he noted, speaking of his focus while in office.

An example of these contrasting styles can be seen in their stances on nuclear energy. Citing a wide array of concerns over environmental dangers, long-term economic obligations, and a preference for promoting renewable resources, MacLean withdrew from the deal signed with New Brunswick Power Corporation in 1978. Lee, on the other hand, saw things quite differently. In a 1982 speech to the Charlottetown Rotary Club, the recently appointed premier informed those in attendance that "the objective of this government is to provide the most economical energy that we can to Islanders"<sup>101</sup> — nuclear or not. While the government did not

re-establish an agreement to purchase nuclear energy from Point Lepreau, Lee remains adamant in his support for nuclear energy as a cost-effective source of energy for Prince Edward Island. "Realistically, above our head, whether that's nuclear energy or whether it's water generated energy, it's just a philosophy."<sup>102</sup> Clearly, Lee was not a disciple of the mode of thinking that MacLean and his close followers subscribed to. In a sense, then, his ascent to the premiership spelled the end of the rural renewal.

On February 24, 1981, Opposition leader Gilbert Clements rose in the provincial legislature and demanded the premier's resignation. In his attack, Clements noted that despite coming to power on a mandate to renew the Island's small communities, MacLean's leadership had amounted to little more than meaningless speeches and wasted opportunities.<sup>103</sup> Was this attack warranted, or was it merely an example of political grandstanding? A perusal of the Conservatives' legislative record during MacLean's years in office indicates that the opposition's allegations were rooted in truth. Although the three sessions were moderately busy, averaging forty-three acts, the vast majority of these were aimed at addressing the province's ballooning deficits.

While the Land Protection Act, the withdrawal from the Point Lepreau deal, and the shopping mall construction moratorium were important gestures, as three moves they hardly lived up to the integrated governing philosophy forecast in the 1978 and 1979 electoral campaigns. Other programs were similar to ones already in existence, or were virtually ineffective. MacLean's rural paving program, announced in 1980, promised to lay asphalt on 130 kilometers of rural clay roads each year. This program never reached its target. While 117 kilometers of newly paved roads were laid in 1981, and a further 190 were paved over the next two years, this pales in comparison to the 178 kilometers of new roads averaged annually between 1959 and 1963.<sup>104</sup> As such, the rural paving program was not a new idea, but rather a push to complete a process long underway.<sup>105</sup> Likewise, MacLean's Small and Part Time Farmers program was inconsequential, as signified by the fact

that twenty years later government officials of the time could not recognize or remember it.<sup>106</sup>

If MacLean was so committed to the idea of a rural renewal, why did he not enact more legislation? Part of the answer lies in MacLean's own personality. The cautious approach that led the man from Lewes to distrust rapid societal changes also meant he was unwilling to leap into action. According to those who worked closely with MacLean, each move was meticulously examined in order to reduce undesirable results. Had he entered the Premier's Office and legislated radical changes, he might have been branded a hypocrite for having taken the drastic changes that he condemned. A unique combination of philosopher and politician, MacLean had a tendency to spend his time considering varying courses of action, rather than enacting them.

An example of MacLean's cautious approach can be found in his handling of the provincial bureaucracy. While it was traditional for incoming premiers to replace deputy ministers and the senior administrative positions within government, MacLean largely bucked this trend. "Angus insisted on doing things properly, in order,"<sup>107</sup> notes Doug Boylan. "He wanted people around him that knew what the traditions were." His preference for maintaining order, rather than stacking the upper echelons of the civil service with patronage appointments, secured an experienced bureaucracy for MacLean. The problem with this approach, however, is that the provincial bureaucracy retained its Campbell government shape and attitude, and consequentially failed to share MacLean's vision. This was a matter of great concern for David Weale since it is the senior bureaucrats who shape policy, both in helping to formulate it and in implementing it.

While the prospect of an uncooperative bureaucracy was a daunting challenge in legislating the rural renewal, MacLean and his advisors faced a grimmer reality. The Progressive Conservative party, by and large, was not supportive of his ideas. Supportive of the platform in so far as it was electorally successful, the party infrastructure was wary of a widespread implementation of its ideas.

An illustration of the rural renewal ideal clashing with the Tory establishment can be seen in the case of the Institute of Man and Resources [IMR]. A “privately-run organization devoted to researching, developing, and demonstrating systems for alternative energy and self-sufficiency”<sup>108</sup> for Prince Edward Islanders, the 1975 creation of the IMR was an initiative of the Alex Campbell Liberals. The Institute’s mission to spur on new sources of energy was one that appealed to MacLean, whose campaign had made a commitment to “research and promote the use of alternative energy sources.”<sup>109</sup> Despite the premier’s stated support for the IMR, many Conservatives viewed the organization as a Liberal playtoy, particularly since Campbell’s former principal secretary, Andy Wells, was its Executive Director. This resulted in efforts by members of MacLean’s cabinet to replace Wells at the Institute’s helm. When attempts to dislodge Wells proved fruitless, public attacks were launched. Advocates of the IMR pleaded with MacLean to end “the public slurs being directed at the Institute by his administration’s ministers,”<sup>110</sup> but to no avail. As historian Alan MacEachern notes, “MacLean may have shared the IMR’s philosophy and claimed to respect its work, [but] he did not ride herd on his ministers.”<sup>111</sup>

Perhaps the most critical failure of MacLean’s premiership, in regards to the rural renewal, was his refusal to promote a favored successor. The clear frontrunner to replace the premier from day one was Jim Lee, whose business background made it clear that he would not be pursuing such a vision. Seeing the platform’s prospects fading away, Weale urged the premier to cast his support behind a candidate that was more ideologically in tune with them:

The point I made to him was that it was imperative, if he wanted to see a continuation of what he cared about, it was imperative he do something to slow down Jim Lee. It was obvious at this point that Jim Lee was the frontrunner to succeed Angus. And my point was that Angus was in a position to affect that if he wanted, and that he should, because I knew,

and he knew, that Jim Lee was not...a proponent of [the rural renewal].<sup>112</sup>

Although placing his support behind a favored candidate would not be unusual for a premier, MacLean preferred to remain impartial. So adamant was his concern to keep from perceived meddling in the leadership race that he spent much of the campaigning period attending the twenty-seventh Commonwealth parliamentary conference in Fiji. Thus, when MacLean went, there was no one to assume the rural renewal mantle, or even the principles and attitudes it spoke to.

A major problem with judging MacLean's success in implementing the rural renewal is that it was, at best, shrouded in vagaries. Instead of announcing a host of concrete initiatives, with the exception of the declarations regarding the shopping mall moratorium and the nuclear energy bailout, the platform was based on a series of principles under which the government would function. "It was a pretty vague platform"<sup>113</sup> concedes David Weale:

I'm not sure that the whole thing was terribly well conceived. I mean Rural Renaissance or rural renewal is another one of those vagaries. I think perhaps if the thing had been conceived differently, in a way that wasn't so vague, something more might have happened.

On the other hand, the platform's very vagueness meant that the premier did not actually break faith with his platform. After all, it had not promised very much other than a change in the government's attitude. While MacLean's years in office did not produce the legislation many supporters had desired, the fact remains that MacLean's time in office did not contradict the principles laid out in his campaign literature. While previous administrations seemed only too happy to consolidate schools, farms, and the fisheries, as well as urbanize the province, the Tory government seemed to slow down this process. MacLean's victory,

therefore, was in bucking the existing trend and reinforcing rural Islanders' sense of self worth. This is the opinion expressed by Pat Binns:

I think what Angus' tenure caused to happen was people to reflect a lot more on the value of rural communities and a sort of commitment to maintaining them. They weren't necessarily big things, but they began a trend to, sort of, stemming the flow from rural to urban and maintaining a stronger rural community across the province.<sup>114</sup>

Besides reinforcing the value of rural life, MacLean's leadership did live up to its goal of, at least superficially, instilling a sense of self-rule on the Island. After years of the provincial government appearing to be under the thumb of the federal government, MacLean appeared to be setting the Island's agenda. While the Comprehensive Development Plan seemed to stand for more shopping malls and the employment of nuclear power, the premier would not accept such proposals because they did not seem right for the province.

What is the historical significance, then, of the rural renewal? As we see, it did not result in Island-shaking legislation. On one level, it can be seen as a lesson in the realities of party politics. Espousing a fervent belief in strengthened rural communities, MacLean came to power, only to have his interests blocked by members of his own party who did not share his political values. In this meeting of politics and ideology, the realities of the former overshadowed the aspirations of the latter.

In another sense, the rural renewal can be viewed as an articulation of discomfort with the change occurring on Prince Edward Island. "I think the rural renewal was like therapy,"<sup>115</sup> notes David Weale. "It wasn't about saying we've got to stop modernity; it was about saying a lot was changing." The platform's commitments, rather than addressing widespread change, seemed to be asking Islanders to take a deep breath and consider their options before heading further down the road of modernity. After so many years of the provincial government focusing on change,

this apparent slowdown was tantamount to triumph for the forces of traditional Prince Edward Island. As such, it could easily be argued that the rural renewal was important symbolically more so than for any concrete legacy it may have left.

Angus MacLean's death on February 15, 2001 was headline news on Prince Edward Island. In the *Guardian's* editorial the following day, it noted that his electoral platform "is still remembered today for its vision and its insight into the need to strengthen the province's rural communities."<sup>116</sup> While his legislative record did not change the course of Island history, it has had an impact on the present. Nowhere is this clearer than in the approach to governing employed by the current premier, Pat Binns. "There's no question that...Angus was his mentor,"<sup>117</sup> notes Harry Baglole:

He's very much the same sort of politician....He's an intelligent rural man that believes in gradual change and he's a Red Tory in the same sense that Angus was a Red Tory. In the sense that the premier sets the tone for the government there's a very strong continuity there.

According to Binns, the time spent in MacLean's cabinet was very influential:

One of the main objectives of our government has been to maintain strong communities across PEI, and that was one of the things we campaigned on with Angus when he was leader. We may have shifted emphasis a little bit, but it's still very much a part of what we're trying to do today. We're trying to do more to...blend technology with tradition, but its really grown from the roots he planted.<sup>118</sup>

What, then, was the rural renewal? Essentially, it was a reflection of its times. In an effort to catch up with the twentieth century, Prince Edward Island undertook a whirlwind of change in

the post-World War II era. With rapid change there is bound to be dissatisfaction, and the Island was no exception. As new ways were developed, a recognition of what was being left behind emerged. That recognition led voters to embrace a leader who embodied the rural ways of past generations. This man, Angus MacLean, while playing upon the public's uncomfortable relationship with change, would not in the end attempt to reverse the course of modern society. And yet, his platform and brief tenure as premier helps us to understand a critical period in the modern history of Prince Edward Island, and the love-hate relationship with change that characterized it.

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#### Endnotes

- 1 J. Angus MacLean, *Making It Home* (Charlottetown: Ragweed Press, 1998), p. 222.
- 2 One of the most glaring mistakes about the Rural Renaissance was the assertion that it was the name of an Island protest group, akin to the Brothers and Sisters of Cornelius Howatt, which is mentioned later in this paper. This appeared in the widely used Canadian history text *Destinies: Canadian History Since Confederation* by R. Douglas Francis, Richard Jones, and Donald B. Smith. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 1996), p. 426.
- 3 For example, in 1962 the province's farming population of 34,000 earned just \$198 per person, which was eleven percent of the national per capita income of \$1,764. William Janssen, "Agriculture In Transition," in Verner Smitheram, David Milne, and Satadal Dasgupta, eds., *The Garden Transformed: Prince Edward Island, 1945-1980* (Charlottetown: Ragweed Press, 1982), p. 116, Table 1.
- 4 Lorne Yeo, "Bright Future For PEI Is Predicted By Premier." *Guardian*, March 8, 1969, p. 1.

- 5 According to the arrangement signed on March 7, 1969, the federal government's contribution to the Plan was supposed to be \$225 million, with the remaining \$500 million raised by the province. In reality, the federal government ended up pumping in \$301 million compared to the province's \$186 million. Edward MacDonald, *If You're Stronghearted* (Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island Museum and Heritage Foundation, 2000), 342.
- 6 MacDonald, p. 307.
- 7 Ryan O'Connor, "The Brothers and Sisters of Cornelius Howatt: Protest, 'Progress,' and the Island Way of Life. Paper presented at *Islands of the World VII: New Horizons In Island Studies*, Charlottetown, June 26-30, 2002, p. 2.
- 8 In 1971, there were 4,543 family farms on the Island. MacDonald, p. 309.
- 9 Prince Edward Island Heritage Foundation Newsletter, January 1973, p. 6 [PEI Collection, Robertson Library, UPEI].
- 10 MacDonald, p. 329.
- 11 Verner Smitheram, "Development and the Debate over School Consolidation," in Verner Smitheram, David Milne, and Satadal Dasgupta, eds., *The Garden Transformed: Prince Edward Island, 1945-1980* (Charlottetown: Ragweed Press, 1982), pp. 185, 192.
- 12 Smitheram, "Development and the Debate," *The Garden Transformed*, pp. 194-195.
- 13 Smitheram, p. 199.
- 14 MacDonald, p. 340.
- 15 MacDonald, p. 343.
- 16 MacLean, p. 220.
- 17 MacLean, pp. 119, 148. Queens County, until the 1960s, was a dual member riding.
- 18 MacLean, p. 150.
- 19 Horace Carver, interview by author, February 25, 2002, Charlottetown.
- 20 MacLean, p. 230.
- 21 David Weale, interview by author, March 14, 2002, Charlottetown. Despite this support of the BS-CH, it is worth noting that MacLean was not one of the group's members.
- 22 The Liberals bested the Progressive Conservatives twenty-seven seats to five in 1970, followed by a twenty-six to six victory in 1974. *Prince Edward Island Historical Review of Provincial Election Results* (Charlottetown: Elections Prince Edward Island Office, 2001), pp. 29, 30.
- 23 MacLean, p. 221. In the course of researching this project, I interviewed no less than seven people who were involved directly in the lobby effort.
- 24 Leone Bagnall, interview by author, March 5, 2002, Hazel Grove.
- 25 MacLean, p. 220.

- 26 Doug Boylan, interview by author, February 25, 2002, Charlottetown.
- 27 Boylan, interview.
- 28 Leo Walsh, interview by author, March 12, 2002, Charlottetown.
- 29 Neither Baglole, who was a co-founder of the New Democratic Party Youth at Acadia University, nor Weale were traditionally associated with the Progressive Conservatives. Buoyed by Carver, Weale's involvement began in 1976 when he ran for nomination in a by-election, which he lost by one vote. This connection with Carver got Weale into the inside when MacLean entered provincial politics, and because "Harry Baglole and I went together like salt and pepper at that time," the two landed positions on MacLean's campaign team. Weale, interview, March 14, 2002; Harry Baglole, interview by author, March 13, 2002, Charlottetown.
- 30 MacLean, 232.
- 31 Pat Binns, interview by author, March 7, 2002, Charlottetown. As Binns notes, his support for MacLean was based more so on his principles than his political persuasion. "He could have been a Liberal or Conservative — [but] probably not NDP."
- 32 MacLean, p. 231.
- 33 Ken Yeo, interview by author, March 4, 2002, Charlottetown.
- 34 "Federal Election The Big One," *Guardian*, April 3, 1978, p. 1.
- 35 As quoted in Angus MacLean's *Making It Home*, p. 229.
- 36 John Jeffrey, "Major Conservative Gains," *Guardian*, April 25, 1978, p. 1.
- 37 MacLean, p. 236.
- 38 Weale, interview, March 14, 2002.
- 39 Weale, interview, March 14, 2002.
- 40 "P.C. Commitment To Islanders," *Guardian*, April 20, 1978, p. 9 [advertisement]. This is a condensed version of what appeared in the advertisement.
- 41 "A Change of Direction," policy document by Bob Nutbrown, p. 4., 1978 [Private collection of Harry Baglole, UPEI]. The fact that Rural Renaissance was used in the April 20 advertisement is somewhat of an anomaly, given the fact that the same point previously appeared as the rural renewal. "P.C. Commitment 5," *Guardian*, April 13, 1978, p. 2 [advertisement].
- 42 Yeo, interview.
- 43 Horace Carver, interview by author, February 25, 2002, Charlottetown.
- 44 "P.C. Commitment."
- 45 Marion Reid, interview by author, February 23, 2002, Charlottetown.
- 46 MacLean, p. 231.
- 47 Baglole, interview.
- 48 Baglole, interview.

- 49 MacLean, p. 346.
- 50 Campbell received his appointment in December 1978. MacLean, p. 346.
- 51 Frank MacKinnon, "Prince Edward Island," in R.B. Byers, ed., *Canadian Annual Review of Politics and Public Affairs 1979* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1981), p. 353.
- 52 "Commitment for the 80s," *Guardian*, April 23, 1979, p. 16 [advertisement].
- 53 "MacLean Wants Clear Majority," *Guardian*, April 20, 1979, p. 1. This moratorium was suggested in order to properly assess the effect such buildings were having on established businesses in rural and downtown areas.
- 54 "Comparing Parties," *Eastern Graphic*, April 23, 1978, p. 4.
- 55 Jim Lee, interview by author, February 20, 2002, Charlottetown. While changing a long sitting government is a common occurrence, it should be noted that the provincial Liberals governed for considerably longer terms in the past, including 1891-1912, and 1935-1959.
- 56 "There's A Basis For Cynicism," *Guardian*, March 31, 1979, p. 4.
- 57 Ken Yeo, interview.
- 58 Leo Walsh, interview.
- 59 MacLean, p. 232.
- 60 MacLean, p. 237.
- 61 Binns, interview. Likewise, in a 1999 interview, Alex Campbell's former principal secretary Andy Wells noted that he had in fact ignored his political allegiance and voted for the Conservatives. Alan MacEachern, *The Institute of Man and Resources: An Environmental Fable* (Charlottetown: Institute of Island Studies, 2003), p. 67.
- 62 Bagnall, interview.
- 63 Angus MacLean, untitled speech delivered during 1978 electoral campaign, circa late March, 1978 [Private collection, Harry Baglole, UPEI].
- 64 David Weale, interview by author, June 3, 2002, Charlottetown.
- 65 Weale, interview, June 3, 2002.
- 66 Weale, interview, June 3, 2002.
- 67 Rosemary Trainor had served MacLean in this capacity since 1957, when he was appointed to the federal Cabinet. MacLean, p. 240.
- 68 Walsh, interview.
- 69 Angus MacLean to David Weale, letter, May 10, 1978 [Private collection of David Weale, UPEI].
- 70 Weale, interview, March 14, 2002.
- 71 Weale, interview, June 3, 2002.
- 72 Boylan, interview.
- 73 Carver, interview.

- 74 Carver, interview.
- 75 Weale, interview, March 14, 2002.
- 76 Weale, interview, March 14, 2002.
- 77 Lee, interview.
- 78 Weale, interview, March 14, 2002.
- 79 David Weale to Angus MacLean, memorandum, December 3, 1980 [Private collection of David Weale, UPEI].
- 80 Frank MacKinnon discusses the deficits in his PEI coverage in *Canadian Annual Review* for each of these years. As could be expected, the Tories blamed these deficits on spending incurred during the previous administration's Comprehensive Development Plan.
- 81 MacKinnon, "Prince Edward Island," *Canadian Annual Review 1979-1981*.
- 82 Kennedy Wells, "The Garden of the Gulf Becomes Asphalt Jungle." *Atlantic Insight*, July 1979, p. 10. Although the Downtown Business Association of Charlottetown alleged that just one of the Summerside malls was operating in the black, rumors spread throughout the business community that a fourth mall was set to open in the city.
- 83 Iris Phillips, "Officials Demand Mall Moratorium 'Now,'" *Guardian*, March 28, 1978, 3; Wells, "The Garden of the Gulf."
- 84 *Acts of the General Assembly of Prince Edward Island 1979* (Charlottetown: Queen's Printer, 1979), pp. 34-35.
- 85 *Acts*, p. 35.
- 86 *Energy Days: Proceedings of an Open Seminar of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island* (Charlottetown: Institute of Man and Resources, 1976), Table 5.
- 87 MacLean, pp. 240-241.
- 88 John Jeffrey, "Opposition Pans Throne Speech," *Guardian*, June 30, 1979, p. 1.
- 89 "Not Penalty," *Guardian*, February 25, 1981, p. 2.
- 90 An oft-told tale of MacLean's exemplifies the difficulties associated with life in unpaved segments of the province. Scheduled to deliver a speech in Charlottetown that afternoon, MacLean was ready to go to town when he discovered that the mud would prohibit his car from navigating down the lane. Not one to give in, MacLean put on his over-alls, jumped into his tractor, and drove to the end of the road, where he met up with a car. Bagnall, interview.
- 91 Gary MacDougall, "MacPhail Gives Good News, Bad News In Budget," *Guardian*, February 29, 1980, p. 1.
- 92 As part of Prince Edward Island's terms of entry it was loaned money to complete the process of buying out these land owners.
- 93 *Report of The Prince Edward Island Royal Commission On Land Ownership And Land Use* (Charlottetown: Queen's Printer, 1973), p. 29.

- 94 "Observations on Land Sale to Non-Residents," *Journal-Pioneer*, March 21, 1973, p. 2.
- 95 In addition to their holdings of 3,000 acres. MacDonald, p. 350.
- 96 *Acts of the General Assembly of Prince Edward Island 1982* (Charlottetown: Queen's Printer, 1982), p. 45. This sounded quite similar to a recommendation of the BS-CH, which suggested limits of five hundred acres per individual and one thousand acres per corporation.
- 97 Ruth Bearisto, "MacLean Resigns As Leader Of Island Tories," *Guardian*, August 18, 1981, p. 1.
- 98 MacLean, p. 248.
- 99 Like MacLean, Lee found himself likened to a potato by the staff at the *Globe and Mail*. As quoted in *Canadian Annual Review 1982*, p. 278.
- 100 Lee, interview.
- 101 Jim Lee, untitled speech to Charlottetown Rotary Club, January 25, 1982 [Vertical File, PEI Collection, Robertson Library, UPEI].
- 102 Lee, interview.
- 103 Gary MacDougall, "Clements Attacks Tories For 'Inaction,'" *Guardian*, February 25, 1981, p. 1.
- 104 *Annual Reports of the Department of Highways [1959-1963]* (Charlottetown: Irwin Printing, 1959-1963).
- 105 This is exemplified by the Department of Transportation & Public Works' announcement in 1985 that "the emphasis has moved away from the paving of unpaved roads to the upgrading of existing rural pavements." Just 1.26 kilometers of new pavement were laid "on various rural roads throughout the province" that year. *Annual Report of the Department of Transportation & Public Works [1985]* (Charlottetown: Queen's Printer, 1985), pp. 12, 13.
- 106 I spoke with Wayne MacKinnon, the present-day Communications Officer for the provincial Department of Agriculture, and he could not explain its purpose or impact. Wayne MacKinnon, telephone interview by author, July 30, 2002, Savage Harbour. Likewise, David Weale was unable to describe its specifics.
- 107 Boylan, interview.
- 108 MacEachern, p. 9.
- 109 "P.C. Commitment."
- 110 MacEachern, p. 88.
- 111 MacEachern, p. 88.
- 112 Weale, interview, March 14, 2002.
- 113 Weale, interview, March 14, 2002.
- 114 Binns, interview.
- 115 Weale, interview, March 14, 2002.
- 116 "Former Premier Angus MacLean Dies At Age 85," *Guardian*, February 16, 2001, sec. A, p. 6.
- 117 Baglòle, interview.
- 118 Binns, interview.