
From
Grassroots
to
Grim Reapings



A HISTORY OF THE
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND
RURAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

MICHAEL A. O'GRADY



At the University of Prince Edward Island

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AT THE UNIVERSITY OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND



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FOREWORD

ISLAND SOCIETY HAS INHERITED a rich endowment from the Rural Development Council (RDC), a community empowerment organization which flourished briefly in the early 1970s. This legacy includes a heightened awareness of rural development issues, the highly popular Community Schools program, and a generation of political and business leaders who received invaluable on-the-job training as RDC staff workers. Notable among these — and there are a surprising number of them — are Pat Binns, Premier of Prince Edward Island, and Joe McGuire, Member of Parliament for Malpeque.

In several very special ways, the Institute of Island Studies has been one of the principal RDC beneficiaries. To begin, the desk at which I write, and the ancient, battered filing cabinet in the corner of my office, are both former Council possessions. They were transported from the University of Prince Edward Island office to which the RDC moved in 1978, several years after the sudden termination of its government funding contract.

There are also important personal linkages. Ian MacDonald, founding Chair of the Institute's Advisory Board, had formerly served as Chair of the RDC. And I was one of those startled RDC Board members who learned, on a spring day in 1975, that the funding axe had fallen!

This RDC inheritance has had a lasting impact on the work of the Institute. It helps explain our ongoing emphasis on rural and community issues. We have also attempted to carry on the Public Forum function of the RDC — to facilitate the balanced discussion of major public issues. Even the first book to be published by the Institute — *A Community of Schools: The First Twenty Years*, by Dr. Ed MacDonald — told the remarkable story of one of the most successful programs of the RDC, the Community Schools movement.

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It is fitting, then, that the task of initiating and publishing a history of the RDC should fall to the Institute of Island Studies. As in everything we do, we have taken great care to be impartial. In this regard, we are much indebted to the scrupulous scholarship of author Michael A. O'Grady. The manuscript has been reviewed by partisans on both sides of the once highly charged RDC controversy; all have given it top marks for fairness and accuracy.

This is by no means a definitive history of the Rural Development Council. We do, however, think it a fine introduction to the subject. In particular, the origins of the RDC are examined with great care; and the reasons for the Council's demise are judiciously examined.

When the RDC finally ceased all its activities in 1978, a small amount of money remained on hand, with Ian MacDonald as signing authority. We are pleased to report that these funds have now been entirely expended — on the research, writing, and publication of this book. ¶

**Harry Baglole, Director
Institute of Island Studies**



AUTHOR'S PREFACE

MICHAEL A. O'GRADY is a former policy analyst for the Executive Council Office of the Province of Prince Edward Island. He is a graduate of the University of Prince Edward Island (B.A., economics; Engineering Diploma) and Harvard University (M.A., anthropology). Since 1991, he has held research positions at Harvard University's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology and the Fogg Art Museum.

THE PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND Rural Development Council (RDC) originated in the mid-1960s as a small, loosely-structured group of community leaders concerned with the decline of traditional Island rural communities. The RDC was legally incorporated in 1968, a prerequisite for its paid involvement in administering programs (most significantly, a public participation component) of the Comprehensive Development Plan. By 1974, the RDC resembled a small government department: it had partitioned office space, two dozen employees, and an annual budget of \$400,000. Since its conception, the organization had continually debated its philosophy and direction; during the early to mid-1970s, the RDC carried out its government-funded administrative responsibilities, while simultaneously acting as an issue-oriented interest group and an advocate for community-based decision-making. Predictably, the latter activities brought the organization into conflict with its employer and, in May of 1975, the Provincial Government abruptly terminated its contractual agreement with the RDC. Appeals for reinstatement of the funding received little support from the Government, the organization's underdeveloped membership, or the Island public; and an attempt by the group to return to its original grassroots structure also failed. Although the RDC still holds its charter, it has not been active since its last Board meeting in 1978.

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The history of the Prince Edward Island Rural Development Council is much more complex and interesting than the preceding summary might indicate. It is a story worth telling and one that has never been told in its entirety. This report uncovers the RDC's origins, reveals its internal workings, and reviews the controversies, the successes, and the failings that marked the organization's decade-and-a-half of existence. It is hoped that the narrative will promote discussion of the Council and community development in general.

Chapter I traces the RDC's early years (1964–1969), from its antecedents in community development to its formal organization. The second chapter considers the Council's Development Plan years (1970–1975). The entirety of Chapter III is devoted to a discussion of the termination of the RDC's Development Plan contract. Chapter IV concludes the narrative and offers a retrospective view of the RDC.

Research on the RDC history began in the summer of 1989. During that initial stage, the author and a colleague, Dr. John Crossley (then of the University of Prince Edward Island Political Studies Department and now the Vice-President Academic of UPEI), focussed their research on several archival collections: RDC files and scrapbooks in the Robertson Library archives at UPEI; a large filing cabinet full to capacity with materials related to the RDC's operation from its origin to its demise, left in the charge of Ian MacDonald, a former President of the RDC Board; and ninety-five boxes of files from the Prince Edward Island Department of Development, now housed in the Public Archives and Records Office of Prince Edward Island (PARO, RG 33). A systematic newspaper search of Prince Edward Island dailies and weeklies was conducted using the Robertson Library microfilm collection. A number of other secondary sources were also reviewed. By the end of the initial research phase, "documentary evidence" had been reduced to some 5,000 pages. These materials were organized, indexed, and filed.

Research resumed in the summer of 1990. The first priority was to arrange taped interviews with thirteen individuals identified by the researchers as "key" people in the RDC's history. Those interviews are cited in the body of this report. Without exception, the interviewees found their subjects to be fully cooperative and, for that, we are very appreciative. We were also granted access to two collections of taped interviews conducted by other researchers. We thank Mr. Gordon Cobb and Dr. David Milne for their cooperation and generosity in this regard. Again, material from those interviews is cited herein. Recorded proceedings from the Second Session of the Fifty-third General Assembly of Prince Edward Island (spring 1975) were obtained from the Public Archives and Records Office. Of particular interest were debates over the issue of the termination of the RDC's government contract.

The third and final phase of the project (summer 1991) saw the completion of a draft of the RDC narrative. The manuscript was revised during the fall of 1996 and

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is presented here as an Institute of Island Studies Research Report. It had been the intention of the two researchers that their work would appear as a co-authored monograph in the Institute's *Island Studies Series*. Various factors combined to make that plan impracticable. Rather than allow the research to languish, Dr. Crossley has graciously agreed that this report should appear in its present form (which is decidedly less comprehensive than was originally planned) and as the work of a single author. His contributions during the planning and research stages are gratefully acknowledged.

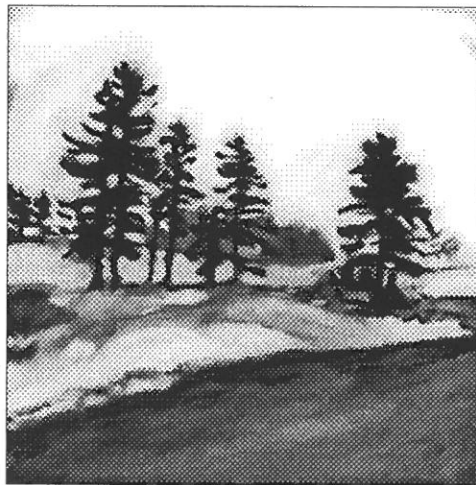
The valuable support of several other individuals should also be recognized: Keith Wornell, acting as Secretary to Executive Council, granted access to the aforementioned Department of Development files; Brenda Young of the UPEI Political Studies Department provided transcription and typing services; Laurie Brinklow of the Institute of Island Studies coordinated the manuscript's publication; Catherine Matthews designed the report; and Harry Baglole, Director of the Institute of Island Studies, added the resolve that finally brought this report to the publication stage.

My participation in the project was made possible through funding provided by the Executive Council Office of the Province of Prince Edward Island and the executors of The Prince Edward Island Rural Development Council. Additional funds were made available from a UPEI Senate Research Grant awarded to Dr. Crossley. ¶

Michael O'Grady

I. THE EARLY YEARS

1964–1969



PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND IN the mid-1960s was struggling through a period of economic and social change. An outmoded economic and social infrastructure severely limited the Island's ability to plan or to develop a positive response to an evolving national and world economy. The Island's unemployment rate was consistently above the national average, while Islanders' personal incomes were less than two-thirds of those of their fellow Canadians. Education levels were low and training opportunities were few and generally inconsistent with emerging needs. The primary industries were producing declining returns for farmers and fishermen. Forsaking the land and the sea, their traditional sources of livelihood for generations,

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many Islanders were leaving their small rural communities for urban and industrial centres that offered higher-paying jobs and year-round employment.¹

Concern over similar ills had, in earlier decades, produced groups and movements such as the Women's Institute, the Federation of Agriculture, and cooperatives and credit unions. Particularly influential on the Island were the ideals and practices espoused by proponents of the Antigonish Movement. At meetings held in rural communities across the Maritime region, Monsignor M. M. (Moses) Coady, the Movement's charismatic leader, challenged his audiences to "develop their possibilities and liberate themselves from economic bondage."² In essence, he urged them to become "masters of their own destiny"³ through community-based adult education and economic cooperation. Coady's message was also directed to the clergy, of all denominations, whom he encouraged to become as involved with promoting social and economic change as they were in preaching moral reform.

The Antigonish concept caught on quickly on Prince Edward Island, through the efforts of Dr. John T. Croteau⁴ and others, notably, the Adult Education League and the St. Dunstan's University Extension Service. The activities associated with the formation of dozens of successful cooperative associations and credit unions have influenced several generations of Islanders.⁵

Like the groups and movements that preceded it, the RDC emerged in response to the economic and social conditions of the time. By the mid-1960s, however, the RDC had the advantage of being able to draw on the experience, and even the

¹ For a discussion of the transitions that occurred on Prince Edward Island in the decades following the Second World War, see *The Garden Transformed: Prince Edward Island, 1945–1980*, edited by Verner Smitheram, David Milne, and Satadal Dasgupta (Charlottetown: Ragweed, 1982).

² Malcolm MacLellan, *Coady Remembered* (Antigonish: St. Francis Xavier University Press, 1985), p. 101.

³ Coined by Coady, this phrase became the title for his book on the Antigonish Movement: *Masters of Their Own Destiny: The Story of the Antigonish Movement of Adult Education Through Economic Cooperation* (New York: Harper, 1939).

⁴ Croteau arrived in the Province in the mid-1930s to teach economics and sociology at Prince of Wales College and St. Dunstan's University. Applying the principles of the Antigonish Movement, he organized study clubs on the Island and produced a local radio program on adult education. His book *Cradled in the Waves* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1951) is considered a standard source for the study of the cooperative movement on the Island during the 1930s and 1940s.

⁵ Although somewhat dated, a good historical summary of the cooperative movement in the Province is provided by Gary Webster's "Cooperatives and Credit Unions: Their Place in Island History," in *Exploring Island History: A Guide to the Historical Resources of Prince Edward Island*, ed. by Harry Baglole (Belfast, Prince Edward Island: Ragweed, 1977), pp. 175–194. Currently in the manuscript stage is "The Co-operative Movement in Prince Edward Island" by Elizabeth Cran and Marian Bruce and edited by Edward MacDonald (Charlottetown: Institute of Island Studies, forthcoming).

membership, of these earlier institutions. This chapter examines the founding and eventual formalization of the RDC. Considered first are the Council's direct antecedents, which are shown to have obvious links to the RDC's aforementioned predecessors in community development.

Rural Development Council Antecedents: 1964–1965



No one occurrence suddenly produced the Prince Edward Island Rural Development Council; rather, a series of events occurring simultaneously in different parts of the Province led to the group's eventual formation.

In the early 1960s, the Provincial Government, led by Premier Walter Shaw, commissioned a Toronto-based consulting firm, Acres Research and Planning, to study the Island's development potential. At about the same time, Federal programs administered under the new Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Act (ARDA) were being introduced in the Province. Both of these Government-initiated activities served to increase Islanders' awareness of the problems facing their rural communities.

In western Prince County, ARDA activities produced a defensive reaction. In that area of the Province, the people felt threatened by the new programs and by the Federal technocrats sent down from Ottawa to implement them.⁶ In response, a United Church Minister, David MacDonald, and a Roman Catholic priest, Gerald Steele, initiated a movement which sought to promote local development while retaining the desirable features of the rural community. Both men were later to become members of the RDC. Their activities proved to be an inspiration to others, especially clergy, who shared their concerns about appropriate rural development.

In eastern Prince Edward Island, members of the rural clergy were also becoming more active in community development. In Montague, the Rural Clergy Institute, also known as the Kings County Clergy Association, was founded in the early

⁶ O'Grady/Crossley interview with Gerald Steele, 1990.

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fall of 1965. The group's first meeting was chaired by Reverend David Barwise, a United Church Minister from Murray Harbour. In a recent interview, he has recalled that the organization got its start "at a time when the ecumenical movement was just opening up."⁷ According to Barwise, the Rural Clergy Institute included representatives from Roman Catholic parishes, as well as from most of the main line Protestant churches.

Occasionally, guest speakers were invited to address Institute meetings. Minutes from the group's founding session recorded the remarks of Dr. J. D. Nelson MacDonald, a United Church minister from Nova Scotia who was very active in the Antigonish Movement; Father Alex MacDonald of the Extension Department of St. Francis Xavier University; and Dr. W. A. Jenkins, Principal of the Nova Scotia Agricultural College.⁸ All three men were fresh from a meeting of the Inter-denominational Institute for Rural Clergy in Nova Scotia, where the main topic of discussion had been the role of the church and the clergy in rural development.⁹ Incidentally, two clergymen from Prince Edward Island, Reverend Donald MacLennan and Father Engleburtus Van de Van, were among the participants at that meeting. MacLennan was also present at the founding meeting of the Kings County Clergy Association, and both he and Van de Van were later to become members of the RDC.

At the initial meeting of the King's County Clergy, Dr. MacDonald told his audience that the "greatest need of the day was economic democracy." He pointed to the cooperative and credit union movement as the means by which people could achieve economic equality. MacDonald spoke, too, of some of the specific problems faced by the rural population: the lack of farm organizations, the trend towards urbanization and vertical integration, and the inability of farmers to obtain credit. He challenged his listeners to unite in their efforts to bring about positive change and not to allow "the evils of denominationalism ... to separate us."¹⁰

Father Alex MacDonald addressed the group next, on the subject of community development, which he defined as "a process of community planning involving local people in the study of, and planning solutions for, social and economic problems in the community."¹¹ His presentation led to a discussion of the question: What kind of leadership could and should clergy provide in community development? The general

⁷ O'Grady/Crossley interview with David Barwise, 1990.

⁸ The Rural Clergy Institute, Minutes of Meeting to Discuss "The Role of the Rural Clergy in Community Development," September 29, 1965.

⁹ Inter-denominational Institute for Rural Clergy, Proceedings of Meeting "Featuring Rural Development," May 10, 11, 12, 1965.

¹⁰ Rural Clergy Institute, Minutes, September 29, 1965, p. 1.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

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response was that the clergy should supply “inspirational leadership,” a role that included the “fostering of community,” both within their own ranks and in their congregations.

While the Rural Clergy Institute was continuing to meet in the eastern part of the Province, and David MacDonald and Gerald Steele were active in western Prince County, another province-wide, church-based organization that shared the concerns of these other groups entered the scene. The Prince Edward Island United Church Presbytery’s Rural Life Committee actually played a pivotal role in the RDC story. David Barwise, a key member of the Rural Clergy Institute, was also prominent in the Rural Life Committee. Through his association with these two groups, the contacts were established that eventually led to the creation of the RDC.

The several other accounts of the RDC’s early history all credit Barwise with initiating the steps that led to the Council’s founding.¹² Barwise has disagreed with that interpretation, preferring to think of himself as “only one of a lot of people who were involved.”¹³ Nevertheless, it was he who, in September of 1964, visited with Ken MacLean at the latter’s home in Central Lot 16. MacLean was a fellow member of the Rural Life Committee and, significantly, was very active in the Island’s cooperative movement.

Barwise’s concern with the social and economic ills of rural Islanders can be explained by at least two factors: his upbringing in the rural community of North Bedeque and the teachings of Father Moses Coady. Barwise has remembered listening to the sermons of the Reverend Dr. J. W. A. Nicholson, who handled the North Bedeque charge in the 1930s. Nicholson was well-known throughout the Maritime Provinces as an ardent supporter of the Antigonish Movement, and his sermons conveyed the “masters of their own destiny” theme. The ideas of Coady and Nicholson were rekindled for Barwise in the summer of 1964, when he attended a course at the Coady International Institute at St. Francis Xavier University. While in Antigonish, Barwise was encouraged, if not “pushed quite a bit, to do something,” upon his return

¹² Ralph Cameron’s *Heather on Fire: The Rural Development Council Story* (Charlottetown: Prince Edward Island Rural Development Council, 1973), albeit a popularized account commissioned by the RDC itself, offers a generally accurate narrative of the organization’s history to 1973. Edward MacDonald’s useful, but brief, summary of the RDC’s history is presented as part of a larger work on the Community Schools movement: *A Community of Schools: The First Twenty Years* (Charlottetown: Institute of Island Studies, 1985). Although short on the RDC’s early history, Gordon Cobb’s master’s thesis provides a solid and more critical assessment of the group, especially its role during the Development Plan years: “Paradox in Planning: Community Power but State Prerogative. An Analysis of the Public Participation Programme in the Comprehensive Development Plan for Prince Edward Island, Canada” (unpublished master’s thesis, Edinburgh University, 1987).

¹³ O’Grady/Crossley interview with David Barwise, 1990.

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to Prince Edward Island; as he recently expressed it: "I wanted to do something, but, like all young men, I just didn't know in what direction I was supposed to go."¹⁴ The staff at the Coady Institute pointed the way, suggesting that Barwise start by getting involved in the Island's cooperative movement. And so, early in the fall of 1964, Barwise arranged a meeting with Ken MacLean, who was then Managing Director of the Cooperative Union of Prince Edward Island.

MacLean has described the day he and Barwise met as "a good day for combining."¹⁵ He was making reference to his grain crop, of course, but could have just as easily been referring to the ideas that he and his guest shared that day. Both men were troubled by the social and economic conditions facing rural Prince Edward Islanders. For Barwise, poverty was the primary ill of the mid-1960s. At the same time, the self-described "angry young man" was upset by another situation he was encountering: "I felt Islanders depended a lot on the leadership of the more educated people, and I always thought they were being manipulated by the politicians and treated so paternalistically." His concern was in getting the "power in our own hands," an obvious Coady ideal.¹⁶

As a result of the meeting between MacLean and Barwise, it was agreed that the latter should contact Father Allan MacDonald, who, in 1964, had just been appointed Director of the Extension Department at St. Dunstan's University. MacDonald had both a personal and professional interest in community development. He has recalled "tagging along" to credit union and cooperative meetings as a young child growing up near Fort Augustus during the 1930s. While a seminarian in Toronto, he gained further exposure to the ideas of Moses Coady.¹⁷ MacDonald also earned a graduate degree in sociology, which was to influence his ideas on community development.

One of the impediments to development that MacDonald observed was the lack of response by rural Islanders to government-sponsored programs. He saw the need for some source of motivation to increase public participation in existing and new development efforts. He felt that the rural clergy had a role to play in addressing the problem, and he was convinced that any such approach had to be interdenominational.

MacDonald's feelings were shared by Reverend Frank Lacey, a United Church minister from the community of York. Lacey had been in touch with MacDonald in the fall of 1964 and he was also involved with the same United Church Rural Life Committee that included David Barwise and Ken MacLean. It was not long before the

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ O'Grady/Crossley interview with Ken MacLean, 1990.

¹⁶ O'Grady/Crossley interview with David Barwise, 1990.

¹⁷ O'Grady/Crossley interview with Father Allan MacDonald, 1990.

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four men arranged to meet. They were to be joined by Mrs. Jean Mutch, another member of the Rural Life Committee, who was active in the Prince Edward Island Women's Institute.

The group's first meeting took place at the old Queen Hotel, then located at the corner of Water and Great George Streets in Charlottetown. Over supper, the five talked about the problems facing rural Prince Edward Island. It was decided that they would meet again and that others who shared their concerns should be invited to attend future meetings. From that point on, the group met regularly, usually in the Kelley Memorial Library at St. Dunstan's University. Looking back, Father MacDonald has stated, at that early stage, "we didn't know where we were going, but we wanted to start moving, holding meetings and talking."¹⁸

It was while the fledgling, and as yet unnamed, group was searching for direction that there arrived on the Island, in late November of 1964, a rural development specialist employed by ARDA, Rudi Dallenbach. Officially, Dallenbach's duties were "to determine and test methods and approaches for use by the rural development offices in dealing with adjustment problems under the ARDA program."¹⁹ Dallenbach has recently recalled that his "unofficial" instructions were: "Just go down there, float around, and do your own thing."²⁰

Dallenbach's "own thing" was community development, and, upon arriving on the Island, he immediately began looking for people with whom he could work; he soon heard of the group that was meeting at St. Dunstan's University. Dallenbach contacted Ken MacLean and asked permission to attend the group's next meeting. MacLean agreed, and thus began Dallenbach's association with the RDC's predecessor.

Almost immediately after Dallenbach's inclusion, the group's public profile increased and more people became involved in what was beginning to resemble a movement. While reluctant to accept credit for what happened next, Dallenbach has admitted to acting as a stimulus and a "behind-the-scenes organizer" for the group.²¹ In the winter of 1965, he, along with MacDonald and MacLean, arranged a seminar on "The Rural Economic Problem." Held in Charlottetown in February, the seminar featured as guest speakers Dr. Alex Laidlaw of the Cooperative Union of Canada and

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ O'Grady/Crossley interview with Rudi Dallenbach, 1990.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

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two of Dallenbach's ARDA colleagues, Alex Sim and Jean Lanctot.²² The meeting, co-chaired by MacDonald and MacLean, attracted forty-five people from across the Island.

One of the major outcomes of the seminar was the formation of a committee directed to plan a follow-up meeting for later that winter. Although the committee did not have an official title, it was known by several names, most commonly the Community Development Committee.²³ The newly formed committee organized three more seminars in the winter and early spring of 1965, two of them in Charlottetown and one in Alberton. One of the Charlottetown meetings attracted over forty people, including Provincial politicians, both Liberal and Conservative; members of the Protestant and Catholic clergy; and representatives from the cooperative and credit union movement, the Women's Institute, and Boards of Trade.²⁴

The purpose of the seminars was, according to Dallenbach, "to stimulate an understanding of community development."²⁵ The meetings also provided a forum for people to express their concerns. Father MacDonald has recalled that everyone was "reporting the same story: dissatisfaction with the lassitude of rural life, low public participation and involvement, and the decline of the Island's rural communities and family farms."²⁶

Throughout the summer of 1965, the Community Development Committee continued to meet at St. Dunstan's University and at other locations across the Province. By design, a different person chaired each meeting. The Committee was beginning to attract the attention of some Provincial politicians, particularly Premier Shaw and his Minister of Agriculture, Andrew MacRae. In Father MacDonald's words: "They were beginning to ask: 'Who is this outfit?' No one could answer because we didn't formally organize, just so the politicians couldn't get a clear shot at us."²⁷

The Committee members were concerned that the Provincial Government might attempt to interfere with the group's activities, which included criticizing Government policies. The tactic of a rotating chairmanship was designed to provide a moving target

²² "Resumé – Capsule Form – Background of Community Development Committee," unpublished ms. (possibly an address), RDC files, 1966.

²³ Dallenbach has recalled that the moniker "Abegweit' Group" was also being used. He explained that, like the New Brunswick-Prince Edward Island car ferry of the same name, "it was the kind of group which floated around the Island and occasionally got stuck in the ice, not meeting for several weeks. Then, all of a sudden, it broke loose, and you would see it appear again" (Niall Burnett interview with Rudi Dallenbach, 1978, conducted in association with a film project being produced by Points East Productions; cited with permission; the film was never completed).

²⁴ "Resumé – Capsule Form – Background of Community Development Committee."

²⁵ O'Grady/Crossley interview with Rudi Dallenbach, 1990.

²⁶ O'Grady/Crossley interview with Father Allan MacDonald, 1990.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

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for any Government efforts to silence its critics. In a recent interview, Dallenbach related that he was summoned to the offices of Agriculture Minister MacRae and Premier Shaw several times and told to appoint a permanent chairman for the Community Development Committee. His response was, "That is not up to me."²⁸ In turn, Shaw and MacRae forbade Dallenbach to continue his involvement with the upstart Committee. As a Federal employee, however, Dallenbach was not obligated to heed the commands of Provincial politicians: "I just explained to them, 'I am awfully sorry, but I work for the Federal Government.'"²⁹

Dallenbach's initial six-month contract with ARDA expired in May of 1965. The Province picked up the contract, making Dallenbach a Provincial employee. Now, the Premier must have thought, he had the maverick development worker under control. Dallenbach, however, continued his involvement with the Community Development Committee, an act of defiance which, within the year, cost him his job with the Prince Edward Island Government.

At the same time as he was assisting the Community Development Committee, Dallenbach was also attending meetings of the Rural Clergy Institute, which only added to the chagrin of the politicians. As Dallenbach has related it: "Again, I was called into Minister MacRae's office, and this time he said, 'I forbid you to continue working with the sky pilots [the clergy].'" Dallenbach has explained:

It was difficult for a politician to deal with the clergy, particularly when you had this ecumenical movement going on. All of a sudden, you had Protestants and Catholics working together, and they couldn't be played off against each other, a tactic used at that time.

As well, the politicians didn't want a Federal instigator organizing people to work against Provincial Government policies. Walter Shaw wanted to run the show; he didn't need to ask the people what they needed, he knew what they needed.³⁰

Dallenbach, of course, did not curtail his involvement with the King's County Clergy or with the Community Development Committee; in the fall and early winter of 1965, he actually devoted more time than ever to the two groups.

It was during the fall of 1965 that Dallenbach approached Father Allan MacDonald with the idea of establishing an adult education program based on

²⁸ O'Grady/Crossley interview with Rudi Dallenbach, 1990.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

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community schools. MacDonald has recalled that “there was very little going on in adult education” on Prince Edward Island at that time, but there was an apparent need for some kind of program. He has recently admitted that when the idea was first proposed to him, he “did not have a clue what Rudi was talking about.” At the same time, he told Dallenbach to “go out and see what you can do.”³¹

What Dallenbach “was talking about” was a system of adult education aimed at “community development through self-development.”³² It was his belief that there was “leadership in every person,” but sometimes it was necessary “to awaken this kind of latent talent people have.”³³ Dallenbach’s approach was to develop the individual’s leadership skills, thereby enhancing the community’s social development. As the author of the history of the Island’s Community School movement has put it: “If the community is accepted as a collection of individuals, then the building block of *community* development is *self*-development.”³⁴

In its inaugural season — the winter of 1965–1966 — the Community Schools program comprised three schools, one each in Tignish, Kensington, and Mount Stewart. Attendance that first year totalled 255 people, who took ten-week, twenty-hour courses “aimed at community as well as personal development.”³⁵ The schools were an instant success with the participants. The following year, the number of schools increased to twelve, and the year after that to twenty. In 1985, when Dr. Edward MacDonald wrote his history of the Prince Edward Island Community Schools movement, there were schools operating in thirty-eight localities with over 5,000 participants.

In spite of their popularity, Community Schools did not become the instrument of community development envisioned by Dallenbach. In a later chapter, it is discussed how Community Schools, in becoming a movement unto itself, was able to ensure its own viability, but was in no position to assist the RDC during the latter’s fight for survival.

Roughly coinciding with the creation of the first community schools was the formal founding of the RDC itself. It has been established that the Community Development Committee, which had been meeting regularly at St. Dunstan’s University, and the Rural Clergy Institute, exclusively a Kings County group, had existed simultaneously and, essentially, independently. The two groups did share

³¹ O’Grady/Crossley interview with Allan MacDonald, 1990.

³² Edward MacDonald, *A Community of Schools*, p. 9.

³³ O’Grady/Crossley interview with Rudi Dallenbach, 1990.

³⁴ Edward MacDonald, *A Community of Schools*, p. 31.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

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common concerns; and several key individuals, most notably David Barwise and Rudi Dallenbach, were involved with both organizations. In the fall of 1965, the Community Development Committee emerged as the predominant group, and, by the following year, the Rural Clergy Institute had ceased to exist. It is not suggested that the two groups were in competition, although an RDC seminar, held in Montague in the winter of 1966, did cause some friction and raise the question of the RDC infringing upon the Kings County group's "territory."³⁶ It should not be inferred, either, that the Rural Clergy Institute was absorbed by the expanding Community Development Committee. Transfers, especially of Protestant clergy, thinned the membership of the Institute to the degree that, by the summer of 1966, it simply "evaporated."³⁷

In the fall of 1965, one of the topics regularly discussed by the Community Development Committee was the group's need for formal organization. Another recurring theme was the necessity for the organization to retain its independence. The minutes of the Committee's meeting of November 25, 1965, stated: "We must not be dependent on govt [sic], consulting firms, or anyone else . . . we must be free agents if we are to render any service." Those sentiments were echoed at the Committee's next meeting on December 7, from which the minutes stated: "A non-political committee with a grass roots concern is essential."

The December meeting of the Committee was especially significant, for it was at that session that Ken MacLean moved that the Community Development Committee "organize as a Rural Development Council." The motivation for formal organization came from two sources. The Committee had just received a letter from the Honourable Maurice Sauvé, Federal Minister of Rural Development, informing it that a National Advisory Council on Rural Development was to be formed.³⁸ As Dallenbach has related it: "In order to have representation on that council, the Community Development Committee was told that we had to formalize."³⁹ The Committee had also been receiving some internal urging to become more structured. A three-page summary of the Committee's activities during 1965 and 1966 included the following remarks: "It is the consensus of the Committee that formal organization is justified so that we may have the instrument through which we can or may more clearly define our purpose and objectives."

The Community Development Committee next met on January 19, 1966, for what was to be its last meeting. The approximately twenty persons there present gave

³⁶ O'Grady/Crossley interview with Father Allan MacDonald, 1990.

³⁷ An interpretation expressed by Father Allan MacDonald during a personal conversation with the author in 1990.

³⁸ "Rural Development on P.E.I.," unpublished ms., RDC files, 1966, pp. 2-3.

³⁹ O'Grady/Crossley interview with Rudi Dallenbach, 1990.

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unanimous approval to the report of the Nominating Committee, which called for the organization of a "Rural Development Council." Members of the Nominating Committee included Father Allan MacDonald, David Barwise, Jean Mutch, and Urbain LeBlanc. The latter individual was, in 1966, a recent addition to the Extension Department at St. Dunstan's University and had previously worked with the Extension Department at St. Francis Xavier University and with the Coady International Institute. LeBlanc was, and still is, active in the cooperative movement in Atlantic Canada. He was to play a prominent role in the RDC between 1969 and 1974.

The Rural Development Council: 1966–1969



At the RDC's founding meeting, the first order of business was the election of a Council Executive. Ken MacLean and Jack Rodd were chosen as Co-Chairs, Eric Kipping as Vice-Chair, and Frank Lacey as Secretary. The objectives of the RDC were then drafted and approved as follows:

1. An instrument through which we can spend some time to understand more clearly what is meant by community development.
2. A forum, where representatives of existing organizations, though not officially representing these organizations, can get together and engage in a "DEBATE" on Community Development Concepts.
3. Promote and foster leadership/education/training programs of all sorts and at all levels of Island society.⁴⁰

Several other matters, the significance of which became increasingly relevant in future years, were also discussed at the RDC's inaugural meeting. A summary of the discussion included the following point: "We wish to make it clear ... that the proposed

⁴⁰ "Rural Development on P.E.I.," unpublished ms., RDC files, 1966, p. 3.

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RDC ... is not a pressure group ... [and] we do not believe that this policy should be altered at this time.”⁴¹ Minutes of the meeting also recorded that “the Council was warned re. holding out hand to govt [sic].”⁴² A suggestion by Dallenbach that the Council be “self-financed” through voluntary contributions from its membership was favourably received.

Among the first public undertakings of the RDC was the staging of three day-long seminars in Charlottetown, Summerside, and Cardigan. By meeting in each of the Island’s three counties, the RDC was attempting to establish itself as a Province-wide organization. The seminars provided a forum for the presentation of a discussion paper prepared by Father Allan MacDonald. “The Plan for Community Development” outlined the principles that had emerged from previous meetings of the RDC and the Community Development Committee.

MacDonald’s paper defined “community” as “a social entity or whole, whether the local group or association, or any other collectivity.” Community development, meanwhile, was defined as “a process designed to create conditions of economic and social progress for the whole community with its active participation and the fullest possible reliance upon the community’s initiative.” Central to MacDonald’s philosophy of community development was a set of postulates summarized as follows:

1. Community development involves persons who must be respected as free and self-directing.
2. All persons are capable of development.
3. Leadership, whether actual or potential, exists in every group.
4. Social groups are essential in allowing individuals to realize social needs.⁴³

During its first year, the RDC Executive met virtually every week. Information seminars and the operation of Community Schools continued to be the organization’s major public activities. At this point in the Council’s history, the involvement of rural clergy in the RDC was at a high point; at the same time, changes were already taking place that were weakening the Council’s membership.

Both David Barwise and Rudi Dallenbach left the Province in 1966. Barwise was transferred, while Dallenbach departed under more interesting circumstances. By May of that year, the Provincial Government had had enough of Dallenbach’s

⁴¹ “Resumé – Capsule Form – Background of Community Development Committee.”

⁴² Minutes of a Meeting of the Rural Development Committee, January 19, 1966.

⁴³ Allan MacDonald, “The Plan for Community Development,” unpublished discussion paper, 1966, pp. 2–5.

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involvement with the RDC and the Rural Clergy Institute. He was fired for ignoring repeated warnings to disassociate himself from the two groups. He next allowed himself to be rehired by the Province, just so, as he has put it, he could then resign, which he did at the end of May.⁴⁴ Dallenbach then returned to Montreal to work at Macdonald College, McGill University. He did maintain an intermittent relationship with the RDC as a consultant and evaluator until 1973, a role discussed in later chapters.

By the end of 1966, the RDC had begun to ask questions of itself which were to dominate its meetings for the next decade: What is the function and role of the RDC and what is its relationship vis-à-vis the Provincial Government? The Council's second year in existence opened in the same way in which the first one had ended. An internal RDC document, dated January 1967, began by stating: "The time has arrived for us to reassess the nature, function and scope of the Rural Development Council." The Council felt that it must find "a more specific formulation" and that "its purpose and structure must be clarified."⁴⁵

Prompting the RDC to seek a better-defined purpose and a more structured existence was the imminent appearance of a federal-provincial Comprehensive Development Plan. By 1967, the Acres consultants had completed their survey of the Island's development potential. Receiving the Acres Report, however, was not the Shaw administration that had commissioned it. The previous spring, a new Liberal government, led by Premier Alex B. Campbell, had been elected. In 1967, the new administration established the Economic Improvement Corporation (EIC), an agency responsible for designing and implementing a development plan for the Province.

The EIC undertook the design of the Development Plan with little public input. As Gordon Cobb has put it: "the Development Plan was largely the product of ... a small group of imported analysts and planning experts."⁴⁶ It was this lack of public involvement in the Plan's development that led the RDC to criticize the Provincial Government. Referring, in a 1967 position paper, to the "minimum effort to involve our rural people," the RDC stated:

⁴⁴ O'Grady/Crossley interview with Rudi Dallenbach, 1990.

⁴⁵ "Rural Development Council," unpublished ms., RDC files, January 1967, p. 1.

⁴⁶ "Paradox in Planning," p. 5. Cobb's conclusion is supported by Wayne MacKinnon in "The Politics of Planning: A Case Study of the Prince Edward Island Development Plan" (unpublished master's thesis, Dalhousie University, 1972), p. 108; and by J. D. McNiven, the consultant hired by the Province to evaluate the Development Plan's public participation program, "Evaluation of the Public Participation Programme Embodied in the Prince Edward Island Development Plan" (Halifax: Dalhousie University, Institute of Public Affairs, 1974), pp. 16-17.

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We believe that the ultimate success of any [development] plan depends upon participation by the people who presumably will be affected by it. We suggest that there is a certain urgency that immediate steps must be taken to involve the people of this province in a study and analysis of all major propositions set forth in the plan.⁴⁷

The RDC maintained that public participation in the Plan could be best facilitated by a “voluntary coordinating body” like itself. The Council felt that its purpose, features, and structure all qualified it to assist in involving the public in the Plan’s implementation. At the same time, the RDC did not directly propose that it be the body to perform the task; the demure Council would wait for the Province to make such overtures.

In May of 1967, Del Gallagher, EIC General Manager, informed the RDC that his agency was putting the “finishing touches” on certain sections of the Development Plan. He observed that one section called for “local involvement.” Gallagher inquired of the Council Executive: “How do we go about doing this? [and] Can I get assistance from RDC?”⁴⁸ At a meeting on May 28, 1967, the RDC Executive noted that “Gallagher had the impression that RDC would be looking for a full-time man as permanent secretary or RDO [rural development officer].” In what appears to have been an enticement, Gallagher apparently asked the RDC, “What can I do for you?” or “What can you do for me?” and then offered, “We [EIC] have some funds which could be put to work”⁴⁹ The Council Executive generally agreed that “there was certainly need for a person to help co-ordinate and guide the [RDC’s] activities”; at the same time, some members warned, “we must not become attached to government, in the sense that we become identified or labelled as such.”⁵⁰ The Council agreed, nevertheless, to consider Gallagher’s proposal at a future meeting.

In August of 1967, at Gallagher’s suggestion, Bob Blakely of EIC began attending RDC Executive meetings in the role of a liaison officer between the government agency and the Council. Although this relationship between the RDC and EIC was an informal one, Blakely “assigned” the Council its first task relative to the Development Plan. Minutes of an RDC Executive meeting recorded Blakely’s directions:

⁴⁷ “Rural Development Council,” January 1967, p. 1.

⁴⁸ Minutes of a Meeting of the RDC Executive Committee, May 28, 1967.

⁴⁹ Del Gallagher, as quoted in the Minutes of a Meeting of the RDC Executive, May 28, 1967.

⁵⁰ Minutes of a Meeting of the RDC Executive Committee, May 28, 1967.

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Consideration must be given to the practical approach to be used to feed information to opinion leaders re. [Development] plan One of the first tasks of the RDC is to identify these people. We [EIC] need the leaders ... of different groups We want to feed them information and ideas re. Plan.⁵¹

At its next meeting, the RDC executive unanimously approved the following motion: "that Mr. Gallagher be approached re. financing of Council's activities."⁵² While still debating what its relationship to government should be, the RDC was making deliberate moves towards a formal, and financial, arrangement with EIC.

The EIC itself was also attempting to define the relationship it desired with the Council. An internal EIC memorandum from Tom Philbrook to Gallagher, dated September 26, 1967, profiled the RDC as potentially serving in either "an advisory or operating capacity." The latter was considered possible "only if the Council were to be employed by the government." Philbrook offered that such an option did "not appear to be a likely possibility as far as the Council is concerned." He then made some general observations, which were to become especially relevant to the RDC situation in the future:

Parentetically, the funding by Government of an outside agency always brings forth, but does not answer, the questions of what are the agency's operational commitments to Government and what are the limits of Government's influence over the agency. Typically, these questions are answered expediently, case by case as they arise; but with each expediently decided case there tends to be a drive to formalize and fix the agency/government relations. This process of shifting back and forth between expediency and formalization continues until the agency disbands, becomes functionally inoperative, or discards its own objectives to become in essence an operating arm of government.⁵³

Philbrook concluded his memorandum by suggesting that the "de facto and informal" arrangement which then existed between the RDC and EIC should be "examined with some care." His concern was that "the relative powers of the participating parties" be sufficiently balanced; as Philbrook put it: "If matters such as these are looked after, we

⁵¹ Minutes of a Meeting of the RDC Executive Committee, August 11, 1967.

⁵² Minutes of a Meeting of the RDC Executive Committee, August 18, 1967.

⁵³ Internal EIC Memorandum from Tom Philbrook to Del Gallagher, September 26, 1967. This document was recently discovered among Department of Development files (PARO, RG 33).

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need not worry too much about watering down, on one hand, the RDC's impact or, on the other, creating great tempests — teapot variety or otherwise.” The success (or failure) of the Government to strike the desired balance in its relationship with the RDC will become obvious in subsequent chapters.

In October of 1967, the RDC received a response to its request for government financing. In a letter to the Council's Co-Chair Ken MacLean, Gallagher wrote:

We have considered your proposed program and budget for the coming season very carefully in an attempt to determine ways in which your Council can effectively become involved in both the preparation and implementation of the province's Comprehensive Development Plan.⁵⁴

He went on to define the EIC's and, presumably, the Provincial Government's desired relationship with the RDC:

... it is not our wish to influence the direction of your day to day activities by means of attaching a number of specific considerations to any financial support which you might receive from us. I think that we all agree that the effectiveness of your operations will be directly related to the voluntary nature of your group and to the degree of independence which you can bring to both advisory and operational functions which you may perform.⁵⁵

Having made those remarks, Gallagher informed the RDC that “we are prepared to provide financial support for your Program ... and to do so unconditionally to the extent that this is possible.”

As it turned out, however, Gallagher's offer of financial support was subject to what he referred to as “a number of considerations,” most of which, in his opinion, were “minor and inconsequential in nature.”⁵⁶ First, the RDC was asked to make a commitment to broaden its membership. The second consideration had the RDC agreeing to “a form of systematic evaluation as a means of determining [the Council's] impact and effectiveness relative to the overall objectives of the [Development] plan.”⁵⁷ The third stipulation was that the RDC become legally incorporated. It would not be

⁵⁴ Letter from Del Gallagher to Ken MacLean, dated October 19, 1967, RDC files.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

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possible, Gallagher argued, for the EIC to finance the Council unless the latter were a legal entity. As a final provision, the RDC was required to revise its programming for 1967–1968 to reflect its role in the Development Plan.

At its meeting of October 19, 1967, the RDC Executive debated, at length, the terms outlined in Gallagher's letter. The provision dealing with incorporation was the most contentious, and no consensus could be achieved initially. Some Council members expressed their concerns that, by incorporating, the RDC would lose its altruistic appearance. It was not until January 31, 1968, that the RDC finally indicated its willingness to comply with the EIC's conditions, including incorporation.⁵⁸

In late February of 1968, in a presentation to the Provincial Liberal and Progressive Conservative caucuses, the RDC revealed its revised programming.⁵⁹ The MLAs were told that the Council's program now included two principal fields: community development and participation in the Comprehensive Development Plan. The former included what had become traditional RDC activities: study sessions on community development, Community Schools, leadership training, and communications seminars. With respect to the Council's participation in the Development Plan, the brief read: "The Rural Development Council views as one of its prime purposes to coordinate its activities with and to be of service where possible to the local planning authority."

Essentially, the Council's role at this point was to review certain sections of the Plan in draft form; in return, the RDC's expenses were being paid with funds made available from EIC. It must be made clear, however, that the RDC had yet to sign a formal agreement with the Province to participate in the Development Plan. Actually, the Plan itself did not receive federal-provincial ratification until March of 1969, and it was a full year afterwards that the RDC formally accepted a contract to participate in it.

The RDC had just agreed to its initial involvement in the Development Plan when the EIC proposed that the Council accept responsibility for the Plan's Counselling Program. The purpose of the program was to facilitate public participation during the Plan's implementation phase. While the RDC was contemplating the EIC's latest proposal, indications from within Government were that the Counselling Program had the potential to become politically volatile.

A confidential EIC memorandum, dated September 6, 1968, described a meeting between Premier Campbell and Bob Blakely. The memorandum was written by Blakely and sent to Del Gallagher. According to Blakely, Campbell "was very

⁵⁸ The Rural Development Council was incorporated on March 20, 1968.

⁵⁹ That programming was summarized in an internal RDC document entitled "Rural Development Council Program 1967–68."

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concerned about his [the Premier's] role in the information and implementation stages of the Plan." The Premier apparently "suggested that he [Campbell] should speak to public meetings outlining the opportunities and provisions of the plan." Blakely cautioned Campbell that "public meetings were an extremely dangerous form of communication," and suggested, instead, that the RDC hold three regional information sessions concerning the Plan. As Blakely recounted it, the Premier then

suggested that the RDC could call public meetings at which he would be able to speak and I pointed out that it was very unlikely that the RDC would invite him as they are an extremely independent group. This aroused his ire but we had spoken of the political capital in the program and how this must be accommodated to a non-partisan overall image. He was quite insistent, however, that he and possibly his cabinet members should play a large role in explaining the program to the people ... [and] I am not sure he will be too accommodating about these points.⁶⁰

According to the Blakely-Gallagher memorandum, another major point discussed at Blakely's meeting with the Premier involved the hiring of personnel for the Plan's Counselling Program. Campbell, Blakely wrote, initially insisted that "he [the Premier] be able to look over the list of people being considered for these positions, ostensibly to check them out for political hatchet men and other types of undesirables." In response, the memorandum related, Blakely "pointed out at considerably [sic] length and very directly that the counselling program, which is the chief involvement agent for the plan, could not afford to be tinged with any political or other non-functional factors." Although Blakely seemed to feel that he had made his point, the Premier did, according to the memorandum, go on to

point out that if a number of Tories could be included in the counsellors that this would be a good move for the program and also politically. He felt that their involvement and explicit support for the program would show benefits both functionally and politically.⁶¹

⁶⁰ EIC Memorandum, stamped "Confidential," from Bob Blakely to Del Gallagher, dated September 6, 1968. This document was among Department of Development of Files (PARO, RG 33).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

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Blakely also wrote that, although the Premier “seemed to agree that rural development officers to be effective must operate outside of government,” he doubted that Campbell would “be willing to relinquish control over these people.”

Blakely concluded his account of the meeting by stating that it was “not entirely a pleasant affair for either the Premier or myself. There was considerable very straight talk about political capital versus the necessary non-partisan nature of the plan.” No one in the RDC knew, of course, about the meeting between Premier Campbell and Blakely. The Council would, however, ultimately experience firsthand the very clash of ideals of which Blakely had written.

While the RDC’s role in the Plan was being bandied about in the back rooms of government, negotiations continued between the Council and the EIC. At an RDC Executive meeting held on September 23, 1968, Blakely and government colleague, Hector Hortie, were present to address certain concerns held by Council members. According to the minutes of that meeting, Blakely informed the members that, if the RDC assumed the responsibility for the Counselling Program, “this would negate the right of the Council to constructively criticize the total plan and at times it could be at odds with the EIC.” When asked if the EIC “would be prepared to pay people who ‘might’ work against them,” the two officials “expressed their confidence in RDC’s modus operandi and felt that criticism when and if necessary would be constructive.” One member of the RDC Executive asked how the Council could “remain independent” under such an arrangement, to which Blakely responded, “By being independent.” In spite of its concerns, the Council agreed in principle, in October of 1968, to accept responsibility for the Plan’s public participation component.

The RDC’s decision had not been made without significant internal debate. The minutes of RDC meetings, however, do not reflect the prodigious struggle that has been recalled by some former members of the Council. Actually, at least one member who has remembered being opposed to the RDC’s involvement in the Plan was among those recorded as voting in favour of it! Considering how the Council’s relationship with the Provincial Government ultimately ended, however, it is not surprising that some people later preferred to distance themselves from the decision. In contrast, Father Allan MacDonald has maintained that the RDC made the right choice. By 1968, MacDonald has recently related, the Council had accomplished all that it could with its own resources. He has even gone so far as to suggest that, if it had not accepted a role in the Plan, “the RDC would have been dead.”⁶²

The Council’s decision to involve itself in the Plan was negatively received by the local media. An editorial in *The Eastern Graphic* asked “Can Rural Development

⁶² O’Grady/Crossley interview with Father Allan MacDonald, 1990.

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Council Be Independent of EIC?” In answering his own question, *Graphic* editor Jim MacNeill referred to a television appearance by RDC Secretary Urbain LeBlanc. MacNeill accused LeBlanc and the RDC of “endorsing the Comprehensive Plan to the hilt.” The editorial stated that, even though the RDC was generally assumed to be independent,

actually [it] is a group completely subsidized by the Economic Improvement Corporation and as such can hardly be classed as an independent body. When officials of RDC therefore are seen on a TV program airing their endorsements of the Comprehensive Plan it should all be taken with a good, big grain of salt. It is like an employee endorsing his employer’s products

The editorial continued:

we have always felt that RDC was always a little out of touch with the common man in the province. It has always appeared to us that it was top heavy with ministers, priests, university professors and such and that it lacked men with practical experience in business, farming and fishing.

It has been great on theory but short on the practical end in dealing with the development of the province.⁶³

MacNeill’s editorial was followed by one in *The Journal-Pioneer* by Hartwell Daley, who hinted that the question of the RDC’s independence was causing strife within the Council:

there are many people in the Council who have boldly told this writer that they are concerned about their organization’s future. The organization started out on a genuinely independent footing and made its decision clear. The council now cannot criticize the plan without biting the hand that feeds it.⁶⁴

In the face of such criticism, the RDC felt compelled to defend itself. Mary Baker, the Council’s Information Officer, issued a press release that appeared in *The Journal-Pioneer* on November 1, 1968. Baker stated that the RDC “always has been

⁶³ Editorial, *The Eastern Graphic*, October 16, 1968.

⁶⁴ Editorial, *The Journal-Pioneer*, October 24, 1968, p. 2.

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independent and intends to continue so.” She accused the RDC’s critics of being “naive” for suggesting that “a grant of money by one group to another implies loss of status to an independent body.” Baker also defended the Council against charges of elitism, stating that its membership was “Island wide” and included “people from almost every branch of society, businessmen, farmers, fishermen, teachers, social workers, clergymen, tourist operators, members of co-operatives and credit unions.”

The media’s criticism of the RDC caught the attention of the EIC’s Gallagher and Premier Campbell. The RDC, even though it was defending its decision to become involved in the Plan, had still not entered into a formal agreement with the EIC. Gallagher, in a memorandum dated October 25, 1968, reassured the Premier that, although the EIC had “been meeting with the RDC *to explore* various roles which they might play in areas of local involvement ..., no final commitments [had] been made on either side.”⁶⁵ On the question of the Council’s independence, or lack of same, Gallagher commented that the RDC was “fairly” independent.

Until it became officially part of the Plan programming in March of 1970, the RDC was financed by the EIC and, later, by the Department of Development. The Plan itself was signed by Provincial and Federal officials on March 7, 1969. Just prior to the signing, the Provincial Government announced that the EIC was to be phased out and replaced by a new Development Department. The EIC, with its imported experts, had never gained acceptance by Provincial politicians or the Provincial bureaucracy. At the same time, however, the Corporation had established a good working relationship with the RDC. The Council, therefore, was quite concerned over the Province’s decision to dissolve the EIC and to release several of its staff, including Gallagher. Fearing that the new Department of Development was being established to allow for political interference in the Plan’s implementation, the RDC drew up the following petition, which it planned to present to Premier Campbell at the March 7th signing ceremony:

To The Honourable Premier Campbell, the Leader of the Opposition and to Members of the Legislature.

In view of the recent announcement made by the Premier of Prince Edward Island to establish a Department of Economic Development, we the undersigned strongly request that the implementation of the Comprehensive Development Plan be carried forward through a development agency free from partisan political influence; and

⁶⁵ Internal EIC Memorandum from Del Gallagher to Premier Alex Campbell, dated October 25, 1968. This document was among Department of Development of Files (PARO, RG 33).

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In order to guarantee the immediate implementation of the Comprehensive Development Plan that the competent personnel now employed in planning be retained on a contractual basis or such other arrangements suitable to the personnel concerned; and

In order to ensure the choice of a competent and acceptable candidate for the position of Deputy Minister of the new Department of Economic Development that there be prior consultation with the Rural Development Council of Prince Edward Island; and

In order to assure grass-roots participation we strongly urge that the Rural Development Council of Prince Edward Island have representation on the Joint Federal-Provincial Advisory Board; and

Finally in view of the fact that the Comprehensive Development Plan is designed for the common good of the people of the Province we recommend in the strongest possible terms to the Premier and to the Leader of the Opposition that when a vote is called for on matters pertaining to the Comprehensive Development Plan that a FREE and OPEN VOTE be taken by Members of the Legislative Assembly during the 1969 Session.

As it turned out, the RDC petition was not presented to the Premier. At the last minute, the Council's participation in the signing ceremony was removed from the agenda. The minutes of the March 17, 1969, RDC Executive meeting included an "explanation of rebuff on day of signing." Council members expressed their belief that the Premier was concerned about "adverse headlines in the Guardian" and this led to the "deletion of RDC from the [signing ceremony] agenda." Surprisingly, the "rebuff" did not cause the Council too much concern. One member even remarked that "it was well that we were not recognized because the document would probably have been misunderstood and would have marred the spirit of the Ceremony."⁶⁶ The whole affair, however, did cause another Council member to observe, "Where does dedication to a principle end and the process of political expediency begin — there is a danger in this area and we have to be concerned about this fact of life."⁶⁷ The RDC would be faced with this dilemma numerous times during its years of involvement with the Development Plan.

The months leading up to the RDC's actual signing of a formal contract with the Province were filled with preparations for taking on Plan-related responsibilities.

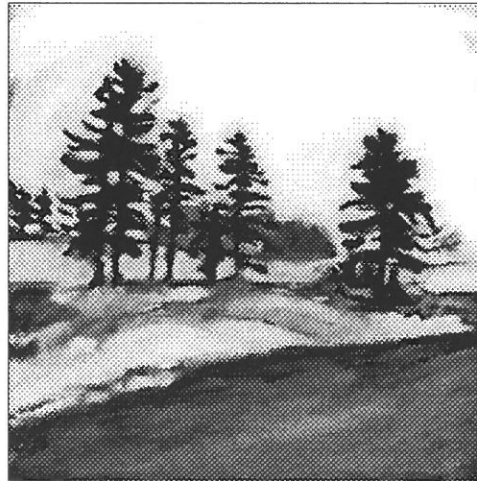
⁶⁶ Minutes of a Special Meeting of the RDC Executive, March 12, 1969.

⁶⁷ Minutes of a Meeting of the RDC Executive, March 17, 1969.

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Former Council Board member Urbain LeBlanc was hired in October of 1969 as the RDC's first Managing Director. On March 26, 1970, the Council signed an agreement to administer four Plan projects, most significantly the Counselling and Community Resource Development functions of the Plan's public participation component. In its examination of the RDC's Development Plan years, the next chapter considers various aspects of the Council's role in the period 1970-1975. ¶

II. THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN YEARS 1970–1975



IN ACCEPTING A CONTRACT for the implementation of the Development Plan's public participation programs, the RDC became involved in the first phase of a fifteen-year, \$725 million, socioeconomic development strategy. Before examining the Council's responsibilities in the Plan, it is useful to provide an overview of the Plan itself. The remainder of the chapter then looks at the vicissitudes of the RDC's existence between 1970 and 1975.

The Comprehensive Development Plan



The overall objective of Prince Edward Island's Comprehensive Development Plan was "to substantially increase the capability of people, businesses and other institutions of the Province to guide and take full advantage of opportunities provided by the rapidly changing social and economic environment of Canada and the world at large."⁶⁸

The Plan relied on a strategy designed to develop virtually all sectors of the Province's economy. Plan programming would, it was stated, bring about

full exploitation of the Island's large and potentially profitable resources for agriculture ... ; a considerable development of tourist facilities; better utilization of forest assets; rationalization of fisheries; extension of education programs and training for full development of the labour force potential; increased efficiency and some expansion in processing and manufacturing industry; investment in housing, health and welfare services and other infrastructure required for effective development.⁶⁹

A major element of the programming for the agricultural, forestry, and tourism sectors was based on land use adjustment. Various programs were designed to facilitate and encourage the reallocation of land to its most profitable and appropriate use. The agricultural development program included provisions for a reorganized and strengthened Provincial Department of Agriculture, more education and management training for farmers, assistance for farm enlargement through land consolidation, and aid in market and product development activities. The specific Plan objective for agriculture was to triple the sector's value-added over a fifteen-year period.

In tourism, programming was aimed at inducing private investment in much-needed facilities and accommodations. The Province would also implement

⁶⁸ *Development Plan for Prince Edward Island* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), p. 27. This document was published under the authority of the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

controls and regulations to prevent “unsightly” development and to avoid conflicts with agricultural and other developments.⁷⁰

In the fishery, the Plan sought to raise incomes and improve the net value of production of fishermen and fish-processing workers. Problems to be addressed included a limited resource base, an excessive number of small ports, and the over-exploitation of certain species. Plan programs provided for expanded landing, bait storage, and holding facilities at designated ports. Training was to be offered in the areas of management practices and fish-handling techniques. In addition, capital expenditures were planned to enhance the capability of the Island’s fish processing plants.

According to the Plan’s architects, social development was equally as important as economic development. There was to be a major restructuring of the Provincial educational system. Five consolidated school districts were to replace the existing 371 boards of trustees. The Province’s two universities, St. Dunstan’s and Prince of Wales, would be combined into one institution, and there was to be established a college of applied arts and technology (Holland College). Additional initiatives would be implemented in the area of adult education and vocational training.

Based on projections, it was estimated that at least 10,000 units of new housing would be required over the fifteen-year period covered by the Plan. The Housing and Urban Services and Developments program was designed to ensure that those needs would be met. In the area of health and welfare services, the goal of the Plan was to establish a level of care and service in the Province which would be equivalent to that offered elsewhere in Canada.

Developments generated by these basic Plan programs necessitated the provision of certain supporting and commercial services. Accordingly, the Plan included programs to improve transportation, power, industrial waste disposal, and water supply.

In terms of industrial growth, the Plan aimed to increase the net value of production in manufacturing and processing from the pre-Plan level of \$12 million to \$66 million by 1983, and employment from 3,300 to 8,300.⁷¹ Specific projects designed to achieve these goals included an industrial financing program; technical, engineering, and management assistance; and the development of an industrial park. Additional programs provided short-term credit to resource industries and sought to enhance product and market development.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

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Overall responsibility for Plan management and implementation lay with the Province's Department of Development. Since the Plan was a federal-provincial undertaking, with the Government of Canada contributing \$225 million of the total expenditures, a Joint Advisory Board was established to coordinate the formulation and control of the various programs and projects.

Given the sweeping changes that the Development Plan promised to effect, it was deemed essential that there be "widespread" public participation during the implementation phase.⁷² It was this function that the RDC had agreed to perform. The next section reviews the activities undertaken by the Council in carrying out the Plan's program of public participation and involvement.

The Plan and the RDC



The RDC was responsible for four Plan projects: Voluntary Institute Support Services, Community Development and Program Planning with the Lennox Island Indian Band, Community Resource Development, and Counselling. The first project simply provided the mechanism for the Council's administration and financing. The Lennox Island program was designed to assist the Indian Band to plan programs related to its specific needs. This project remained under the RDC's direction for only the 1970–1971 budget year. Community Resource Development and Counselling were the projects that became the main focus of the Council's activities between 1970 and 1975.

The purpose of the Community Resource Development program was

to aid individuals, groups of individuals and organizations in making adjustments towards their social and economic improvement. This will involve evaluating needs and potentials, both in the social and economic sectors, and bringing to bear all available resources to service those needs.⁷³

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁷³ Document entitled "Project Summary: Community Resource Development and Counselling Project," Department of Development files (PARO, RG 33), p. 1.

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These activities were to be carried out by community development workers. Their primary responsibility was “in motivating the members of the local communities to undertake, to identify and to evaluate their needs and assist the people in developing alternative lines of action to resolve situations to their long term benefit.”⁷⁴

The stated objective of the Counselling program was

to make the population in general aware of the opportunities and provisions of the Comprehensive Development Plan. It is also specifically aimed at that portion of the population who would not hear about or understand the opportunities being provided by the Plan. The project is also intended to provide much of the feedback required to evaluate the impact of the Comprehensive Development Plan.⁷⁵

The activities associated with the Counselling program were the responsibility of a staff of professional counsellors.

The definitions of the programs, and the duties of those implementing them, were sufficiently vague to be open to interpretation. This situation soon led to confusion and conflicts within the RDC and, eventually, between the Council and the Provincial Government. The public participation function itself was never clearly defined. On this point, Andrew Wells, former Principal Secretary to Premier Campbell, has commented, “I don’t think anyone from the Premier on down really knew what [public participation] should consist of and how to go about doing it.”⁷⁶ The accuracy of Wells’ comment is reflected in remarks made by Campbell at an RDC meeting held just prior to the Council’s implementation of its Plan projects. The Premier is reported to have said, “The role of the RDC is not spelled out for the next 15 years and although the need is clear now for community development, counselling, etc., needs will change and the RDC will have to grow with the job.”⁷⁷

Given its vague role, it is not surprising that the RDC got off to a slow start in 1970. In his report to the Council’s 1970 Annual Meeting, then RDC President Ken MacLean commented, “In referring to our activities of the past year I would be something less than honest if I did not describe it as a year of frustration.” MacLean stated that the Council’s acceptance of a role in the Development Plan created “a transition period and a change of activity emphasis, which we hope is only temporary.”

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁷⁶ Gordon Cobb interview with Andrew Wells, October 1, 1987.

⁷⁷ As recorded in the Minutes of a Meeting of the RDC Central Committee, December 18, 1969.

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Administrative matters, including the hiring of staff and finding office space, took up so much of the Board's time that the President observed that the Council's "established and successful programs suffered."

Gradually, however, the RDC attended to the tasks which would allow it to administer the Plan programs. Beginning in late 1969 and through 1970, the Council made a number of staff appointments. Two persons who figured prominently in events of the following year were Angus MacIntyre, hired as Director of Community Resource Development, and Tom O'Brien, Director of Counselling. The individuals hired as the field staff for the respective programs formed a truly impressive group. Typically, a counsellor or community development worker was in his or her mid-twenties or early thirties, had university education, was articulate, and had experience in the community development or counselling fields. The successes that the RDC experienced during its Development Plan years were directly attributable to the Council's bright young staff. A number of these persons have since gone on to distinguish themselves in the public service and private endeavours, and remain leaders in their communities.

During the period of 1970–1975, the RDC's field staff was involved in such a large number of activities that it would be impossible to review them all here. Space does not even allow the presentation of a complete summary of the many and varied issues and projects with which the Council became involved. At the same time, an attempt must be made to reveal the nature of the RDC's undertakings during this period; therefore, drawing primarily on the Council's annual reports and publications, examples of RDC activities are presented. In several instances, particular matters are discussed in detail to highlight their role in the Council's development and evolution.

In his report covering the 1970–1971 fiscal year, Managing Director Urbain LeBlanc noted that the community development workers had been active in a number of "areas of concern."⁷⁸ Among the problems that the workers had encountered during their first year in the field were: low returns to Irish moss fishermen, the inability of oyster fishermen to obtain leases for their fishing grounds, general concerns over the reorganization of the Province's educational system, tenant/landlord disputes, inefficient administration of welfare programs, and a feeling of hopelessness and uselessness among Island youth.⁷⁹

The community development workers perceived their role to be one in which they established a rapport with individuals, families, and groups in the community. The

⁷⁸ Information gleaned from RDC files shows that the Council's total expenditures for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1971, were close to \$300,000. At that point, the Council employed the equivalent of perhaps fifteen full-time workers.

⁷⁹ RDC Annual Report, "Managing Director's Report," p. 6. (April 24, 1971).

professionals would then assist in identifying and prioritizing problems, but would leave the choice of a specific solution to members of the community. Once a solution was identified, the worker would assist those involved in obtaining the required government or private resources to implement the desired course of action. The nondirective approach favoured by the community development workers assumed that, at some point, a community would develop its own problem-solving expertise. The approach was such that, at least in the short-term, results were difficult to discern. This observation is not meant to be a criticism of the Community Development program; in fact, its Director, Angus MacIntyre, made the same point. He commented that his program sought to “develop people for the ‘better,’” a qualitative goal that eluded easy measurement.⁸⁰

The approach taken by the counselling staff was different from that of the community development workers. The counsellors were more directive in their approach, becoming active in organizing communities and providing individuals with leadership training. Core counsellors, through contact with community groups and organizations, identified the problems that needed to be addressed. Local counsellors were then recruited to work with the community to develop solutions to particular problems. In 1970, for example, counsellors were assigned to work with special interest groups, including dairy farmers, fishermen’s associations, and senior citizens.⁸¹

A major component of the counselling program was the provision of information on the Development Plan and other government programs, and the promotion of local participation in those programs. The list of the counsellors’ activities for 1970–1971 included numerous information sessions with groups across the Province. Another major activity was the homemaking program, which provided socialization and education activities for mothers of low-income families. Counsellors also worked with a number of voluntary organizations including the Women’s Institute, the Craftsmen’s Council, the Provincial Home and School Association, and various youth clubs. The intent of the counsellors’ involvement was to stimulate these groups to become more active in community development efforts. Overall, the directive approach was more goal-oriented, and its impact more quantifiable in the short-term, than were nondirective methods.

The contrasting philosophies of the Community Development and Counselling programs were a direct reflection of the beliefs held by the respective program directors. The RDC Board, preoccupied with (and perhaps overwhelmed by) its new administrative responsibilities, had not thought out its preferred approach to

⁸⁰ Angus MacIntyre, “Report on the Community Development Program of the Rural Development Council of Prince Edward Island,” unpublished report from RDC files, January 11, 1971, p. 8.

⁸¹ RDC Annual Report, pp. 8–10 (April 24, 1971).

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implementing the Plan projects. There was pressure to put staff in the field, and that is what the RDC had done.

By mid-1971, the philosophical differences of the two program directors contributed to a major conflict within the RDC. As early as December of 1970, officials from the Provincial Department of Development and from the Federal Department of Regional Economic Expansion (DREE) had begun to ask the RDC to show evidence that it was fulfilling the terms of its Plan contract. Specifically, the officials wanted to know just what the community development workers were doing.⁸² As already commented upon, the Community Development Program's short-term results were difficult to measure. Adding to this problem was the emergence of the Program's Director, Angus MacIntyre, as somewhat of a maverick. He refused, according to LeBlanc, to justify his program to anyone.⁸³ With pressure being exerted from within government, the RDC Board, and the Counselling Program, LeBlanc asked for MacIntyre's resignation, effective June 30, 1971.

In a display of loyalty, MacIntyre's entire staff of five community development workers resigned from their positions. To add further to the turmoil, Counselling Director Tom O'Brien tendered his resignation that same summer. His departure was unrelated to the earlier resignations, but it had the effect of essentially halting the RDC staff's remaining momentum.⁸⁴ LeBlanc has recently commented that, after the events of 1971, it took him almost three years to rebuild his staff.⁸⁵

Given the circumstances involving its staff, the RDC Board was forced to assess its own future. Since accepting its government contract, the Board had experienced difficulty in fulfilling all of its functions. At an April 1971 meeting of the RDC Executive, Father Allan MacDonald remarked that the demands on the Board were "too great." In the wake of the resignations, one Board member felt that the Council was incapable of meeting its Development Plan commitments and achieving its original objectives as well. At a meeting of the Board in August, Alfred Morrison introduced the following motion:

Be it resolved that WHEREAS the Board of Directors of RDC believes it cannot adequately carry out the responsibilities incorporated in its contract with the government, that is, to perform counselling and community development functions and

⁸² J.D. McNiven, "Evaluation of the Public Participation Programme Embodied in the Prince Edward Island Development Plan," p. 102.

⁸³ O'Grady/Crossley interview with Urbain LeBlanc, 1990.

⁸⁴ O'Brien left the RDC to accept an assignment with the World Council of Credit Unions.

⁸⁵ O'Grady/Crossley interview with Urbain LeBlanc, 1990.

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WHEREAS the Board has found that the contractual arrangements have impeded its ability to act as public forum

THEREFORE, the Board will terminate its contract with the government at the earliest date commensurate with the terms of the said contract.⁸⁶

Morrison's motion was put to a vote, but was defeated, the mover being the only Board member to register an "aye."

Although wounded by all that had occurred, the RDC was not ready to admit defeat. By the end of the summer of 1971, the Board of Directors had prepared a policy statement on reorganization, which included a reexamination of the RDC's community development philosophy. It has been suggested that, if the RDC had taken the time to define its philosophy and methodology prior to hiring a staff, the 1971 crisis could have been avoided.⁸⁷

Actually, even before the internal tensions reached their climax, the RDC Board and staff had begun to evaluate the Council's purpose and means. In May of 1971, at a three-day seminar involving employees and Board members, twenty major concerns were identified. These matters included: insufficient direction from the Board, a lack of understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of employees and volunteers within the organization, intolerable staff relations, inadequate input from the general membership, the failure of Community Schools to function in concert with other programming, and the RDC's poor public image. In addition, the Board itself admitted that it required a better understanding of the concept of community development.⁸⁸

The August 1971 policy statement began with an admission by the RDC Board that it had failed to satisfy the terms of its contract with the Government.⁸⁹ Changes would be necessary, the document stated, if the Council were to become more effective in the future. In designing its revised plan of action, the Board drew on two background papers, "The Meaning of Community" by Father Allan MacDonald and "The Process of Community Development" by Harry O'Connell.

⁸⁶ Minutes of a Meeting of the RDC Board of Directors, August 17, 1971.

⁸⁷ Gordon Cobb, "Paradox in Planning," p. 38; J.D. McNiven, "Evaluation of the Public Participation Programme Embodied in the Prince Edward Island Development Plan," p. 100.

⁸⁸ Information gleaned from materials in RDC files related to the seminar held at Gregor's Hotel, May 1971.

⁸⁹ "Policy Statement On The Re-Organization of the Rural Development Council," unpublished report retrieved from RDC files, p. 2 (August 1971).

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MacDonald, who, in 1966 had provided the RDC with its initial statement of philosophy, felt that it was time for the organization to rethink its views on community and community development.⁹⁰ The communities of the 1970s differed markedly from those of a decade earlier, he stated. Developments in transportation and communication had resulted in larger communities and ones which were more diverse as well. MacDonald defined the modern community as “a distinct unity of people who are united by their possession of some common bond (likely locality), who share common values, common norms, a distinctive social structure, and who interact and relate to each other in a distinctive way.”⁹¹ Based on this definition, MacDonald estimated that there were (in 1971) thirty or thirty-five “communities” in rural Prince Edward Island.

Defining the process by which these communities should be developed was left up to O’Connell, who, in 1971, was a graduate student in sociology at Iowa State University. He had previously been a research analyst with the Provincial Department of Development and would later, in the spring of 1972, join the RDC staff. O’Connell defined community development as “a process of deciding objectives, making choices concerning methods, and involving people in carrying out those objectives.”⁹² He outlined a series of steps that could be used for the planning and implementation of community development projects. It is not possible to discuss his model fully here, but, essentially, it involved defining the community, identifying its needs and objectives, deciding upon the means to be used for development, implementing the plan, and evaluating the results.⁹³

Based on the papers by MacDonald and O’Connell, the RDC Board proposed to reorganize its programming. There was to be renewed emphasis on promoting the understanding and evaluation of government programs, the counselling and community development projects were to be more closely integrated, and the Council’s public forum function was to be expanded. Additional strategies included the long-term goal of having a professional development worker in each of the Province’s “communities,”⁹⁴ increasing the involvement of the Board in policy formulation, and expanding the role of Community Schools in the community development process.

⁹⁰ MacDonald’s 1966 discussion paper was entitled “The Plan for Community Development.”

⁹¹ Allan MacDonald, “The Meaning of Community,” unpublished discussion paper, 1971, pp. 10–11.

⁹² Harry O’Connell, “The Process of Community Development,” unpublished discussion paper, 1971, p. 1.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 2–6.

⁹⁴ For this purpose, the accepted definition of “community” was the one expressed by Allan MacDonald in “The Meaning of Community.”

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The RDC management and Board acted immediately on at least some of its proposed administrative and organizational changes. The Counselling and Community Development programs were merged and placed under a Director of Field Services. In September of 1971, Leonard Bradley was hired to fill that position. An Islander by birth and a graduate of St. Dunstan's University, Bradley had been working in Ottawa with the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. He favoured the directive approach to community development, which had emerged as the most popular one with the RDC and the Province. Bradley quickly implemented a more structured reporting system for his field staff, in an attempt to produce a better assessment of the effectiveness of the Council's programming.

The RDC's year-end report for 1971 alluded to the "mild turmoil" of that year, but did not belabour the point. Instead, the report focused on the Council's many activities. Community Schools continued to operate successfully. It was reported that there was increased interest in classes dealing with subjects related to community development; at the same time, it was observed that many course offerings continued to be "frivolous," yet popular.⁹⁵

RDC field staff had also been active in working with fishermen's associations and individual fishermen. The report stated that workers had assisted in identifying the major problems facing the fishing industry. Dozens of meetings, involving hundreds of fishermen, had been staged across the Province. Similar field work had been done in agriculture, the objective being "to create an awareness of the programs and services available through the Comprehensive Development Plan and to assist farmers to objectively identify their problems and collectively find solutions to the same."⁹⁶ Specific agriculture-related projects in which RDC staff were involved included the formation of marketing boards for hog producers and vegetable growers, and the organization of planning and information sessions on a producer-controlled marketing program for potato farmers.

In the fall of 1971, the RDC had also undertaken a housing project aimed at low income and welfare families. The idea was to have these families form cooperative housing groups for the purpose of erecting their own homes. Prefabricated bungalows were to be constructed at a total cost of \$8,500 each, with approximately half of that amount being covered by a Provincial grant. One objective of the program was to foster a "community relationship" among the participants: "They will be a group of

⁹⁵ "Activity Report, January 1–November 30, 1971, Rural Development Council of Prince Edward Island," p. 1.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

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people who will not only share a common locality, but they have co-operated to solve a common problem and, in the process, fulfilled a dream.”⁹⁷

Another project initiated in 1971 was the Head Start Program. It provided a summertime, play-centred learning program for culturally and economically disadvantaged preschoolers. The objective was to assist these children in adjusting to the social situation that they would encounter upon entering school. The same program also provided recreational supervision for children in the elementary grades, established recreational projects for teens, and sought to increase community participation among adults.

One RDC field worker, Stephen Connolly, Sr., was specifically responsible for assisting senior citizens in organizing social clubs. By late 1971, ten such clubs, representing 400 members, had been established. These clubs had also formed a Provincial Federation and had national affiliation as well. The RDC had also set up an Alcohol Information Centre, which provided information on alcoholism and referred individuals to appropriate treatment programs.

Many of the projects and issues with which the RDC became involved were ongoing, so that the breadth of the Council’s activities grew each year. In 1972, field staff continued working with commodity boards and rendered organizational assistance to industrial milk producers. RDC efforts in the fisheries sector assisted in the formation of the Acadian Fishermen’s Association. Workers were also involved in the consolidation of the East Prince and West Prince Fishermen’s Associations and in the establishment of a Marine Plant Co-operative in Tignish.⁹⁸

Ten additional senior citizens clubs were formed in 1972, and the Provincial Federation hosted the National Convention of Senior Citizens and Pensioners. The RDC’s Activity Report for that year stated: “The efforts in organizing Senior Citizens must not be understated. Such activities are important since our society tends to segregate elderly persons and, in many cases, to deprive them of their ability to have a say in the events which affect their lives.”

The Home Helper Program, a joint effort of the RDC and several Provincial Government departments, also expanded in 1972. The program was designed to transmit homemaking skills, such as money management, child care, and nutrition, to low income householders. The participating families were also counselled with regard to government and community services. The number of families involved in the program increased from sixty in 1971 to over eighty in 1972.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁹⁸ “Brief Summary of RDC Activities — 1972,” unpublished report from RDC files, p. 2.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

Towards the end of 1972, the RDC had begun developing the idea of Area Planning Councils. The concept involved setting up a planning and development council in each of the Province's thirty or so "communities." As it was envisioned by the RDC, the councils would be "responsible for every major sector of activity in that community, from industrial development through education, health, social services, finance, planning and the like." The councils would also serve as a forum for the "discussion of issues, problems and opportunities facing the community; the planning of different solutions to those problems; and the choosing of the most appropriate alternative."¹⁰⁰ The RDC field workers' role included planning community meetings, which, it was hoped, would result in the formation of the desired council. Long-term plans had a full-time, professional planner working with each council, coordinating technical assistance from various government departments and agencies and encouraging continued community involvement in the process. The RDC continued to champion the idea of Area Planning Councils over the next three years (until 1975).

By 1973, the RDC had twenty-one full-time employees and a yearly budget of nearly \$350,000.¹⁰¹ The year's activity report revealed the usual broad range of projects involving RDC field workers. One issue in particular emerged as the highlight of the year and, by at least one account, of the Council's entire existence. That issue was the proposed establishment of a national park in eastern Kings County.

The possibility of locating a national park in the Eastern Kings area of Prince Edward Island had first been raised in a federal-provincial shoreline study conducted in 1964. The area identified as suitable for such a designation was then made up of a number of small communities with a combined population of approximately 1,000 persons.¹⁰² Agriculture, most notably potato production, and fishing, including the gathering of Irish moss, were the leading sources of employment and income. A major inshore fishing port, the only port in the area, was located at North Lake. It was the site of a fish processing operation and a drying plant for Irish moss. North Lake was known as the "Tuna Capital of the World," in reference to its renowned sports fishing. Except for that attraction, tourism in Eastern Kings was not highly developed at the time of the national park proposal. The tourist industry has always been seen to have

¹⁰⁰ "Community Involvement in Area Planning," p. 2. This unpublished document is an appendix to the previously cited 1972 RDC Activity Report.

¹⁰¹ Unpublished report retrieved from RDC files: "Summary of Activities, 1973," p. 1.

¹⁰² The events and circumstances surrounding the East Point Park proposal are considered in some detail in a case study prepared by J. D. McNiven as part of his evaluation of the Development Plan's public participation program (cited in full earlier in this report). See especially, McNiven's Appendix II, "A Case Study: Public Participation on the East Point Park Proposal," pp. 198-224.

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potential in the area, however, given the scenic landscape, extensive sand dune formations, and beautiful beaches.

Three years after the initial shoreline study, the East Point Park project received the approval of the Federal Cabinet. It was not until the fall of 1969, however, that Federal and Provincial representatives met in Charlottetown to discuss the proposal, and a major conflict arose between the two levels of government. The Province wanted a multiple-use park, which would allow area residents to carry on their traditional occupations within park boundaries. In contrast, the Federal position was that park lands would have to be developed as a wilderness area, devoid of any of the activities that the Province wished to see maintained.¹⁰³

Rumours concerning the East Point Park had been circulating for some time before the proposal was finally made public in *The Guardian* on March 12, 1970. The headline read, "Second National Park To Be Established Here."¹⁰⁴ Still unsettled at the time of the announcement, however, was the future use of properties within park boundaries and, indeed, the future of East Point residents themselves. While Provincial Tourism Minister Gilbert Clements was stating that park lands would continue to be farmed and Irish moss would still be gathered on park beaches, personnel within the Department of Development were preparing proposals for the removal of the land from cultivation and the relocation of area residents.¹⁰⁵

The Department's planners had begun with the premise that those persons to be relocated were entitled to the same standard of living after the move as they had enjoyed beforehand. As it has since been pointed out, however, the planners had overlooked the most important question: "Do the people in the area want to be relocated?"¹⁰⁶ A socioeconomic survey of Eastern Kings had revealed that the majority of farmers in the area did not want to sell their farms or be retrained for other employment.¹⁰⁷

As opposition to the park idea began to surface in Eastern Kings, the planners realized the need for a neutral agent to establish a rapport with area residents.¹⁰⁸ It was at about this time, in the summer and fall of 1970, that the RDC first became involved in the issue. The Council's field staff started contacting people in the affected area, and

¹⁰³ J. D. McNiven, "A Case Study: Public Participation on the East Point Park Proposal," p. 200.

¹⁰⁴ *The Guardian*, March 12, 1970, p. 1, as quoted in McNiven, p. 201.

¹⁰⁵ J. D. McNiven, "A Case Study: Public Participation on the East Point Park Proposal," p. 200. As supporting evidence, McNiven cites internal Department of Development memoranda.

¹⁰⁶ J. D. McNiven, "A Case Study: Public Participation on the East Point Park Proposal," p. 204.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ J. D. McNiven, "A Case Study: Public Participation on the East Point Park Proposal," pp. 204–205. As supporting evidence, McNiven cites internal Department of Development memoranda.

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Urbain LeBlanc began meeting regularly with Development personnel to discuss the park proposal. Meanwhile, negotiations were continuing between the Federal and Provincial governments over the question of whether the park was to be multiple-use or a wilderness area. The Federal Government gradually yielded, agreeing to the former designation.

It was March of 1973 before the Province finally unveiled the formal proposal for the East Point Park. There was provision for farming, fishing, Irish moss gathering, and forestry activity within park lands. In addition, those persons owning property within the park's boundaries were presented with a number of alternatives, ranging from the outright sale of their land to various leasing arrangements.¹⁰⁹ The proposal also provided for a public participation process, which was to be the responsibility of the RDC. As a facilitator of the involvement process, the RDC had agreed:

1. To provide information on the land acquisition options available to property owners, including the long term implications for area land use.
2. To ensure that individual rights of Park residents will be protected over the longer term.
3. To provide documented evidence to government of the opinions and attitudes held by residents regarding the establishment of the Park, and the various land acquisition options which are available.¹¹⁰

Between March and June of 1973, John Cain, the RDC's field worker in Eastern Kings, contacted all property owners affected by the park proposal, providing them with information and recording their concerns. Residents believed that "even if they said 'no,' the park would still be placed in the area."¹¹¹ They were also unconvinced of the park's economic benefits and concerned about their community's future. In particular, the local population wanted more information regarding possible restrictions on farming, building, and Irish moss gathering within the park.

Early in the involvement process, Cain and the RDC were accused of attempting "to sell" the park proposal. According to J. D. McNiven, this "idea was dispelled by Mr.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 210-211. McNiven cites "An Approach to Establishing a Park at East Point," Department of Development, November 30, 1972, p. 3; and "Status Report on the East Point National Park Proposal," tabled in the Legislative Assembly of P.E.I., March 16, 1973, pp. 1-2.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 213. McNiven is citing a Memorandum from Hon. Bruce Stewart to the Provincial Cabinet on the subject of the East Point Park, March 1973.

¹¹¹ J. D. McNiven, "A Case Study: Public Participation on the East Point Park Proposal," p. 213.

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Cain who pointed out he was there only to provide information, so when discussions were held with government, area residents would understand what they stood to lose and gain from the park.”¹¹²

In late June, Cain organized three public meetings in the Eastern Kings communities of Kingsboro, South Lake, and Fairfield. The format for the meetings had Cain introduce various Federal and Provincial officials, who were there to answer questions about the proposal. The introductions were followed by a slide presentation by Premier Campbell, designed to show what could happen to the East Point area if it were left to private development. It has been commented that the slides “vividly illustrated the destruction of the natural landscape, and the results of overuse, crowding, poor zoning and the lack of planning.”¹¹³

By the time the third public meeting was held, strong objections were being voiced to the park proposal. Some local residents did not put much faith in the lease agreements being proposed by the Government. Zoning regulations, which restricted building in the park, also came under attack. There were concerns, as well, that the social impact of the project had not been adequately studied; and some objectors “felt that proposals for the park should be generated from the community and community decisions should be the basis for any park proposal.”¹¹⁴

Concluding that there was lack of support for the park, Premier Campbell “tore up a copy of the agreement in front of the crowd, and stated that any further action on the matter would have to be initiated by the people in the area.”¹¹⁵ In recalling this event, and the involvement of the RDC and the local community in the process that led up to it, Father Allan MacDonald has recently remarked: “This was community development at its best.”¹¹⁶

The East Point Park proposal was not the only high-profile, controversial issue with which the RDC became involved in 1973. Gordon Cobb has pointed to the Council’s role in the contentious matter of school consolidation as evidence that the RDC had begun to develop a “tendency to serve as an ‘advocate’ on specific issues.”¹¹⁷ In School Unit II, parents, through their Home and School Associations, had begun to express reservations concerning the Development Plan’s school consolidation process. Their concerns, according to Cobb, included a lack of parental input in the

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 214.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ O’Grady/Crossley interview with Father Allan MacDonald, 1990.

¹¹⁷ Gordon Cobb, “Paradox in Planning,” p. 67.

process, the bureaucratization of the Province's educational system, and the "monotonously long bus rides experienced by students in their daily transport to the new consolidated schools."¹¹⁸ The RDC had initially assisted with the organization of the Home and School Associations, and, when the controversy arose in Unit II, the Council's field staff helped to stage public meetings.

Cobb has related the story of one RDC field worker who, in the midst of the school consolidation controversy, "petitioned Premier Campbell stating that 'he [the RDC field worker] represented the people of Unit II.'" An irked Premier reportedly responded, "When were you elected?" Cobb's research indicated that this event signalled "a significant turning point in Campbell's acceptance of the RDC."¹¹⁹

While 1973 was generally viewed as a successful year for the RDC staff, old concerns were once more being raised by the Board of Directors. At a meeting of the Board held in March of that year, one member expressed her concern that the Directors were "not having much input in matters of the Council."¹²⁰ The same issue was raised at the Council's 1973 annual meeting, from which the minutes stated: "More power [should] be vested in Board of Directors; should not be a rubber stamp for approving work done by the staff." And, later in the year, minutes of another Board meeting recorded: "There are so many programs and activities going on at the community level that it is very difficult for the Board members to keep abreast of what is actually going on."¹²¹ Other concerns revisited by the Board during the year included the Council's continued failure to broaden its membership, and the importance of the RDC "remaining unsullied while being funded by Government."¹²²

In 1974, RDC field workers continued their activities in the following areas: organizing senior citizen clubs; administering the alcohol information program and Community Schools; establishing community councils; and lending administrative and organizational assistance in housing, agriculture, and fisheries. In his report to the 1974 annual meeting, Managing Director LeBlanc noted that his fourteen community development field workers were servicing twenty-eight of the Province's thirty-five "communities." As had been true in the previous year, there had been instances in 1974 when the RDC's activities had become front-page news. One such case had proved to be particularly bizarre.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

¹²⁰ Minutes of a Meeting of the RDC Board of Directors, March 12, 1973.

¹²¹ Minutes of a Meeting of the RDC Board of Directors, May 8, 1973.

¹²² Minutes of a Meeting of the RDC Board of Directors, July 10, 1973.

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In mid-February of that year, it was revealed that the RDC had been investigating the citizenship status of Dr. John Rusk, a Summerside optometrist and a member of the Unit II School Board. Canadian citizenship is a prerequisite for School Board members, and the RDC's Managing Director had taken it upon himself to investigate rumours that Rusk, who had been born in Scotland, did not meet the requirement. In a story carried in *The Journal-Pioneer*, Rusk charged the RDC with using a "C.I.A. approach" in investigating his background. He accused Urbain LeBlanc of leading the "operation" and of making phone calls to some of Rusk's professional colleagues in the course of the investigation.¹²³

Upon learning of the RDC's actions, the Unit II School Board immediately passed a resolution "protesting the alleged involvement of a publicly funded body in such an investigation."¹²⁴ The School Board's Chairman also wrote to the RDC President, Jean Mutch, stating that the "clandestine" investigation of Rusk was not "in keeping with the stated aims of the RDC and, instead of leading to cooperation with established institutions, can only lead to division and possibly confrontation."¹²⁵

An unapologetic LeBlanc was quick to respond to the criticism being levelled against himself and the RDC. In a press release, he expressed resentment over Rusk's charges of a C.I.A.-type investigation, and suggested that the School Board member had been "reading too much about the Watergate tapes." At the same time, LeBlanc intimated that the whole affair did have a counterespionage flavour: "I have not yet obtained a satisfactory answer as to the date Dr. Rusk was granted Canadian citizenship. For some reason, the answer seems to be surrounded by a wall of secrecy and I would be interested in learning who erected that wall." LeBlanc went on to declare that he considered it his "right" to determine if "any person placed in a position of governmental trust is also a Canadian citizen."¹²⁶ Pushing this point even further, LeBlanc stated: "If Dr. Rusk is as proud of his Canadian citizenship as I think he should be, then he should welcome such questions being resolved before the public."¹²⁷

If LeBlanc's response only served to add to the ill feelings between the parties involved, then so, too, did statements made by RDC field worker Peter Prebble. In an

¹²³ Rusk made the accusation in a story carried in *The Journal-Pioneer*, February 13, 1974, p. 1. In correspondence recovered from RDC files, LeBlanc did privately admit to contacting "an officer of [Rusk's] professional association," an action which he referred to as a "possible error" (letter from Urbain LeBlanc to Dr. Jean MacKay, February 28, 1974).

¹²⁴ As reported in *The Guardian*, February 14, 1974, p. 1.

¹²⁵ Letter recovered from RDC files from Edwin K. Lewis, Chairman, Unit II School Board, to Jean Mutch, February 14, 1974.

¹²⁶ As reported in *The Journal-Pioneer*, February 15, 1974, p. 3.

¹²⁷ As reported in *The Guardian*, February 15, 1974, p. 1.

interview carried on the local CBC affiliate's news program, "Compass," Prebble implied that the rumours concerning Rusk emanated from a source close to the Unit II Board. This revelation prompted another letter from School Board Chairman Edwin Lewis to the RDC President. Lewis demanded that Prebble issue a retraction of his statements, which the School Board considered to be "libelous and defamatory."¹²⁸

In her written response to Lewis, Mutch acknowledged that Prebble had stated: "One of the sources of the rumour is very close to the School Board, and Board-based staff." At the same time, she accused Lewis of "over-reacting," but did promise that, if Prebble's claims proved to be unfounded, the field worker would issue a public apology and face "action" by the RDC Board.¹²⁹

The "mystery" surrounding Rusk's background was apparently solved within a day or two of the story being broken by local newspapers. In the course of my research, a handwritten note was discovered in the RDC files that read: "Call from Ottawa ..., Feb. 15, 1974, message to Peter Prebble that mix-up in Ottawa re. Rusk's status had been cleared up John Murray Rusk born in Scotland (1918) residing in Summerside — Canadian citizenship Jan. 11/71."

Prebble subsequently apologized to the Unit II School Board for his earlier statements, admitting that he could "procure no evidence" to support them.¹³⁰ The RDC Board, which had promised disciplinary action against Prebble, instead approved a resolution commending him and Urbain LeBlanc for "a job well done."¹³¹

The RDC's involvement in the Rusk affair, and the attitude displayed by both the staff and the Board during the controversy, are troubling. It is far from clear that the Council was operating within the terms of reference of its Development Plan contract. There was certainly a humorous side to the Rusk affair, however, and this was well-captured by cartoonist R.C. Tuck. The RDC sleuths, Urbain LeBlanc, in the trench coat, and Peter Prebble, with magnifying glass and hound dog, are depicted in the midst of their "investigation" of Rusk.¹³²

Soon after the Rusk matter was resolved, Urbain LeBlanc announced his resignation as RDC Managing Director. He publicly denied that his leaving had anything to do with the controversy.¹³³ LeBlanc returned to the position of Corporate

¹²⁸ Letter recovered from RDC files, from Edwin Lewis to Jean Mutch, February 21, 1974.

¹²⁹ Letter recovered from RDC files, from Jean Mutch to Edwin Lewis, February 25, 1974.

¹³⁰ As reported in *The Guardian*, March 8, 1974, p. 3.

¹³¹ Minutes of a Meeting of the RDC Board, March 19, 1974.

¹³² The cartoon appeared in *The Journal-Pioneer*, February 19, 1974, p. 2.

¹³³ As reported in *The Journal-Pioneer*, March 1, 1974, p. 1.



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Secretary for Public Relations with United Maritime Fishermen Limited, a job from which he had been granted an extended leave of absence in 1969.¹³⁴

Harry O'Connell took over as the new Managing Director on August 15, 1974. He had joined the RDC staff in 1972 and the following year had succeeded Leonard Bradley as Director of Field Services. Almost immediately after his taking over the senior management post, O'Connell and the RDC became involved in yet another high-profile issue, when they opposed a rate increase by the Island Telephone Company.

Acting on "a concern expressed by various rural communities in Prince Edward Island," the RDC intervened in a hearing before the Public Utilities Commission.¹³⁵ The telephone company had applied for a significant increase in its rates, arguing that additional revenue was required to cover increasing costs of operation and to help attract investment capital for modernization and expansion. In opposing the rate hike, the RDC was represented by lawyer Ronald Dalzell, who was assisted by two financial consultants from a Charlottetown accounting firm. Field workers Peter Prebble and John Cain also helped to prepare the RDC case.

The RDC submission argued that, even before the proposed increase, telephone rates in Prince Edward Island had been among the highest in Canada. It was claimed, as well, that telephone service in rural areas of the Province had been unsatisfactory and that a rate increase was unwarranted until that service could be improved. Furthermore, the RDC maintained that the profits being sought by Island Telephone were somewhat excessive, and the submission also called into question the company's accounting methods.¹³⁶

Although not all of these arguments were accepted by the Public Utilities Commission, the RDC was successful in having proposed rate increases for some customers either denied or reduced. The Council estimated that, as a direct result of its intervention in the rate hearing, telephone users on the Island realized a saving of \$246,000.¹³⁷

As well as making its own submission before the Public Utilities Commission, the RDC staff assisted other interveners in the preparation of their cases. Gordon Cobb has found that this activity was considered inappropriate by "a number of civil servants

¹³⁴ When he was interviewed in connection with the RDC history in the summer of 1990, LeBlanc was a Development Officer in the Member and Public Relations division of Co-op Atlantic in Moncton, New Brunswick.

¹³⁵ Presentation by the RDC made before the Public Utilities Commission of Prince Edward Island, "A Summary of the Case for Intervention by the Rural Development Council," September 1974, p. 1.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *RDC Communicator*, Vol. 6, No. 7 (January-February 1975), p. 2.

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and Members of the Legislature” — the RDC had, these people thought, assumed too much of an advocacy role.¹³⁸ So, although the RDC had helped to win a decision that must have been popular with the general public, Cobb has claimed that the Council’s actions had been costly in terms of popularity within “the offices of government.”¹³⁹

The RDC entered 1975 amid an air of optimism. At its annual meeting, held in April of that year, Harry O’Connell reviewed the events of the preceding twelve months and outlined future directions for the Council. He began by naming some of the organizations that the RDC had assisted in “numerous ways”: the General Merchants’ Association, the Federation of Mayors and Municipalities, the Prince Edward Island Tourist Association, the Tyne Valley Health Centre, and the Canadian Mental Health Association. O’Connell also noted the ongoing assistance provided to senior citizen clubs, housing groups, fishermen’s organizations, and various agricultural commodity boards and cooperatives.¹⁴⁰

For the future, O’Connell saw the need for the RDC to be more farsighted in its programming and activities. He acknowledged that efforts, to that point, had been directed toward addressing immediate economic problems. The Council should, he said, “make greater efforts at coordinating a long-term approach to the economic development of communities.”¹⁴¹ A second area that O’Connell identified as requiring redress was the Council’s public forum function. Providing a public forum for the discussion of community development concepts and issues had been one of the original objectives of the RDC. O’Connell felt that this function should be reemphasized as an “instrument” of public participation in the development and analysis of public policy.

With slight regret, O’Connell reported to the Annual Meeting that the Council’s government contract, which had expired on March 31, 1975, had not yet been renewed. He boldly stated, however, that negotiations for a new, five-year contract would be “successfully concluded very shortly.”¹⁴² Within weeks of expressing this opinion, O’Connell’s confidence, and that of the entire RDC, would be severely shaken.

Before pursuing this point in the next chapter, there is one other element of the RDC’s Development Plan years remaining to be discussed here, that being the evaluations of the Council conducted during this period. Considered first is an external evaluation of the RDC completed in May of 1974.

¹³⁸ “Paradox in Planning,” p. 72.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ “Managing Director’s Report,” in RDC Annual Report, April 26, 1975, p. 10.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

The Joint Advisory Board had commissioned a series of evaluation studies to assess the effectiveness of programming under the First Phase of the Comprehensive Development Plan. The first of these reports to be released was the evaluation of the public participation program. The study had been done by J. D. McNiven of the Institute of Public Affairs at Dalhousie University. His review covered four major projects funded under the Plan's public participation component. Only his evaluation and recommendations concerning the RDC are considered here.

McNiven briefly examined the early history of the RDC, and, in much greater depth, reviewed the Council's Plan-related activities up to and including the 1973–1974 fiscal year. While acknowledging the problems that the RDC had experienced in the early years of its Government contract, he observed that, by 1973, the Council had rebounded, involving itself in “almost all the significant community development activities on P.E.I. ...”¹⁴³ Although McNiven expressed general approval of the RDC's performance, his report included some specific criticisms. The organization's “weak spot,” he said, was its Board of Directors. He found the Board to be “generally weak in policy formation, planning and philosophical direction” and noted that the members had insufficient knowledge of public participation and community development concepts.¹⁴⁴ McNiven further faulted the Board for having failed to develop a viable and active general membership.

The evaluation noted the broad range of activities with which the RDC had been associated (a point also brought out in this chapter), but suggested that such an approach was “not conducive to the solving of long-term problems.” The RDC must, McNiven offered, develop an overall goal for its community development activities, rather than to continue “putting out fires.”¹⁴⁵

What McNiven described as “perhaps the RDC's greatest single failure” was its inability to initiate and maintain the public's interest in the concept of community development.¹⁴⁶ Specifically, he was referring to how the Council had failed to serve as a public forum. Related to this shortcoming was the failure of Community Schools to emerge as a vehicle for community development. McNiven observed that “in spite of the original intentions, the Community Schools have tended to become social groups

¹⁴³ “Evaluation of the Public Participation Programme Embodied in the Prince Edward Island Development Plan,” p. 104.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 145, 147.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

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and ... oriented more around ... skill instruction, rather than developing public-oriented concerns.”¹⁴⁷

In spite of these criticisms, McNiven did, as was already stated, find that the RDC had had a generally satisfactory performance during the First Phase of the Development Plan. It was his final recommendation that a new five-year contract, which would cover the Plan’s Second Phase, be negotiated between the Government and the RDC.¹⁴⁸

The validity of McNiven’s observations and criticisms have been supported by our own research. Perhaps an even better indication of their accuracy is that most, if not all, of his recommendations were incorporated into an RDC planning document presented to the Council’s 1975 annual meeting. The brief, entitled “The Role of the RDC During the Next Five Years,” addressed virtually all of the above-noted deficiencies in the Council’s programming and operation.

Over approximately the same period covered by McNiven’s evaluation (1970–1974), the RDC was also being assessed by an internal evaluator. One of the original concessions agreed to by the Council, in order to qualify for financial support from the EIC, had been the implementation of a form of systematic, internal evaluation. Rudi Dallenbach had been retained in December of 1969 to fulfil this requirement. It was his responsibility to evaluate the effectiveness of the Council’s programs, report to the Board of Directors on his findings, and make recommendations for improvements. The relationship between Dallenbach and the RDC Board proved to be anything but harmonious.

In one of his first reports, dated March 10, 1970, Dallenbach criticized the RDC for failing to broaden its membership and for not involving more people in Council decisions. He stated, for example, that “no seminars were held to inform the membership at large about the operation of the programs RDC was committed to undertake [as part of its contract with the Government].”¹⁴⁹ He also reminded the Board that “Community Schools were formed to be a tool to assist in the process of change.”¹⁵⁰ The RDC had not managed to integrate Community Schools with the rest of its programming, and, in fact, it never would.

In his next report, Dallenbach continued on the same themes. Community Schools, he said, had been successfully animating people. It was the responsibility of

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

¹⁴⁹ Rudi Dallenbach, “Report to the P.E.I. Rural Development Council,” March 10, 1970, p. 2. All of Dallenbach’s reports were found in the RDC files; hereafter they are cited as “Dallenbach Report,” followed by the date of the report.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

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the RDC “to create a platform where participants of Community Schools [could] engage in a debate of social issues pertaining to the Island.” There was no point in animating people, only to then leave them “on the halfway mark,” Dallenbach commented. If the RDC was not prepared to “follow through” on its responsibility, then it had “no business in the [community development] field,” he concluded.¹⁵¹

A year later, Dallenbach was still expressing the same concerns regarding the RDC’s failure to broaden its membership, to make better use of Community Schools, and to act as a public forum. He added additional criticisms to the list. He suggested that the Council was becoming too bureaucratized and, in the process, was being perceived by the public as a “Government Department”: “Office after office is filled with RDC workers with artificial walls between them,” he said. He also faulted the Council for failing to investigate funding sources, other than the Government. He warned that “too many Community Development programs have failed because of dependence on one source of funds only.”¹⁵²

Along with the RDC Board, management, and staff, Dallenbach suffered through the Council’s 1971 crisis and, in fact, he became one of its victims. In August of 1971, fed up with the internal bickering of the staff and with a Board that had been inattentive to his previous recommendations, Dallenbach wrote a scathing letter. In it, he suggested to the Board members that their organization had become undemocratic and was no longer concerned about the people for whom it was created to serve. He implied that the Council’s primary concern was with “maintaining itself.” Dallenbach concluded the letter by saying that the RDC membership should be asked if the responsibility for the Council’s Plan programs should be returned to the Government.¹⁵³

Included with his missive to the RDC Board was another letter to Urbain LeBlanc, indicating Dallenbach’s desire to “disassociate” himself from the RDC.¹⁵⁴ In a letter of response, LeBlanc informed Dallenbach that the RDC Board had already decided that his services as an evaluator of the Council “would no longer be required.”¹⁵⁵ Dallenbach, who had shown his penchant for having the last word when his employment with the Province was terminated in 1966, wrote back to LeBlanc:

¹⁵¹ Dallenbach Report, July 7, 1970, p. 2.

¹⁵² Dallenbach Report, April 8, 1971, pp. 3, 5.

¹⁵³ Rudi Dallenbach, “Letter of Concern to the P.E.I. Rural Development Council,” August 12, 1971. This letter was recovered from the RDC files.

¹⁵⁴ Letter from Rudi Dallenbach to Urbain LeBlanc, August 12, 1971. This letter was also recovered from the RDC files.

¹⁵⁵ Letter from Urbain LeBlanc to Rudi Dallenbach, September 21, 1971. Recovered from RDC files.

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There is only one thing I am really sorry about, and I would like you to give this some thought. Ever since my departure in 1966, RDC has refused to let people participate in the planning and decision-making process of its own program To me, Community Development is people participation above expediency. I know it is so much easier to make a decision without people. But the day will come when RDC will need people support and I still think it is the leadership's role to see that this support is forthcoming. Unfortunately, nobody is doing anything about it.¹⁵⁶

He concluded by saying, "Sorry, Urbain — I keep my mouth shut from now on. Please give my regards to your family and have a good winter." The letter was signed,

Sincerely,
Rudi Dallenbach
Must be nuts or something

Surprisingly, Dallenbach was later retained again by the RDC, albeit on a very short-term basis. In January of 1973, he submitted a report to the RDC Board, but it read like a copy of his earlier evaluations. He himself admitted: "I have read over my previous reports again and find it rather difficult to offer many new solutions."¹⁵⁷ This report was to be Dallenbach's last.

As the RDC's evaluator, Dallenbach was truly "a voice crying in the wilderness." A prominent member of the RDC Board during the Council's Development Plan years has recently commented that Dallenbach's reports were "generally, not taken very seriously."¹⁵⁸ He kept "harping on the same themes; I found his reports rather disappointing in that respect," the former Board member remarked.¹⁵⁹

As the next chapter shows, Dallenbach's "harping" proved to be quite prophetic. ¶

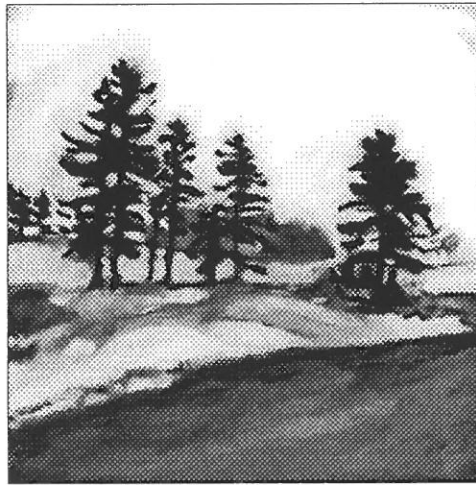
¹⁵⁶ Letter from Rudi Dallenbach to Urbain LeBlanc, October 11, 1971. Recovered from RDC files.

¹⁵⁷ Dallenbach Report, January 3, 1973, p. 1.

¹⁵⁸ O'Grady/Crossley interview with Ian MacDonald, 1990.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

III. CONTRACT TERMINATION



ON TUESDAY, MAY 13, 1975, RDC President Mrs. Jean Mutch met with Industry Minister John Maloney at his office in the Shaw Building in Charlottetown. The meeting had been arranged by Dr. Maloney's secretary the previous week, but Mrs. Mutch apparently had not been informed of the purpose behind the Minister's request to see her. At the meeting, Dr. Maloney informed a genuinely shocked Mrs. Mutch that the Provincial Government had decided not to renew the RDC's contract for Phase II of the Comprehensive Development Plan. The RDC was allowed six weeks to terminate its Development Plan-related activities.

This chapter examines the events and circumstances leading up to and immediately following the Government's decision regarding the RDC's funding. The discussion begins by considering the reaction to the decision. Several explanations of the rationale for the apparent sudden change in government policy are then considered.

Reaction to the Contract Termination



The reaction to the Government's announcement that the RDC's contract would be allowed to expire on June 30, 1975, was immediate, but varied, depending upon the source of the response. To be reviewed are the reactions by Provincial and Federal politicians, by the RDC itself, by the local media, and by the Island public.

¶ Reaction at the Political Level

The Provincial Legislature was in session when Dr. Maloney informed the RDC that the organization would no longer have a publicly funded role in the Development Plan. The official announcement of the Government's intentions was made in the Legislature on May 15, in response to Opposition questions directed to Premier Alex Campbell and Maloney. The Industry Minister informed the Legislature that the Government did not intend to renew its contract with the RDC. He stated that the Council was viewed as having "finished a role which it had done very well."¹⁶⁰ When asked how the Government intended to facilitate public participation in Phase II of the Development Plan, Maloney responded that the activities previously carried out by the RDC could be adequately handled by existing Provincial Government departments and such organizations as community improvement committees and commodity boards. Both Maloney and Premier Campbell reminded the Opposition that the RDC was an independent organization that had existed prior to its involvement in the Development

¹⁶⁰ John Maloney in transcript of taped Proceedings of the Second Session of the Fifty-Third General Assembly of Prince Edward Island, May 15, 1975.

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Plan. The Premier expressed the opinion that the future of the RDC would ultimately be determined by its Board of Directors, not by the Government.¹⁶¹

Only one Liberal, Robert Campbell, who represented the District of First Prince, queried the Government on its decision. Campbell, popularly known as “the Great West Wind,” a reference to his outspoken nature and the fact that he represented western Prince County in the Legislature, was concerned about the fate of the twenty-one RDC employees who stood to lose their jobs. In a question directed to the Industry Minister, Campbell asked if the Government had specific plans to hire any of those displaced employees.¹⁶² Maloney replied that former RDC workers would be “eligible” for employment with the Provincial Government, if there was a demand for their services.

Opposition MLAs raised the RDC issue again, later in the legislative session. On May 27, during consideration of budget estimates for the Department of Development, the Opposition introduced a motion calling for an increased budget for the RDC, in order to allow the organization to continue its Plan-related responsibilities. In introducing the motion, Opposition Leader Melvin McQuaid referred to the RDC as “the most important instrument in public participation that we have in the Province today.”¹⁶³ The Opposition motion was easily defeated, along party lines.

On May 30, the final day of the 1975 Spring Session of the Provincial Legislature, the RDC issue was once more brought to the floor of the House, this time in a manner that caused some embarrassment for the Government. The Chairman of the Select Standing Committee on Agriculture, Eddie Clark, a Liberal, tabled his interim report for the approval of the House. Included among the report’s recommendations was a resolution that read:

In view of the tremendous service that the Rural Development Council has provided to the rural areas and particularly to those associated with agriculture, and since this organization seems to be becoming more and more useful and acceptable, the Committee recommends that its services

¹⁶¹ Alex Campbell in transcript of taped Proceedings of the Second Session of the Fifty-Third General Assembly of Prince Edward Island, May 15, 1975.

¹⁶² Robert Campbell in transcript of taped Proceedings of the Second Session of the Fifty-Third General Assembly of Prince Edward Island, May 15, 1975.

¹⁶³ Melvin McQuaid in transcript of taped Proceedings of the Second Session of the Fifty-Third General Assembly of Prince Edward Island, May 27, 1975.

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be retained at the same level as last year, with a greater emphasis placed on field work activities.¹⁶⁴

The RDC resolution, couched between recommendations dealing with beef prices and potato marketing, had been inserted into the report at a Committee meeting when only three of the eight Liberal members were present. The four Conservative members of the Committee had taken full advantage of their temporary majority by drafting and approving the resolution dealing with the RDC.

When Committee Chairman Clark moved that his report be adopted by the Legislature, the motion was defeated, for obvious reasons. Two Liberal MLAs, Clark and Robert Campbell, did join the six Conservative members in voting for the report's adoption. A brief account of what had occurred appeared in that afternoon's edition of *The Evening Patriot*, under the headline "Red Faces in House Over RDC Resolution."

The Federal Parliament was also in session when the Provincial Government announced its position regarding the RDC. The four Prince Edward Island MPs — Hon. Daniel J. MacDonald, Minister of Veterans Affairs, and three Progressive Conservatives, J. Angus MacLean, Heath MacQuarrie, and David MacDonald — all expressed their support for the Council.¹⁶⁵ Hon. Daniel MacDonald, in a letter to the RDC President, stated that he had made "representations" on the Council's behalf to his Cabinet colleague, Hon. Don Jamieson, Minister of Regional Economic Expansion.¹⁶⁶ Jamieson's department was the one responsible for the Federal administration of the Comprehensive Development Plan.

The RDC issue was not raised immediately in the House of Commons, primarily because of Jamieson's absence during the week that the Provincial announcement had been made. On May 26, however, Malpeque MP Angus MacLean inquired of the DREE Minister if the Prince Edward Island Government's decision had been made with the Federal Minister's prior knowledge. Jamieson responded that there had not been "any prior personal knowledge" on his part concerning the decision. He also informed MacLean that he had asked his department to conduct "a thorough

¹⁶⁴ Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island, 53rd General Assembly, 2nd Session, 1975, *Journal*, May 30, 1975, p. 146.

¹⁶⁵ Letters of support from each of the four Prince Edward Island MPs were included in the RDC files examined during our research.

¹⁶⁶ Letter from Hon. Daniel J. MacDonald to Jean Mutch, May 28, 1975.

examination” of the matter.¹⁶⁷ Egmont MP David MacDonald¹⁶⁸ raised the issue with the DREE Minister again, during the Commons question period on June 3. In responding to MacDonald’s question concerning the Federal Government’s role in the RDC decision, Jamieson said that it had come as “a complete surprise” to him.¹⁶⁹

The political debate over the future role of the RDC was not limited to the Provincial Legislature or to the Canadian Parliament. As one might expect, statements made outside the respective houses of government were much more revelatory than those recorded in the legislative debates.

DREE Minister Jamieson, for example, indicated, outside Parliament, that the Prince Edward Island Government had acted within its rights and that there was nothing that he, as a Federal Minister, could do about the situation involving the RDC.¹⁷⁰ MP David MacDonald was quoted in the press as saying that the RDC had become “too much a creature of government” because of its reliance on public funding. At the same time, he called the termination of the organization’s funding “grossly unfair” and predicted dire political consequences for Premier Campbell.¹⁷¹

Campbell, meanwhile, defended his Government’s decision in the local press. In a front-page story carried in *The Guardian*, the Premier expounded on the topic of public participation and on the Province’s decision to end its affiliation with the RDC. Campbell stated that the “concept of the public being fully involved in the affairs affecting them is a concept to which I and my government are firmly committed.” To this preface, he added, “However, to suggest that we cannot have this public involvement without the RDC is just ridiculous.” Campbell then offered to attempt to explain “just why the RDC contract was cancelled.” His explanation appeared as follows:

After being informed of the cancellation [of its contract], the RDC rejected our decision as if it were an equal or superior power to the elected government of this province.

The RDC met with me in my office and informed me that I needed the RDC more than I needed the extension services of the

¹⁶⁷ *House of Commons Debates Official Report*, 1st Session, 30th Parliament, Volume IV, May 26, 1975, p. 6094.

¹⁶⁸ It will be recalled from Chapter I that, as a United Church minister, David MacDonald was among those who had sparked the creation of the RDC in the mid-1960s.

¹⁶⁹ *House of Commons Debates*, June 3, 1975, p. 6378.

¹⁷⁰ As reported in *The Guardian*, May 27, May 28, June 6, 1975.

¹⁷¹ As reported in *The Guardian*, June 6, 1975.

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department of agriculture, more than I needed the extension services of the department of fisheries.

I was informed by the RDC that the people of P.E.I. cannot trust and communicate with their government.

RDC informed me that there had to be an objective agency between the people and the government so that the people could better express their needs to government.

All of this combined to demonstrate what was already becoming clear to me: That the RDC would have us move to a new form of government which relegated MLAs, as biased persons, to the backwoods. The RDC would have us accept the basic philosophy that government is not independent, not objective, not reflective of the will of the people, but rather some alien force to be dealt with through new systems of communication and through pressure groups.

My colleagues and I have totally rejected this concept of democratic government.¹⁷²

Campbell, in accusing the RDC of attempting to undermine the role of the MLAs, identified what has remained one of the leading explanations of the contract termination. In more recent interviews, Campbell has been consistent in his explanation of the reasons behind the RDC decision.¹⁷³ More will be said of the former Premier's rationale later in the chapter.

In the course of his original explanation, however, the Premier did suggest that other considerations entered into the Government's decision to discontinue its funding of the RDC. He is quoted as saying that the RDC had been effective in animating and informing the public, but, in so doing, had also "generated a high level of expectations" by the public for its government. The "process of public participation" was, said Campbell, forcing government to deal with so many matters of public concern that "more important long-range issues" were being "pushed aside." The Premier cited "potato marketing, the nagging problems of our fishermen and the energy question" as examples of issues that should have been taking prominence over such concerns as "rinks, sewage systems, and ... the location or style of public buildings." Lest he be accused of having had all that he could take of public participation, Campbell offered

¹⁷² As reported in *The Guardian*, June 21, 1975, p. 1.

¹⁷³ Patsy McQuaid interview with Alex Campbell, January 14, 1980; O'Grady/Crossley interview with Alex Campbell, August 21, 1990.

that “None of this means that my enthusiasm for local community development has been dampened.”¹⁷⁴

If the Premier took the opportunity to present his Government’s perspective on the RDC’s contract termination, then so, too, did the RDC seize the chance to tell its side of the story. Fortunately, the Council’s reaction can be reconstructed from the minutes of the RDC Board meetings and from local newspapers dating to the period under consideration.

¶ Reaction by the Rural Development Council

Immediately upon being informed by Dr. Maloney that her organization’s contract would not be renewed, Mrs. Mutch contacted fellow Board members and Managing Director Harry O’Connell. There followed, over the next month and a half, a series of events, which saw the RDC fighting desperately to regain its government funding.

On May 14, the day following the meeting between Maloney and Mutch, the RDC President, along with RDC Board member Ken DesRoches and O’Connell, met with Premier Campbell to request that the Government reconsider its decision. The Premier indicated that he would take up the matter at a meeting of the Liberal caucus that very afternoon and at Cabinet on Thursday morning. There was to be no change forthcoming, however, in the Government’s position.

Still in shock over the abruptness of the Government’s decision and searching for the reasoning behind it, the RDC requested a meeting with the Deputy Minister of Development, Gordon Fairfield. Some members of the RDC Board and staff believed that the decision to terminate their funding had been influenced by certain senior bureaucrats in the Provincial Government, including the Deputy Minister of Development. (This hypothesis is examined later in the chapter.) Fairfield initially refused to meet with the RDC. Included in the Council’s files, however, is a carefully transcribed summary of a confrontation that eventually did occur between RDC representatives and the Deputy Minister.

The transcript relates that when Fairfield refused to meet with them, Mutch and several RDC staff members decided: “We would walk into his office and force him to meet with us. [And,] that is what we did.”¹⁷⁵ On Friday afternoon, May 16, the group representing the RDC proceeded to the fifth floor of the Shaw Building, where

¹⁷⁴ As reported in *The Guardian*, June 21, 1975, p. 1.

¹⁷⁵ “Rough Transcript of a Meeting Between our President Mrs. Jean Mutch Along With Staff Members Pat Binns, Fred Eberman, Peter Prebble and Alan Shaw and Deputy Minister of Development Gordon Fairfield Plus Human Relations Coordinator Steve Gibbons,” typescript (dated May 1975) recovered from RDC files.

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Fairfield's office was located. In a recent interview, Mrs. Mutch could still vividly recall the encounter:

We met him [Fairfield] in the corridor and he just ran from us, so we ran after him. I've never been so bold in all my life. We just wanted to talk with him — and this would have been, maybe, 4:30 — so we thought, "he has all evening, we will just keep him here." And, we did.¹⁷⁶

Fairfield was actually accompanied at the ensuing meeting by Steve Gibbons, the Department of Development's Human Resources Coordinator. The six-page transcript of the session related that the two officials were repeatedly asked how the decision had been made to terminate the RDC's contract and what role they (Fairfield and Gibbons) had played in the decision-making process. At one point during the inquisition, Fairfield's wife, who apparently had been waiting for her husband downstairs, appeared at his office to see what was keeping him late. Mrs. Mutch has remembered that, when the knock came at the door, "one of the group just said, 'Mr. Fairfield will be available soon.'"¹⁷⁷ Much to the frustration of Mutch and her followers, neither Fairfield nor Gibbons could, or would, say anything enlightening about the Government's decision. The standard response from the bureaucrats was that the determination had been made at the Cabinet level.

At the first joint meeting of the RDC Board and staff to follow the termination decision, all other matters on the agenda were deferred and it was agreed that the crisis would become the "order of the day." Among the resolutions passed at that meeting was the following:

That the Board emphatically rejects Cabinet's decision to terminate the public participation and community development programs, and staff, by ceasing funding, and asks the people of Prince Edward Island for their support to have this decision changed.¹⁷⁸

It was also resolved that the Board would immediately request a meeting between the Council's Executive and management and the Liberal caucus.

On May 22, members of the Council's Executive and several RDC staff made a presentation to the Liberal MLAs asking that the decision to terminate their contract

¹⁷⁶ O'Grady/Crossley interview with Jean Mutch, 1990.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ Minutes of a meeting of the RDC Board of Directors, May 20, 1975.

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be reconsidered. Documents from the RDC's files, admittedly not an objective source, relate that, in response to the Council's request, Dr. Maloney had "said nothing," while Premier Campbell "spoke for 10–15 minutes, and no one was quite sure what he said."¹⁷⁹ What was clear, however, was that the Liberal caucus was standing behind the Cabinet's decision. In a recent interview, Maloney has stated that, although the caucus had listened to the RDC's presentation, there had been no real reconsideration of the Cabinet's decision. It was actually his opinion that caucus was "a much less friendly place for them [the RDC] than Cabinet had been."¹⁸⁰ Maloney's explanation was that much of the pressure to terminate the RDC's contract had come from non-Cabinet members of the caucus. This explanation is examined in more detail later in the chapter.

Following their unsuccessful representations before Cabinet and the Liberal caucus, the RDC Board and staff began to show some signs of desperation, or at least a greater appreciation of their desperate situation. The minutes of an RDC Board meeting held in late May of 1975 recorded Managing Director Harry O'Connell's comment that the Council's campaign to have its funding reinstated had "about two weeks left 'to peak.'" At the same meeting, Board member Fred Von Dreger, then a Professor of Political Science at the University of Prince Edward Island, suggested that if the RDC "staged some demonstrations (sit-ins, sit-downs, etc.) directed against Dr. Maloney personally we may drive him to lose his cool and make foolish public statements." According to the minutes, this idea was abandoned when "Fred was unable to suggest 'volunteers' who [might] be willing to engage in such activities."¹⁸¹

On a more moderate note, Board member Harry Baglole observed that, to that point, the Council had "failed to adequately involve our membership" in the campaign. It was Baglole's suggestion that "a letter immediately be sent to all members 'and friends,' outlining the situation, and listing various things that could be done to help (contacting MLAs, making public statements, holding public meetings, etc.)." The Board agreed to pursue that suggestion, although one member predicted that the RDC "could expect a groundswell [sic] [of support] from the East [the eastern part of the Province] within the week."¹⁸² The minutes of the next meeting of the RDC Board did not record any overwhelming show of public support, however, from "the East" or anywhere else. Meanwhile, the minutes did note the opinion of Board members that "Cabinet [was] solid in [its] decision to cease funding RDC."¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ Minutes of a Meeting of the RDC Board of Directors, May 27, 1975.

¹⁸⁰ O'Grady/Crossley interview with John Maloney, 1990.

¹⁸¹ Minutes of a Meeting of the RDC Board of Directors, May 27, 1975.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ Minutes of a Meeting of the RDC Board of Directors, June 3, 1975.

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The Council realized, as well, that it was imperative to make better use of the media if it was to stand any chance of successfully arguing its case before the public. It was resolved, accordingly, that a "Save the RDC" fund would be established to help defray the costs of conducting a "public awareness and information campaign."¹⁸⁴ The main thrust of the campaign was the publication in all Island newspapers of an open letter to the Minister of Development.

The letter, which appeared in print in late June, took up a full page of *The Guardian*. It included a section of "Background Facts" describing how the Provincial Government had arrived at its decision. According to the RDC, the Council had not been consulted prior to the Government's decision to terminate its funding, nor had it ever received official notification that its contract was not to be renewed. The open letter stated that this treatment reflected "Government's carefree attitude to consultation and public participation in this Province." The letter also claimed that the RDC "did not originally ask for Government funding. It was the Government who came to the RDC."¹⁸⁵ (This position is, of course, debatable, given the evidence presented in earlier chapters.) Included, as well, among the "Background Facts" was reference to McNiven's evaluation of the Council and the consultant's recommendation that the RDC's contract be renewed.

The middle portion of the open letter included a "brief" review of the RDC's "major" activities. Actually, there were one hundred such activities enumerated, including everything from the Council's sponsorship of Community Schools to its intervention in the Island Telephone Company rate hearings. Many of the activities recorded the RDC's "support" and "assistance" to various Island groups and organizations, too numerous to list here.

In bold type, near the letter's conclusion, was a series of questions directed specifically to Dr. Maloney. The Industry Minister was asked:

1. Why was the Rural Development Council not consulted prior to Cabinet making the decision to phase it out?
2. Why was the Rural Development Council not informed of the decision until six weeks prior to the time its contract was to be terminated?
3. Why was the Rural Development Council not phased out more gradually so that community groups could prepare to operate

¹⁸⁴ Minutes of Meetings of the RDC Board of Directors, June 3, 10, 1975.

¹⁸⁵ *The Guardian*, June 28, 1975.

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without RDC support, and so that employees of the Council could make alternate job arrangements?

4. How do you justify cutting off the funds of the Rural Development Council in light of the recommendation by Dr. McNiven, the Evaluator your Government hired, to renew the contract of the RDC for another 5 years?¹⁸⁶

All good questions, certainly, but they were not to elicit a response from the Industry Minister.

The Council's open letter concluded by asking people to indicate their support for the RDC by clipping out a form attached to the letter and returning it to the Council's office. The response to this appeal is discussed below.

As the end of June approached, the RDC began to explore alternate sources of funding and to give consideration to its future role. On June 30, President Mutch, Board members Ken DesRoches and Ian MacDonald, and Managing Director O'Connell met with Premier Campbell to propose a compromise funding arrangement for a drastically downsized RDC. They proposed that it continue to function as a public forum, which would require a staff of three and a permanent office. The Council also requested that funding be provided for one counsellor and two fieldmen, who would continue working on specific projects that had already been initiated. Finally, the RDC asked that it be allowed to retain responsibility for the Community School Program, which would continue to be financed by the Province.¹⁸⁷

Following the group's meeting with Campbell, Managing Director O'Connell reported to the Board that the "Premier seemed most uncompromising ... [but it] appeared he might allow Government funding for a reduced budget in Community Schools, and a small amount for an office."¹⁸⁸ The minutes of the Board meeting bluntly concluded: "The final analysis is that as of June 30th the staff will receive notice of termination of employment."¹⁸⁹

Even while the Council was in the midst of a funding crisis and a fight to rally public support for the organization, attendance at meetings of the RDC Board had

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ Minutes of a Meeting of the RDC Board of Directors, June 30, 1975; the proposals were presented in a "Brief to the Government of Prince Edward Island from the Rural Development Council of Prince Edward Island."

¹⁸⁸ Minutes of a Meeting of the RDC Board of Directors, June 30, 1975.

¹⁸⁹ The Provincial Government did not officially respond to the RDC's compromise proposal until September of 1975; at that time, the RDC was informed that all of its requests had been denied, with the exception of funding for the Community Schools.

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begun to decline. In mid-June and again in early July, Board meetings had to be called to order without a quorum. The minutes of the July meeting noted that attendance had fallen off and it was agreed that a letter should be sent to all members of the Board, asking them to express their decision on whether or not they were “willing and able to attend future Board meetings.” The number of “active” Board members continued to diminish over the summer months. The Board’s monthly meeting in August also had to proceed without a quorum. The minutes of that meeting noted that the President had received a poor response to her letter requesting Board members to reaffirm their commitment to the Council.

Attendance continued to be a problem in September; by then, four members of the Board had resigned. A resolution was subsequently passed that reduced the size of the RDC Board from fourteen to nine.¹⁹⁰ Given the poor turnout at meetings, this action was necessary to ensure that a quorum was present to ratify the business of the Board and to conduct future meetings.

It is worthwhile to note that the per diem allowance for Board members, which had been instituted when the RDC accepted its initial government contract in 1970, was discontinued in August of 1975. The loss of the per diem certainly contributed to declining attendance, but the reduced commitment of the Board can be more fairly attributed to several factors, not the least of which was the loss of a mandate when the RDC’s Development Plan contract was terminated.

By July of 1975, all of the RDC staff positions had been terminated, with the exception of the Managing Director. The Council was subsisting on what funds remained from the amount appropriated that spring to allow the RDC to conclude its operations.¹⁹¹ By that point, there was a general acceptance among the Board members, and certainly by the single remaining employee, Harry O’Connell, that the Provincial Government was not about to reconsider its decision to stop funding the Council. At a special meeting of current and past RDC Board members and staff, held in late July of 1975, President Mutch stated that the session had not been called as “an inquest to ascertain what happened to the RDC, [but] rather to talk about a revised role for the Rural Development Council over the next period of time.” O’Connell added that “right or wrong,” the Government’s decision must be accepted.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Minutes of a Meeting of the RDC Board of Directors, September 8, 1975.

¹⁹¹ On July 2, 1975, *The Eastern Graphic* reported that the Department of Development had requested that the RDC return “all unspent funds” from that year’s appropriation. According to *The Graphic*, the Council refused to oblige, arguing that it “had already put in an invoice for the money, had received it and had deposited it in their bank account.”

¹⁹² Minutes of a Special Meeting of the RDC, July 22, 1975.

The July special meeting was clearly an attempt to rekindle the spirit which, in the mid-1960s, had produced the RDC. Present at the meeting were three of the five individuals who had met at the Queen Hotel in the fall of 1964 — Jean Mutch, Ken MacLean and Father Allan MacDonald. Also in attendance were people like Joe Gaudin and Urbain LeBlanc and others who had been RDC stalwarts in earlier years. Emerging from the session were three main conclusions, listed in the meeting's minutes under the headings of "THE NEED," "THE JOB," and "THE MEANS." It was agreed that "there was even a greater need now, in 1975, for an organization like the RDC than there was in the early 1960s when the RDC was founded." The "size," "massiveness," and "impenetrability" of the Government were identified as reasons why the RDC was still needed. The job, as the Council saw it, was to provide "a major public forum," through which groups and individuals could become involved in the creation and evaluation of public policy. The means included public meetings, press releases, and the offering of Community School courses in "social and political awareness."¹⁹³

Those present at the Special Meeting unanimously agreed that the "overall theme" of the revamped RDC was to "stimulate thought and action to enable individuals, groups, and communities to gain more control over their own affairs."¹⁹⁴ There can be no denying that this expression signalled a return to the original "masters of their own destiny" principle upon which the RDC had been founded a decade earlier.

Despite the air of optimism that pervaded the July Special Meeting, it was not long before the RDC slipped, once more, into the self-absorption that had characterized so much of its history. Although the RDC had just identified the "need to look outwardly at community needs and desires — NOT inwardly at ourselves,"¹⁹⁵ by the fall of 1975, the old preoccupations of the Council had begun to resurface.

At a general meeting held in October of that year, no real consensus could be reached concerning the future role, financing, or structure of the Council. Neither could the group decide if the RDC should "take stands on issues" or simply serve as a forum through which other organizations and individuals could voice their opinions.¹⁹⁶ And, the whole issue of the Council's independence from government was once more revisited. While one member warned that "we must learn from our history ... [and] be

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ In the opinion of one former Board member from this period, the RDC chose the neutral course. That individual is on record as saying: "I have never seen articulated, or had expressed to me, a clear idea of what the RDC thought of anything" (Gordon Cobb interview with Harry Baglole, October 13, 1987).

financially independent from Government,” another argued that there was “nothing wrong with the RDC going after public funds.”¹⁹⁷

With the RDC appearing to be on the verge of repeating its own history, this is a good point to break from the chronology to consider the reaction by the media and the Island public to the termination of the Council’s government contract. The next chapter picks up the story again and briefly reviews the RDC’s post-contract period.

¶ Reaction by the Media

The termination of the RDC’s contract was front-page news in all Island daily and weekly newspapers. Weeks after the Government’s decision, the story continued to get extensive coverage by the local media. Although they had once seriously questioned the appropriateness of the RDC accepting a funded role in the Development Plan, editorials now sided with the Council in its fight to have the contract renewed.

A *Guardian* editorial of May 17, 1975, began by stating that the “concept of public participation in government has received a severe setback with the announcement that the province will no longer provide funding for the Rural Development Council.” The editor obviously saw the Council as having been a successful vehicle for public participation in the past, with a vital role to play in the future:

At this juncture when politicians are saying that major changes in present lifestyles are imminent, it is unfortunate that the government has moved so unwisely in sapping the strength of a province-wide, grassroots organization which for years has shown that it can operate as a communication link between all sectors of the Island economy and the administration.¹⁹⁸

Jim MacNeill of *The Eastern Graphic* characterized the contract termination as a “sign of success” on the part of the RDC. The Council, he said, had been too effective “in mobilizing public opinion ... [that] was not always in agreement with government policy.” MacNeill laid the blame for the cancelling of the contract on Dr. Maloney, whom he characterized as an “arrogant,” “axe-wielding” politician who had “hacked away at the financial lifeline of the Rural Development Council.”¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ Minutes of a General Meeting of the RDC, October 4, 1975.

¹⁹⁸ Editorial, *The Guardian*, May 17, 1975.

¹⁹⁹ Editorial, *The Eastern Graphic*, May 21, 1975.

Wally Smith, a columnist with *The Guardian*, suggested that the termination of the RDC's contract was indicative of the Provincial Government's newly adopted attitude of "doctor knows best" when it came to public policy. Naturally, Dr. John Maloney was identified as one of the leading practitioners of this approach. Smith suggested that the Industry Minister had, through his decision regarding the RDC, "questioned both the feasibility and value of encouraging greater public participation and of stepping up efforts to keep the public better informed."²⁰⁰

In the aftermath of the RDC's contract termination, Dr. Maloney was clearly made the target of much criticism, both by the media and the RDC. The general public, however, seemed unconcerned with laying the blame on anyone.

¶ Reaction by the Public

From the RDC's perspective, the public response to the Council's funding crisis was extremely disappointing. Ian MacDonald, who was serving as Past-President of the RDC Board at the time of the contract termination, has recalled that "when the announcement came, the actual [public] outcry was pretty small."²⁰¹ Members of the RDC staff were also surprised and somewhat disillusioned by the public response. Harry O'Connell has remarked: "There was an attempt to get public support, but it is sad that we had to attempt it, and they [the public] didn't respond. That [reaction] defeated me, that really made me depressed about the whole thing."²⁰²

Even the Provincial politicians were somewhat amazed, although not disappointed, by the restrained public reaction to their Government's decision. Both Alex Campbell and John Maloney have indicated that they had prepared themselves for a more spirited response than what materialized. Campbell has commented that he had expected "all hell would break loose," only to be surprised by the "lack of marchers and demonstrations and petitions to the Legislature."²⁰³

It should not be assumed, however, that no one came to the RDC's defence. Although the former Premier did not remember it, there was a petition presented to the Provincial Government calling for the RDC's contract to be renewed. The petition was signed by 800 Island senior citizens.

A number of rural communities, through their community improvement committees, also expressed their opposition to the contract termination. Press releases

²⁰⁰ *The Guardian*, May 26, 1975.

²⁰¹ O'Grady/Crossley interview with Ian MacDonald, 1990.

²⁰² O'Grady/Crossley interview with Harry O'Connell, 1990.

²⁰³ O'Grady/Crossley interview with Alex Campbell, 1990.

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in support of the RDC were also issued by HOPE (Help Our Provincial Environment), an Island-based, independent environmental group; the Social Action Commission of the Charlottetown Roman Catholic Diocese; and by the Extension Department of St. Francis Xavier University.

HOPE saw the termination of the RDC's contract as "a bad omen for all citizen groups concerned about the province and interested in cooperating with the government." The environmentalists viewed the Government's action as "all the more deplorable because there was absolutely no prior consultation with the public, nor indeed, with the RDC itself."²⁰⁴ The Social Action Commission stated that "the people should stand behind the RDC and insist that the [Council's] contract be renewed."²⁰⁵ Rev. George Topshee, Director of the Extension Department at St. Francis Xavier University, was particularly critical of the Island Government's decision. By "abandoning" the RDC, Topshee said, "Prince Edward Island [was] slipping into the social rut of other Atlantic Provinces." He went on to say that

For the past five years, P.E.I. led Canada in its commitment to grass-roots involvement in its 15-year development plan but it now appears to have lost faith in the people by its plan to cut off RDC funding June 30.

It seems that the people are being punished by their government for doing what they were asked to do: involve the whole community by participating in the planning and placing of programs and policies under close public scrutiny.²⁰⁶

A formal opinion poll was never conducted on the popularity of the Government's decision. On May 30, 1975, *The Guardian* did publish a "man on the street" feature in which the participants were asked: "Why did the government terminate the contract of an organization which did so much good?" The "poll" was conducted in Summerside, two weeks after the Government announced that the RDC's contract would not be renewed. Of the nine persons who responded to the question, only one expressed displeasure with the Government's decision. *The Guardian* concluded, however, that "the real barometer of public opinion and awareness may have been the large numbers who declined to comment on the grounds that they didn't

²⁰⁴ *The Guardian*, May 27, 1975.

²⁰⁵ *The Guardian*, May 24, 1975.

²⁰⁶ Press Release, St. Francis Xavier University Extension Department, May 30, 1975. This document was retrieved from RDC files. It could not be determined if it ever appeared in the print media.

know who or what the RDC was.” One person’s response to the “pollster’s” question was: “The RDC? Are they the ones who work for the lending authority?”²⁰⁷

The “poll” conducted by *The Guardian* was very unscientific, of course, but the conclusion drawn from it was revealing nonetheless. Other indications of public opinion on the RDC issue would also lead one to believe that there was not a great deal of public support for the Council. The RDC’s open letter in Island newspapers, for example, produced only sixty responses from persons in favour of a continuing role for the Council. The total amount in the “Save the RDC” fund, meanwhile, never exceeded \$150.²⁰⁸

The inability of the RDC to elicit public support, or even to generate a measurable response from its own membership, at such a critical point in its history is certainly one of the Council’s most significant failings. The next chapter, in its overall assessment of the RDC, presents further comments on this point.

Before considering the rationale for the discontinuation of the RDC’s funding, it is necessary first to provide some background information as to how and when the Government arrived at its decision. Although the RDC Board and staff were truly astonished at an announcement that appeared to have come out of nowhere, there is sound evidence, previously not made public, that the Government had been contemplating its decision for several months prior to its May 1975 announcement.

Background to “The Decision”



During the Development Plan years, the body responsible for Plan management was the Federal-Provincial Joint Advisory Board, made up of Provincial Cabinet Ministers and a host of bureaucrats from both levels of government. At a February 1975 meeting of the Board, Premier Campbell hinted that the RDC’s role in Phase II of the Development Plan was going to be reconsidered. The Premier is quoted in the minutes

²⁰⁷ The Lending Authority was an agency of the Provincial Government. Actually, the respondent may have been confusing the RDC with another Provincial agency, LDC, the Land Development Corporation.

²⁰⁸ Minutes of Meetings of the RDC Board of Directors, June–September, 1975.

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of that meeting as saying that, during the second phase of the Plan, the RDC's "terms of reference would be more clearly and narrowly defined."²⁰⁹ There was no indication at that point, however, that Campbell was considering curtailing the RDC's activities to the point of terminating its contract.

By March of 1975, however, several members of the Provincial Cabinet, including Campbell, Maloney, Minister of Municipal Affairs Gilbert Clements, and Finance Minister T. Earle Hickey, had in their possession a consultant's report recommending that very course of action. Donald Nemetz, a Professor of Business Administration at the University of Prince Edward Island and part-time consultant, had been retained by the Province to make recommendations concerning the RDC's future relationship to Provincial Government programming. In his confidential report, Nemetz termed the arrangement that then existed between the two bodies as "unsound." He commented that certain activities of the RDC had placed the Council in an adversarial role with respect to the Province. He further suggested that the Council was performing tasks which would be better undertaken by departments of the Provincial Government. If the RDC continued to carry out these functions, which the consultant did not specify, it could, said Nemetz, "have the unintended effect of postponing or preventing desirable reforms within departments."²¹⁰

Especially condemning for the RDC was the final conclusion of the Nemetz report, which read as follows:

It would seem that the original idea of the RDC had merit and that there is a useful role for a non-governmental organization of that type, but not with government as the sole or even major source of funding. A good case can be made for RDC returning to its original form, as a voluntary, privately supported organization with a more active membership. It would be entirely appropriate for the government to grant a measure of financial assistance to a re-constituted RDC for certain specified activities best conducted by such an organization. Those members of the salaried staff qualified in such fields as community organization, agricultural extension, and the like could fruitfully be brought into the relevant departments of government.²¹¹

²⁰⁹ Minutes of the Thirteenth Meeting of the Federal-Provincial Joint Advisory Board, February 6-7, 1975 (PARO, RG 33).

²¹⁰ Memorandum, stamped CONFIDENTIAL, from D. E. Nemetz to Hon. Gilbert Clements, and copied to Maloney, Campbell, and Hickey, dated March 18, 1975 (PARO, RG 33).

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

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If, in March of 1975, the Province was searching for a rationale for cancelling the RDC's contract, it had received it. Surprisingly enough, however, when they were recently asked about the Nemetz Report, neither former Premier Campbell nor Dr. Maloney had any specific recollection of having read it.²¹² One should not conclude, however, that they were not, at the time of the report's submission, influenced by the consultant's observations.

During the winter and early spring of 1975, the RDC was also being evaluated, albeit less formally, by the Department of Development. In a recent interview, Dr. Maloney readily admitted that, in the months immediately preceding the termination decision, he was monitoring the RDC's activities, by sending "observers" to meetings organized by the Council. On the basis of these observers' reports, the Industry Minister arrived at the conclusion that the RDC was "doing us more harm than good."²¹³

Even while the Provincial Government was having serious doubts about the RDC's future role in the Development Plan, negotiations for a new five-year contract between the Province and the Council were continuing. Given what eventually transpired, however, one must wonder if those negotiations were being carried out in good faith on the part of the Provincial Government. The RDC, meanwhile, appeared convinced that their contract would be renewed. An RDC Managing Director's report, dated April 8, 1975, stated: "Dr. Maloney, Minister, Department of Development, indicates that the RDC contract will be renewed as soon as the 'second phase' negotiations have been completed with Ottawa."

Within a little over a month, of course, the Council had been informed that there would be no contract renewal, that decision having been taken at a regular meeting of Cabinet on May 8. It is evident that Cabinet did not suddenly arrive at its decision during the one-month interval between the 8th of April and the 8th of May.

Following the termination of the RDC's contract, several explanations were offered for the Government's decision. With the decided advantage of retrospect, each of these hypotheses will be evaluated.

²¹² O'Grady/Crossley interviews with Alex Campbell and John Maloney, 1990.

²¹³ O'Grady/Crossley interview with John Maloney, 1990.

Rationale for the Contract Termination



Recent discussions with former RDC Board members and staff have revealed a range of explanations for the events of mid-May of 1975. As already mentioned, some of those individuals, especially those who confronted Deputy Minister Gordon Fairfield, believed that the impetus for the contract termination came from Department of Development staff, including the Deputy himself. The evidence in support of such a conspiracy hypothesis is essentially nonexistent.

¶ Bureaucratic Conspiracy

The researchers carefully examined Department of Development files for any evidence that upper-level bureaucrats had direct influence on the Government's decision to end the RDC's funding. It was apparent that there was some tension building between the Department and RDC staff during the renegotiation of the Council's contract.

The RDC's initial contract actually expired in 1974 and was then extended into 1975. Negotiations for a new contract had begun in the spring of 1974. In the midst of these negotiations, David Catmur, a Plan Coordinator within the Department of Development, fired off a confidential interoffice memorandum to his senior departmental colleague, Tom Connor. (The memorandum was also copied to, among others, Deputy Minister Fairfield.) Catmur wrote that he "[could not] recommend renewal of the existing RDC contract for more than an interim period." He stated that the "relationship between DOD [Department of Development] and indeed other government departments with RDC [was] not good in terms of mutual understanding of roles and functions." He also alluded to "personal antagonisms" between the Department and RDC staff. Catmur went on to say that

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Regrettably I have arrived at the following decisions:

1. RDC's senior management is inept and probably incompetent.
2. RDC's assertion that they, through their field staff's contacts with communities, represent community views is, at best, only partially true and, at worst, pretentious nonsense.
3. That any new contract with RDC must clearly lay out their mandate and relationships with government without unduly constraining their independence of action.²¹⁴

Five days after he wrote his scathing assessment of the Council, Catmur sent a memorandum to the RDC's Managing Director Urbain LeBlanc and Harry O'Connell stating that he had recommended to his Deputy Minister that:

1. The existing RDC contract should be renewed for an interim period of six months this April [1974].
2. That during the ensuing six months RDC and DOD negotiate a new, hopefully longer term contract.²¹⁵

Catmur concluded his memorandum to the RDC's management with the following remarks, which, in light of his earlier comments, might appear almost affected:

You should perhaps be aware of the fact that I hold very strongly to the view that government needs and indeed requires the active help of independent, non-profit agencies such as RDC. I do not subscribe to the notion that government, beyond the political realm, can act as its own conscience. Nor do I believe that government is always the most effective vehicle for the delivery of services and information to the public.²¹⁶

²¹⁴ Memorandum from David Catmur to Tom Connor, stamped CONFIDENTIAL, dated April 3, 1974 (PARO, RG 33).

²¹⁵ Department of Development Memorandum from David Catmur to Urbain LeBlanc and Harry O'Connell, dated April 8, 1974. Recovered from RDC Files.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

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A year after contract negotiations between the Development Department and the RDC had begun, the Council was still operating on interim funding. At that critical point in the negotiations, there was no hint in Development files of any animosity towards the RDC, suggesting that Catmur's outburst a year earlier was likely an isolated occurrence. Another Department of Development employee from that same period, Sandy Griswold, has stated that he saw "no evidence" of any conspiracy to have the RDC's contract terminated. Griswold has maintained that he personally enjoyed a good working relationship with the RDC staff and management.²¹⁷

In March of 1975, the Department's Deputy Minister even expressed confidence in his ability to work with the RDC. In a memorandum to Cabinet, Fairfield clearly stated that it was up to Executive Council to decide the future role of the RDC. He also made reference to Dr. McNiven's evaluation of the Council, commenting that the evaluation had "concluded that the RDC is technically competent and ... certain aspects of the organization could improve the quality of [public] participation in the Province."²¹⁸

It is not clear from the sources reviewed that there was anything resembling a bureaucratic conspiracy to undermine the RDC. Conflicts between the Council and the Department of Development did arise, but these did not appear to have had a major impact on the Government's decision to end its relationship with the RDC.

At the time of the contract termination, Dr. Maloney suggested that the activities that had been the responsibility of the RDC could be assumed by the Provincial civil service. This opinion brings up the next explanation for the contract termination, that the RDC had outlived its usefulness.

¶ The Redundancy Hypothesis

With funding made possible through the Comprehensive Development Plan, the Prince Edward Island Civil Service had grown considerably between 1969 and 1975. During that span, the number of classified civil service positions had increased from 1,620 to 2,751.²¹⁹ Over the same period, several Plan programs had provided for staff training and development. Certainly by the mid-1970s, the Province's civil service had an enhanced capacity for planning and program design and delivery; but the question is,

²¹⁷ O'Grady interview with Sandy Griswold, August 1, 1991.

²¹⁸ Department of Development Memorandum to Executive Council, March 12, 1975. (PARO RG 33.)

²¹⁹ *Annual Report of the Civil Service Commission of the Province of Prince Edward Island*, 1969, 1975, pp. 11 and 25, respectively.

was it also capable of involving the public in those activities? Or, put another way, had the RDC become redundant?

From the preceding chapter, it is recalled that Dr. McNiven, in his evaluation of the Development Plan's Public Participation Program, thought that such was not the case. He had generally endorsed the RDC's activities and had recommended that the Council continue in its role as a facilitator of public participation in the Plan's Second Phase.

Dr. Maloney, however, has still maintained that, by 1975, the growth of the Provincial civil service had made the RDC "supernumerary."²²⁰ Even if this were true, which is difficult to prove or disprove, it was not, according to Campbell and Maloney, the main reason for the Government's decision to cease its funding of the RDC. The rationale, according to those most intimately involved in that decision, was rooted in traditional Prince Edward Island politics.

¶ The Political Rationale

Under this heading, a whole series of interrelated factors is discussed, beginning with the political milieu of Prince Edward Island in the mid-1970s. In 1975, the Provincial Liberals were fresh from an election triumph the previous spring, which saw them capture twenty-six seats in the Island's thirty-two-seat legislature. It was the third consecutive victory for the Alex Campbell-led Liberals, and their most decisive.²²¹

Although the 1974 election had resulted in a big majority for the Liberal Party, it had also produced an unusual — for Prince Edward Island — voting pattern, which was not reflected in the number of seats won or lost. The Provincial New Democratic Party had run twenty candidates in the 1974 campaign, the most in the Party's history, and had garnered six per cent of the popular vote.²²² A comparison of the 1970 and 1974 results indicated that the New Democrats had taken two-thirds of their popular vote from the Liberals.²²³ The emergence of a third party, with a credible leader in the person of Aquinas Ryan, was viewed as a potential threat to both of the Island's mainline political parties and, therefore, to traditional Prince Edward Island politics.

²²⁰ O'Grady/Crossley interview with John Maloney, 1990.

²²¹ In 1966, after a by-election, the Liberals had ended up with 17 seats, while in the general election of 1970 they had taken 25 to the Conservatives' 7.

²²² *Report of the Chief Electoral Office of Prince Edward Island on the 1974 General Election.*

²²³ As indicated by unpublished data compiled by Fred von Dreger and Gary Webster, both formerly of the University of Prince Edward Island Political Studies Department.

Threatening, as well, during this period was the appearance of an unprecedented number of advocacy groups. David Milne has observed that “although government had always received the views of established religious, agricultural, and business organizations ... it had never before the 1970s confronted so many non-partisan, *ad hoc* community groups.”²²⁴ Among the groups he identified as belonging to the Province’s extra-party opposition of the 1970s were The Brothers and Sisters of Cornelius Howatt, the Concerned Citizens for Education, the Civil Liberties Association, the National Farmers Union, the Social Action Commission, and the RDC. The focus of their discontent, Milne claimed, was the Comprehensive Development Plan.

Besides the emergence of such community groups, other changes were taking place in Island society that threatened to undermine traditional political practices. Milne pointed to “electoral reform, the development of bureaucratic power and standards, mass communications, a more educated public, and mobile residential and work patterns” as all working against what he referred to as the boss-follower system of politics.²²⁵ Island politics of the mid-1970s had become more issue-oriented. People were asking for more than a personal favour at election time; they were constantly demanding that Government address larger issues. Premier Campbell had referred to this very development in his statements to *The Guardian* on May 21, 1975. Public participation had, he said, raised public expectations and was forcing Government to deal with an excessive number of issues and requests.

Combined, all of these factors created a time of uncertainty for Island politicians. Even though, in 1975, they held twenty-five seats in the Legislature and were not facing another election for four years, the Liberals felt their control slipping away. Gary Webster, an observer and analyst of Prince Edward Island politics for two decades, has remarked that the Campbell administration was at least as concerned with “holding power *between* elections, as in winning them.”²²⁶

It was in this political environment that the decision was made to terminate the RDC’s Development Plan contract. And, it was primarily because of the unaccustomed pressures being experienced by Island politicians that the decision was made. In recent interviews, both former Premier Campbell and Dr. Maloney have admitted openly that

²²⁴ David Milne, “Politics in a Beleaguered Garden,” in *The Garden Transformed: Prince Edward Island, 1945–1980*, ed. by Verner Smitheram, David Milne, and Satadal Dasgupta (Charlottetown: Ragweed, 1982), p. 63.

²²⁵ Milne, “Politics in a Beleaguered Garden,” p. 62. The boss-follower system is based on patronage dispensed by a “boss” in return for votes from constituents.

²²⁶ O’Grady interview with Gary Webster, 1991.

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the primary reason for the Cabinet's decision was political.²²⁷ Campbell allowed that the "RDC, in its promotion of Development programs and its advocacy for government responses was perceived by MLAs to be in competition with the traditional role of the MLAs."²²⁸ In an 1980 interview with another researcher, Campbell elaborated:

The MLAs were the ones who were the most bitter about the role of the RDC, because it was the RDC that appeared ... to be out around the country delivering programs and speaking for organizations, speaking for the farm community. And, you had, then, a confrontation between what was traditionally perceived to be the role of the MLAs, elected, and the role of the employees of this organization [the RDC] who had no constitutional responsibility, faced no elections, responsible to no one except their boss²²⁹

The RDC had set itself up as a prime target for a Government intent on retaining its traditional relationship with the electorate. First of all, it had done an effective job in animating the public, or as Webster has put it: "the RDC had found the formula for public participation and intervention to which Island politicians were not accustomed."²³⁰ Second, the RDC had chosen to become involved in particular controversial issues, which only exacerbated the inherent conflict between itself and the traditional political structure. Third, the Council was totally dependent upon public funds, yet was striving to maintain its independence from Government, a situation certain to result in discord. On a final note, it was suggested earlier that the performance of the New Democratic Party in the 1974 provincial election was perceived as a threat to the Province's two mainline parties. The former Premier has recently implied that the RDC was thought of by some MLAs as being associated with the New Democrats.²³¹

And so it was left up to Dr. Maloney, on May 13, 1975, to inform RDC President Jean Mutch of the Cabinet's decision to terminate the Council's contract.

²²⁷ O'Grady/Crossley interviews with Alex Campbell and John Maloney, 1990.

²²⁸ O'Grady/Crossley interview with Alex Campbell, 1990.

²²⁹ Patsy McQuaid interview with Alex Campbell, January 14, 1980.

²³⁰ O'Grady interview with Gary Webster, 1990.

²³¹ O'Grady/Crossley interview with Alex Campbell, 1990.

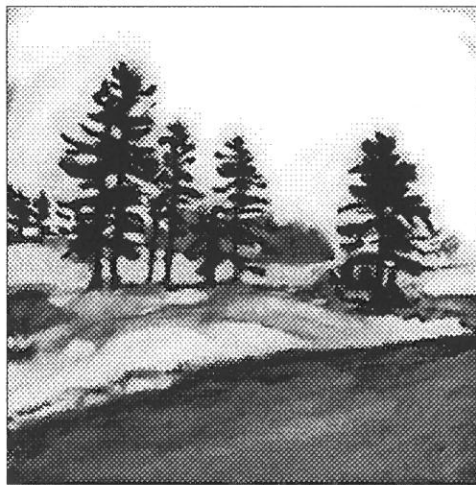
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Looking back, Maloney has recalled that it was “terribly hard to tell her that, but I had to.”²³²

The next and final chapter picks up the RDC story in the period following its loss of public funding. Conclusions and observations are then offered concerning the Council’s successes and failures. ¶

²³² O’Grady/Crossley interview with John Maloney, 1990.

IV. THE LAST DANCE



WHEN WE BROKE FROM the chronology in the previous chapter, the RDC was in the midst of yet another debate over its future role, financing, and structure. Meanwhile, the Council's financial position was rapidly deteriorating. The minutes of an October 1975 Board meeting related that the Council's account had a balance of \$45,000. Measures were taken to stretch that amount as far as possible. Furniture and supplies from the Council's office at 83 Queen Street in Charlottetown were sold. The RDC board room, once the scene of deliberations over a \$400,000 budget, was rented to the Prince Edward Island School of Dancing. It was the RDC, however, which appeared to be preparing for its last dance.

This chapter briefly reviews the Council's operation from late 1975 until the spring of 1978, when its activities simply petered out. There then follows a review of the RDC's accomplishments and failings.

The Final Years: 1975–1978



By December of 1975, the School of Dancing had actually vacated the RDC board room, and another tenant was occupying the space. In fact, the RDC was proving itself to be an effective landlord, as it had also managed to lease offices to the Provincial Home and School Association and a local bus line.²³³ Unfortunately, the Council was not enjoying similar success in securing a continuing source of operational funds. At its first meeting of 1976, the RDC Board agreed to a proposal by Harry O'Connell to "write to about one hundred foundations and agencies which might be potential providers of funding for the Council."²³⁴ The effort proved to be in vain.

One impediment to the RDC's securing financial support was the Council's ongoing problem with defining its purpose. In March of 1976, O'Connell suggested to the Board that: "We have to decide [first] what we want to do, then seek the funding necessary to do it." The Board responded by forming a committee to address the question: "Is there, in fact, a future role for the RDC?"²³⁵ The committee eventually identified eight options, which were presented for discussion at the RDC's 1976 Annual Meeting. Those alternative roles were listed as follows:

1. Continue in its present form and structure.
2. Terminate its activities and surrender its charter.
3. Become a discussion, study, and research group composed entirely of volunteers.

²³³ Minutes of a Meeting of the RDC Board of Directors, December 9, 1975.

²³⁴ Minutes of a Meeting of the RDC Board of Directors, January 13, 1976.

²³⁵ Minutes of a Meeting of the RDC Board of Directors, March 9, 1976.

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4. Reconstitute as three regional RDC groups, one for each of the Province's three counties.
5. Affiliate with the Extension Department at the University of Prince Edward Island, where it would operate as a group similar to the one described in option 3.
6. Become a sub-committee of Community Schools, working through the Community Schools as a discussion, study, and research group.
7. Emerge as a political party on a platform of local control, public participation, and community development based on local resources.
8. Re-establish as a foundation for the purpose of dispensing the interest on its capital funds to local groups whose activities are in keeping with the original RDC philosophy.²³⁶

The RDC membership endorsed option one, agreeing that the Council should continue to operate as it had in the past. The attendance at the meeting was disappointing, with only thirty-five people present. Nevertheless, resolutions were passed on a wide range of issues, from School Board hiring practices to electoral reform and the encouragement of economic development in Island communities.²³⁷

In her address to the Annual Meeting, President Mutch reported that, since the contract termination of the previous year, many of the Council's activities had been concerned with defining a future role for the RDC and exploring funding possibilities. She also related that the Board had been continuing to meet regularly. Mutch urged the RDC membership to continue its study and promotion of community development and to persevere in its efforts at involving the citizenry in public policy decisions.

Within a month of the 1976 Annual Meeting, new officers were elected to the RDC Board. Mrs. Mutch did not re-offer as President, citing the need for a change. Father Allan MacDonald took over the post. Meanwhile, Harry O'Connell informed the Board of his intention to resign as Executive Director, effective June 30, 1976. Fred Eberman, a former RDC field worker, was hired as O'Connell's replacement.²³⁸

Eberman was to remain as Executive Director until December of 1977, at which time he, too, resigned from the position. The Council had not been successful in obtaining substantial funding to supplement the interest accruing from its remaining

²³⁶ "Report of the Rural Development Council Resolutions Committee," March–April 1976.

²³⁷ Minutes of the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the RDC, April 24, 1976.

²³⁸ Minutes of a Meeting of the RDC Board of Directors, June 25, 1976.

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capital. Upon Eberman's resignation, the RDC Board chose not to fill the position and decided, as well, to vacate its Queen Street offices.²³⁹ In January of 1978, the Board agreed to locate its operations, which by this time consisted of only a four-drawer filing cabinet and a desk and chair, at the University of Prince Edward Island. Ian MacDonald, the University's Director of Extension and a former RDC President, was given signing authority for the remaining RDC funds.²⁴⁰

The last meeting of the RDC Board for which there is any record took place on March 20, 1978, ten years, to the very day, from the date of the Council's incorporation. A press release issued from that meeting stated:

On the tenth anniversary of its incorporation in P.E.I., the Rural Development Council has moved back to the place where it used to meet as a voluntary citizens group ten years ago when it decided to adopt an official charter. It continues to be, as it was then, a totally voluntary group dedicated to the objective of rural development in our province.

Although it is no longer an active organization, the RDC still holds its charter. With amusement, Father Allan MacDonald recently recalled what was probably his last "official" act as a Council Board member. In 1989, on the occasion of the Royal Visit of the Duke and Duchess of York to Prince Edward Island, Father MacDonald received in the mail two tickets to a command performance of "Anne of Green Gables" and an invitation to a Royal reception preceding the play. The letter was addressed to the "Chairman of the Prince Edward Island Rural Development Council."²⁴¹

Unlike the musical "Anne," which returns year after year to the main stage of the Charlottetown Summer Festival, there were no cries of encore for the RDC. Never able to rebound from the events of 1975, the Council unraveled in its final years and then was allowed simply to disappear.

²³⁹ Minutes of Meetings of the RDC Board of Directors, November 17 and December 1, 1977.

²⁴⁰ Minutes of Meetings of the RDC Board of Directors, January 24 and March 9, 1978. The remainder of their funds helped to finance the present publication.

²⁴¹ O'Grady/Crossley interview with Allan MacDonald, 1990.

The RDC: A Review



The RDC emerged in the mid-1960s as a *product* of the times and a place, an attempt to control change in the traditional rural communities of Prince Edward Island. In the mid-1970s, it also became a *victim* of the times and the place, its end, in large part, predestined by traditional Prince Edward Island politics. As this narrative has revealed, the Council enjoyed successes and suffered through failures.

The founding philosophy of the RDC favoured community development that resulted from community-based decision-making. Ideally, the development of indigenous leadership would allow communities to identify their own economic and social problems, propose their own solutions, and then enact the changes necessary to improve their situation.²⁴² While the RDC did not necessarily feel this kind of community development was incompatible with centralized government, its philosophy did call for decentralized decision-making. How, then, did the RDC rationalize its decision to become such an integral part of a Comprehensive Development Plan conceived of and administered by a central authority?

As my research colleague, John Crossley, has expressed it, that decision was “both difficult and easy to reach.”²⁴³ As has been thoroughly discussed, there were always members of the RDC who felt that government funding threatened the organization’s autonomy and independence. But, by the late 1960s, the RDC had reached a point where it felt the need to practise community development, not just preach it. The Development Plan, and the sweeping changes it proposed, demanded — at least for most of the RDC Executive — that the Council put its own community development workers in the field. The Plan offered the resources the Council needed to fund and staff such a program. For Father Allan MacDonald, the choice was a simple

²⁴² John Crossley has labelled this thinking “the purist paradigm”: “Community Development, Administrative Rationality, and Politics: The Rural Development Council and the Canada-P.E.I. Comprehensive Development Plan.” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Atlantic Provinces Political Studies Association, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 20–21 October 1990.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

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one: if the Council had not accepted a role in the Plan, the RDC would have been “dead.”

As an administrator of Plan programming, the RDC put itself in the position of promoting public participation in development programs that had not been devised through community-based decision-making. In evolving, the Council had compromised its founding philosophy. Crossley has offered the following summary of the RDC’s move towards what he has referred to as “the public administration paradigm”:

[RDC] field workers and community leaders were not to promote decentralization of decision-making power or community-based problem solving. Rather, they were to help central decision-makers communicate changes to the communities, help citizens accept decisions made at the centre, and help administrators run a complex variety of small-budget programs aimed at specific communities or industries. In other words, community development was an extension of public administration.²⁴⁴

This perspective was arguably the one held by Plan administrators, but not always by the Council. Its role in the Plan was vague enough to cause misunderstandings between both parties — the Government and the RDC — and between the Council’s Board and staff. The voluntary Board was overwhelmed by Plan-related activities and programs and was forever struggling to delineate the desired role and structure of the Council. Predictably, the RDC adopted conflicting roles and, in the instances discussed earlier in this report, acted as an issue-oriented interest group. When RDC participation in the East Point National Park debate helped to quash that project, some of the Board and staff saw this as a major triumph for community development. Ironically, Gordon Cobb’s research has suggested that this incident was particularly damaging to the RDC’s reputation within Government circles and even contributed to the eventual cancellation of its Plan contract.²⁴⁵ The RDC could not act as both a “government employee” and an outspoken advocate for community-based decision-making, at least not in the context of the Comprehensive Development Plan.

When the conflict did reach its climax — the termination of the RDC’s Government funding — another major weakness of the RDC was glaringly revealed. The Council had not heeded repeated warnings to cultivate its membership and broaden its source of funding. Rudi Dallenbach had predicted that the day would come when the RDC would need “people support.” The day came, and the reaping was grim

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

²⁴⁵ Gordon Cobb, “Paradox in Planning,” p. 71.

indeed. Far removed from its grassroots origins, the RDC was profoundly disappointed by the public response to the Government's decision.

A related failure lay in the Community Schools program. It had been envisioned as an instrument of community development, but instead had evolved as a separate movement with very little to do with its original goals and only tenuously connected to other RDC programs.²⁴⁶ If the Council had been able to integrate Community Schools with the rest of its programming, if the thousands of participants in Community Schools across the Island had also been made to feel an active part of the RDC general membership, then perhaps there would have been the necessary "people support" to launch a respectable campaign against the Government's decision. Would a large-scale "Save the RDC" crusade have been successful? Former Premier Campbell and Dr. Maloney have both indicated that they had braced themselves for a battle — one that never materialized, as it turned out; but it would have been a good test of their political resolve, had they been confronted by a truly Island-wide movement, thousands strong. In spite of its unrealized potential, however, the Community Schools Program can still be considered a positive legacy of the RDC.

As a facilitator of public participation in Phase I of the Development Plan, the RDC received a mixed review from evaluator J. D. McNiven. He noted that the RDC Board had insufficient knowledge of public participation concepts and the Council had failed to serve as a public forum. Nevertheless, there is no question that the RDC did encourage and assist numerous community-based groups and individuals to become involved in the Plan. Directly and indirectly, the RDC helped to raise issues of local and Provincial concern. The Council's efforts at animating and informing Islanders were so successful, in fact, that in 1975 Premier Campbell and his Government were being forced to deal with an unprecedented number of concerns from a public whose expectations of their elected representatives had been raised to new heights.

During the first half of the 1970s, the Council had, in the words of McNiven, managed to involve itself in "almost all the significant community development activities on P.E.I." While this broad range of involvement is certainly an accomplishment of sorts, the Council might have achieved even more, if it had attempted less.²⁴⁷ As alluded to above, the RDC often lacked a sense of focus and a well-defined purpose.

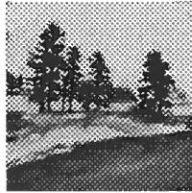
²⁴⁶ Still thriving in the 1990s, Community Schools are primarily social groups with only a handful of course offerings related to community development.

²⁴⁷ McNiven suggested that the RDC had wasted too much time "putting out fires." Ironically, in its early days, the RDC felt that it needed to "light a fire" under a population that had grown apathetic; recognizing that objective, an earlier history of the RDC was entitled *Heather on Fire*.

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During the Second Phase of the Development Plan, many of the terminated RDC staff members were absorbed by an expanded Provincial Civil Service; they brought with them to their new jobs the experience and skills gained as community development workers. In the past two decades, a significant number of those former RDCers have risen to senior positions in Government (Federal, as well as Provincial), where their influence is arguably another legacy of the Council. Most notable of these persons at present is Prince Edward Island Premier Pat Binns, a former RDC field worker (1972–1975) who has also served as a Member of Parliament for Cardigan.

If pressed for a one-sentence summary, I might characterize the history of the Prince Edward Island Rural Development Council as a story of “priests and poets, prophets and kings.” Prominent in its early years, of course, were the clergy and the laypersons who expressed their belief in the potential of rural communities. Throughout the RDC story, it seems, there were warning voices that foretold the Council’s fate. And, in the end, it was a system of politics — not a monarchy, but just as time-honoured — that dictated its termination. ¶



A NOTE ON SOURCES

THIS HISTORY OF THE Prince Edward Island Rural Development Council is based, for the most part, on primary sources. The author's preface alludes to the mass of material examined in the course of this study. The original RDC files, along with the additional materials compiled during the summers of 1989 and 1990, are, at the time of this writing, stored in the Main Building on the UPEI campus. It is expected that they will eventually be placed in the Public Archives and Records Office of Prince Edward Island.

Also mentioned in the Author's Preface are the taped interviews conducted during the summer of 1990. These tapes are now considered part of the RDC archive and will be included with the other materials when they are deposited in the Public Archives.

The RDC files include items spanning the full history of the RDC — 1964–1978. Particularly valuable are minutes of meetings of the RDC Board (including the Executive Committee) and annual meetings, and minutes and reports emanating from various RDC committees. From the “Early Years” period (1964–1969) are copies of important papers and briefs related to the Council's philosophy, policies, and strategies.

During its Development Plan period (1970–1975), the RDC had all the trappings of a small government department and it produced the expected amount of administrative paperwork. The RDC files include budgets, staff lists, minutes of staff meetings, and various reports (including Reports of the Managing/Executive Director, 1970–1977, internal and external evaluations, and individual and summary activity reports). Especially relevant to the Development Plan years are materials retrieved from Department of Development files (PARO RG 33), including confidential memoranda, and minutes of meetings of the Planning Board and the Joint Advisory Board.

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Numerous pieces of correspondence, again dating from the mid-1960s through to the late 1970s, and newspaper clippings, most from the period 1968–1975, will also be found in the Council files. An almost complete edition of the *RDC Communicator*, a regular publication of the Council from 1968 to 1975, is another source contained in the files.

All the aforementioned primary sources are fully identified in either footnotes or in the body of this publication. Secondary sources used in this project have been discussed and cited in full in the footnotes. ¶