

Government feel themselves bound to adhere to the decision, so repeatedly adopted by my predecessors in this matter, and to state that both on the grounds of justice to the landed proprietors, and of the permanent interests of the community of Prince Edward Island, they regard such a measure as impracticable."

It could hardly be conceived that, with such views as these, Her Majesty could ever have intended to transfer to the Local Government a power, the exercise of which would be in derogation of the faith and honour of the Crown. But apart from this, the exercise of such power at the present time would be directly at variance with the interests of the Island.

Ninety-four years ago the grants were issued; 84 years ago the conditions of the settlement by foreign Protestants, on which they were issued, were broken; 84 years have passed and no forfeiture for such breach has been exacted. In the meantime the character and value of the lands have altered; improved, cultivated, and paid for, acquired by purchase, or passed by inheritance, in some instances no taint of the original ownership remains.

If it were possible that any country could be found, where, after a century the possession of property could be disturbed for non-performance of an absurd condition in the original grant, the authority having the power to enforce the forfeiture during all that period, not only being fully cognizant of the omission to perform, but actually declaring that performance should not be required, and acquiescing in the expenditures, improvements, and transmissions that were made on the faith of such declaration, that country would cease to be regarded among the civilized communities of the world.

If it were believed that such a principle existed in Prince Edward Island, or could be enforced, it would be utterly ruinous to its prosperity.

The insecurity of the tenure would prevent any person purchasing land. Titles would be insecure, because, with few exceptions, the forfeiture would apply to every township, and every subdivision of a township in the Island. No particular lot, no particular proprietor could be selected; the law would be general in its application, and must fall on all alike; not solely on the representative of the original grantees of 1776, if any such there be, but on the purchaser of yesterday, or the orphan whose inheritance fell to him the day before. The destruction of the primary title would carry with it the titles of the small freeholders who hold under it, as well as the improvements of the tenants. If courts and juries could be found to work out such a principle, no free people would endure it long.

But if the scheme could be carried out, and these lands became vested in the Local Government, how could they be disposed of, and who would become the owners? If put up at public auction, it does not follow that the man whose labor had made a farm valuable, or whose money had purchased it before the scheme, would be certain of securing his improvements. If disposed of at a private sale, the practice would lead to the grossest favoritism and corruption.