

at. Complaints were continually being brought in by tenants that proper titles could not be obtained from the landlords, also that great hardship was caused by short leases. It was impossible for a man to take pride in improving his land, if when he was old, and not able for work, the fruits of so many years of hard toil would be taken from him. There were good landlords who were of real benefit to their tenants, but unfortunately there were many who cared for nothing but the few pounds of rent received, and were utterly heartless if the money were not forthcoming. Some who had a little money on their arrival managed to pay their rent, and did not find the conditions too severe, but as a rule, the only prosperous districts were those where the land was held as freehold.

A large number of Loyalists, after the war, had been induced by the proprietors to settle on the Island by a promise of land, but on arriving it was most difficult for some of these men to obtain proper titles to the land on which they had been placed. Others, more fortunate, receiving land and title together afterwards proved to be among the best settlers in the country. Many of those who found they could not be confirmed in their right to the land left in disgust, while others who had spent their all in reaching the Island could not leave, and were obliged to remain "tenants at will," not knowing from day to day how long they would be left in peace. This disgraceful state of affairs could scarcely continue without some serious steps being taken to rectify the wrongs of the tenants. Three different propositions had been put forward for the settlement of the question. First by establishing a court of escheat, second by the purchase of the land by the Crown, and third by a heavy tax on wilderness land. All three propositions were rejected by Lord John Russell, Colonial Secretary.

Finally, in the year 1859, the Island legislature petitioned the Queen to appoint a commission to inquire into and regulate matters. The petition was granted and the commission was appointed as follows:—Commissioner for the Crown, Hon. J. H. Grey, of New Brunswick; Commissioner for the Proprietors, Matthew Ritchie, of Halifax; and Commissioner for the Island Legislature, Hon. Joseph Howe, of Nova Scotia. The commission met for the first time in the assembly room of the Colonial Building, and court was also held at St. Eleanor's and Georgetown. Every opportunity