

Maritime Union: A Good Idea for PEI?

by Tom Beveridge

This article is written in response to the Institutes of Island Studies and Public Administration of Canada day long seminars on Tuesday, February 27, 1996

After 130 rounds of debating the issue in as many years as the federally constituted jurisdiction known as Canada has been around, the specter of Maritime Union continues to raise its head. The question of Maritime Union was again discussed in Charlottetown through a day-long seminar, co-sponsored by the Institute of Island Studies from the University of PEI and the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (I.P.A.C.). This event drew a cross section of interested academics in the fields of economics and political science, labour leaders, politicians, the media, and approximately half a dozen students.

The university's Vice President, Doctor John Crossley welcomed everyone to the seminar as the moderator for discussion and the debates. The Hon. Robert Morrissey was the first to make a presentation with comments regarding the usefulness of Maritime Council of Provinces over its 25 year history and the PEI government's commitment to continued economic co-operation with the other Maritime provinces. Leo Broderick, former President of the PEI Federation of Teachers Union pressed Morrissey on the question of jobs and suggested that corporations were taking control of the government's public agenda to meet their own needs, namely profits. The response was one of denial, of course, and the day moved on.

The first half of the day was committed to the economic side of the issues facing PEI regarding the possibility of Maritime Union. It was fitting then, to have two respected economists - Brian Russell, the director of the North American Policy Group at Dalhousie and Brian Crowley, the president of the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies, debating the economic effects of Maritime Union. Brian Russell presented a good case for the topic of Maritime Union as timely and beneficial to PEI. He stated that after 25 years of incremental economic union, the Maritime Council of Provinces and the governments involved should shoulder the burden of proof in light of its lack of substantial performance. With so little to show over 25 years, Russell made his point that other alternatives, including Maritime Union, should be looked at in a closer light. Brian Crowley presented the other side of the debate with less "fast talking" than Russell was accused of, but his point about the short term economic burden was not as well made, though the research was very sound and effective in itself.

Other speakers, such as Kenize MacNeil, an editor of The Cape Bretoner, Eric Ellsworth, the chair of the Atlantic Provinces Chamber of Commerce, Professor David Milne from UPEI's political science department (with some absent ghostly assistance from Barry Bartman, also with UPEI's political science department) and Aubrey Cormier from the Acadian community in New Brunswick, provided the seminar with further perspective on Maritime

political Union. Mr. MacNeil provided an emotional plea for PEI to retain its "adult independence" based on the experiences that Cape Breton felt in its loss of independence. Professor Bartman provided his ghostly indignity over the idea that a small island such as PEI can not make it alone as a viable economic jurisdiction. Mr. Ellsworth and Mr. Cormier made presentations along with statistics showing support for Atlantic Union from the small business community and the Acadians across Atlantic Canada.

The event as a whole brought to light many new questions and a lot of new arguments and defense on the topic of Maritime Union. In the near future the discussion of Maritime Union will have to be taken up by more than the politicians, public service or academics. With this issue about to heat up as another Quebec referendum approaches, along with constitutional meetings scheduled for 1997, individual people will have to decide what Maritime Union means to them and whether it is good for PEI.

Kiss A Pig Results

Winner: Tim Carroll, Business Administration - 334 votes
 Palmer - 64 (Chemistry)
 Mark Braithwaite - 45 (Manager, Residence and Conference Services)
 MacDonald - 39 (Math)
 Peters - 36 (Engineering)
 Leblanc and O'Rourke - 24 (Business)
 O'Hare - 23 (English)
 Lacroix - 18 (Bio)
 Adams - 16 (Business)
 Srebrnil - 14 (Political Science)
 Dahn, Kemp, Robb - 10
 Sweet, MacEwen - 8
 Hennessey, Ryan, Wolf, Ferris - 5
 MacQuarrie, Boudreau, Murray - 4
 McLean, Beauregard, Colins, Morrison, Robinson - 3
 Smitheram, Wagner, McCormac, Mackie, Bustard, Judson - 2
 Song, Cheverie, Clark, Lindsay, Love, Powell - 1



41 of 51 profs on list received at least one vote
 Total votes - 731
 Total money raised - \$365.5
 100% goes to help UPEI student travel to Guyana for 10 weeks of volunteer work with Youth Challenge International.

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