

# INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION IN EASTERN CANADA

## COUNCIL OF MARITIME PREMIERS

### PROPOSALS FOR MARITIME UNION

Current examination and debate the constitution of Canada and the need for techniques of revision suggest that the exercise that has been underway in Eastern Canada during the past seven years might be of interest to legislators in Canada - members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

Professor J. Murray Beck, in his History of Maritime Union: A study in frustration, makes the following comment:

"In 1713 the Treaty of Utrecht decreed that Acadia was to be British. More than two hundred and fifty years later - in 1969 - the number of political entities that is most appropriate for administering the original Acadia is still a subject for study and debate."

It will be recalled that Acadia included what are now the provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. New Brunswick was established as a separate province in 1784 and Prince Edward Island in 1789. Cape Breton, having been separated in 1763, was reannexed to Nova Scotia in 1820 to settle the present geographic and jurisdictional boundaries of the Maritime region.

### MARITIME UNION STUDY

The Maritime Union Study, carried out under the direction of the late Dr. John Deutsch and published in 1970, notes the persistence of the idea of Maritime Union over the past century and a quarter. Various governors of the three Provinces proposed the union during the 1850's but failed to attract firm support locally or in Great Britain. The original Charlottetow conference in 1864 was organized by the three Provinces and attracted delegates from the governments of the Canadas. Discussion of Maritime Union was deferred to permit consideration of proposals for the larger union with results that need not be referred to here.

The idea, however, refused to die and discussions of it were resumed from time to time leading, in the autumn of 1964, to the unanimous adoption by the Assemblies of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia of identical resolutions, presented by Premiers Robichaud and Stanfield, supporting a study of union. Some time later, Premier Alex B. Campbell of Prince Edward Island indicated his willingness to participate in the study. This study appears to have been sparked by remarks of the Honourable Louis J. Robichaud, Premier of New Brunswick, at the opening of the Confederation Centre in Charlottetown in 1964, on the 100th anniversary of Charlottetown Conference.

Dr. Deutsch and his associates, Messrs. F.R. Drummie and F.J. Arsenault, after considering three possible approaches, viz. informal cooperation, formal cooperation and some form of union, came down in favour of a form of Maritime Union. They did not undertake to prescribe form of political union that should be aimed at, but recommended the establishment of machinery and procedures to carry out a number of tasks in preparation for union, namely: regional economic planning, regional negotiations with federal authorities, establishment of common administration services, development of uniform legislation, coordination of existing provincial government for the Maritime region, and implementation of successive steps leading to political union.

The mechanism suggested would consist of:

- The Council of Maritime Premiers
- The Maritime Provinces Commission
- The Joint Legislative Assembly.

The Council of Maritime Premiers would consist of the three premiers of the Maritime Provinces who would meet regularly and at least four times a year, to:

- (a) consider recommendations from the Commission;
- (b) approve joint submissions and negotiate with federal authorities on behalf of the region;

- (c) coordinate policies of the three provincial governments; and
- (d) secure agreements among the three governments for common action.

It was recommended also that the Council should have a small secretariat to organize and expedite its work.

The Maritime Provinces Commission would consist of five full-time members appointed by the Council of Maritime Premiers - two from nominees of each of the Governments of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia and one from nominees of the Government of Prince Edward Island, plus a chairman appointed by the Council. Its duties would be principally to submit to the Council of Premiers recommendations respecting the tasks enumerated above that were required to be performed in preparation for union.

The Joint Legislative Assembly would consist of all the members of the three provincial legislative assemblies meeting in joint session "once a year for a few weeks to receive and discuss reports from the Council of Premiers and from the Maritime Provinces Commission. The Assembly would consider "proposals from the Commission for uniform legislation, for budgets, for joint services and projects, for the constitution of a united Maritime province, and for the procedures and timetables for the progressive implementation of political union".

The three speakers of the existing provincial assemblies would alternately act as speakers of the Joint Assembly. Work of the Assembly would be organized and arranged by a "steering committee" of five members elected annually.

### REACTION TO STUDY

As detailed later, the three Premiers -- Hatfield of New Brunswick, Regan of Nova Scotia, and Campbell of Prince Edward Island -- lost little time in acting upon the recommendation for establishing the Council of Maritime Premiers.

They departed from the recommendation for joint meetings annually of all the members of the three Assemblies and arranged for a meeting of a number of members from each assembly to review the Study and the various tasks identified in the Study. Such a meeting was held in 1971, but was not considered to be sufficiently productive to warrant similar meetings in subsequent years. It would appear that the main reason for insufficiency of productivity was the lack of support staff and preliminary preparation for the meeting.

On the recommendation for establishment of a Maritime Provinces Commission, the Premiers have opted for examination of projects and possible joint programs by committees of ministers or of senior public servants supported by a secretariat and, on occasion, by consultants engaged for matters requiring specialized knowledge or experience.

Similarly, they have consistently shown an unwillingness to approve the recommendation that the

Provinces enter into a political union, preferring to follow the route of cooperation and promotion of joint programs and objectives.

### COUNCIL OF MARITIME PREMIERS

A speedy action of the Premiers to the Study was an Agreement among them in May, 1971, to form a Council having objectives similar to those listed in the Deutsch report, but omitting any reference to political union. A secretary was engaged and office space acquired in Halifax.

At the sessions of the three Legislative Assemblies in 1972, identical acts were passed confirming the Agreement of 1971 and empowering the Lieutenant Governor in Council to enter into agreement appointing the Council of Premiers as agents of the three Governments to do on their behalf anything that they themselves were authorized to do. Pursuant to this authority, the Governments of the three Provinces have entered into a number of agreements with the Council, whereby the Council has been appointed as their agent to negotiate and enter into agreements with the Federal Government and others respecting various joint programs and projects.

A full-time Secretary and two Assistant Secretaries have been appointed, as well as a number of Regional coordinators who work with committees of Ministers, or officials on subjects such as: Communication, Transportation, Environmental Matters, Energy, Tourism, Uniform Legislation, Economic Development, and the like.

Two substantial programs have been carried on jointly with the Federal Government since the establishment of the Council -- one involving the surveying and mapping

of the three Provinces leading to establishment of a land titles system, known as Land Registration and Information Service, and the other as Maritime Resource Management Service, designed to provide consulting services in community planning, aerial photography, cartography and selected civil engineering services. Approximately three hundred employees are engaged in these two projects.

Many of the persons employed in these two services had previously been Federal or Provincial employees enjoying the benefits of superannuation, group insurance and collective bargaining rights. In order to ensure that they would not be prejudiced by joining the staff of the Council, it was considered necessary and advisable to set up similar arrangements in relation to them as Council employees. This has led to the creation of a Council superannuation plan, a group insurance plan, personnel policies and collective bargaining arrangements. These in turn have required the establishment of an organization of approximately ten persons within the Council Secretariat for central administrative purposes.

## EDUCATION SERVICES

### MARITIME PROVINCES HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

Before the Council was formed, each Province had a commission or agency charged with the duty of administering programs providing financial assistance or support to post-secondary education. In keeping with a decision of the Council, legislation was passed in all three Provinces replacing these provincial bodies by the Maritime

Provinces Higher Education Commission, to act as the advisory to post-secondary educational institutions on development of higher education in the region. The Commission annually recommends to the Council levels of provincial financial support to all and each post-secondary educational institution in the three Provinces. Upon approval by the Council of the Commission's recommendations, each Premier arranges for inclusions in the Estimates of his Province the portion of the total contribution that is to be borne by it. In preparing its recommendations for funding, the Commission consults with institutions concerning their plans for continuing and possible new areas of education and training, and with the Regional Treasury Board composed of the Minister of Finance and one additional Minister from each of the Provinces. In addition to the savings flowing from replacement of three provincial bodies by a single Maritime Agency, the Commission has been effective in producing greater equity in the public support of institutions that serve students from provinces other than those in which they reside, and in helping to restrain uneconomic duplication of new programs and courses.

### MARITIME MUNICIPAL TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD

With encouragement and financial support from the Federal Department of Urban Affairs, the Premiers joined in the establishment of this Board to promote education and training of persons engaged in municipal administration. The Board itself is not designed to provide training and education, but rather to assist and advise municipal bodies and educational institutions in

developing and providing those services. Administrative services are provided to the Board by the Institute of Public Administration of Dalhousie University under contract with the Council. An example of the value of the Board is a program for training of building inspectors, which has been developed by it to complement adoption of the National Building Code in all three Provinces following passing of legislation promoted by Council.

### OTHER ACTIVITIES

The space available in this Review is not sufficient to permit a detailed account of the range and variety of other matters that have been, or are being, carried on under the aegis of the Council. Some of the more significant or interesting are listed below, and more information about them is readily obtainable from the Secretary of the Council whose address is P.O. 2044, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 2Z1.

1. Establishment of a Maritime Energy Corporation to produce and distribute electricity throughout the Region.
2. Coordination of Provincial positions on transportation and telecommunications, participating in negotiations with the federal government, and presentations to regulatory bodies.
3. Development of uniform-harmonious legislation or regulations on co-operatives, credit unions, building codes, land titles, securities, and motor vehicle transportation.

4. Joint planning, promotion or administration in relation to tourism, environmental protection, archaeological sites preservation.
5. Support service in preparation for, and conduct of, annual meetings of Eastern Premiers and New England Governors.

### RELATIONSHIP TO PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS

Decisions of the Council require unanimous agreement of the three Premiers, who in turn must have approval of the Lieutenant Governors in Council for agreements containing financial obligations and the grant of funds by their Assemblies. Participation by the Ministers and officials is necessary for effective action by committees to which subjects are referred. In effect, ultimate authority in all matters remains with the Provinces. The Council, its agencies and staffs exist to complement, not to compete with or displace, Provincial organisms or bodies.

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## INTERPROVINCIAL EXCHANGE VISIT TO SASKATCHEWAN, JULY 1978

From July 15-22, 1978, nine parliamentarians and their spouses from the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories and the House of Assembly of Newfoundland visited Saskatchewan as part of Saskatchewan's interprovincial exchange visit program. In 1972, the Saskatchewan Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association instituted a program of trying to ensure that each and every backbench Member of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly would have the opportunity of visiting another jurisdiction through a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference or exchange visit within the four-year term of that Legislature.

A vital component of this program is to invite the Assemblies of other Canadian provinces to visit Saskatchewan. This year, Newfoundland and the Northwest Territories were invited to send delegations to Saskatchewan. Two jurisdictions were purposefully combined in one visit in order to offer the visitors an opportunity to become acquainted with Saskatchewan Members and to meet and get to know Members from another area of Canada.

The tour for the visiting delegation had a predominating theme which was the historic background shared by the Province of Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories. The delegation attended the Trial of Louis Riel, visited Batoche, the site of one of the battles of the Riel Rebellion; and Fort Battleford, the capital of the Northwest Territories from 1876-1882. The visitors toured Saskatchewan's grain, potash and steel industries. While in Saskatchewan, the delegation toured the Saskatchewan countryside, met with Saskatchewan Members of the Legislative Assembly and with many Saskatchewan citizens.

The visit was an opportunity for Members from the Northwest Territories, Newfoundland and Saskatchewan to meet, to become friends and to learn more about the various aspects of the Canadian nation.

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