**Committee: Canadian Confederation**

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**Topic 1: Institutional Design and Regional Diversity.**

Initially, Prince Edward Island (PEI)was enthusiastic of the possibility of a political union of British North American (BNA) colonies, however after some time, they no longer found the idea appealing. PEI began its path to the Confederation by considering a union between the Maritimes colonies (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and PEI). The Maritime union wanted to reorganize these colonies into one, in order to ameliorate their defenses. However the discussion of creating a Maritime Union during the 1864 Charlottetown Conference, quickly expanded into a discussion of a bigger Union of all the BNA colonies.

The people of Prince Edward Island, saw no benefit in joining an united BNA. The islanders felt that they wouldn't be represented enough in the Union. Politics in the island were characterized by a strong sense of independence in relation to the outside world. They felt that if they joined an united BNA their voices wouldn't be heard due to the "representative per population system". Prince Edward Island had a small population and only 5 people out of 194 would represent the colony in the new government. The islanders, therefore thought that by agreeing to a united BNA they would lose legislative control over their own affairs. The islanders also didn't want to pay tax for the construction of a new railroad system all over Canada. Since Prince Edward Island is a country they did not benefit from the new railroad system. As Prince Edward Island had a strong economy due to the farming, shipbuilding and timber industries, the islanders felt like the united BNA would just take money from them.

Due to these reasons, Prince Edward Island refused to be a part of am united BNA. The colony examined other options that were opened to them, such as remaining part of the nation of Great Britain and Ireland, becoming a discrete dominion upon itself, are joining the United Sate of America. Prince Edward Island would probably join the united BNA if the other colonies agreed on interpolating a transport system between Prince Edward Island and the main land, allowing Prince Edward Island to have a bigger voice in the new government and to help the island with absentee landlord holdings (further explained in topic 2).

**Topic 2: Economic Policy, Regional Markets, and Colonial Expansion**.

Prince Edward Island had a strong and healthy economy due to the timber, farming and shipbuilding industries, and with a merchant fleet that shipped goods around the world. In 1854, Prince Edward Island and the other BNA colonies signed a treaty with the United States of America called the "Reciprocity treaty" which assured free trade amongst the two regions. This treaty helped the Island's economic boom. However, in 1866 the treaty expired, and Prince Edward Island couldn't discuss a new trade option with the United States of America without the permission of Great Britain.

Unfortunately, Prince Edward Island has accumulated a large debt when trying to pay for the construction of a railroad system throughout the island. In addition, Islanders were suffering due to absentee landlord holdings. Absentee landlordism was implemented by Great Britain, where it divided the island into 67 lots and sold them to people living in Great Britain. The owners of the land had to agree to certain terms in exchange for the land, one of which was to ensure the settlement of one third of the land. However many of these owners refused to meet these conditions. This angered the settlers as they were unable to own the land in which they lived and worked on and the owners forced the islanders to pay expensive rent. In 1853, Prince Edward Island started the "Land Purchase Act". This act empowered the government to purchase land from those who are willing to sell, and resell these lands to settlers at low prices. However the Island had to stop this act when it ran out of money. Dissatisfaction and anger grew in the islanders, and eventually in 1860 the "Tenant League" was created. Most of the tenants on the Island joined. The League members refused to pay their rent until the owners agreed to sell their land. This created huge conflicts between the tenants and the owners which resulted in numerous incidents known as the "Tenant League Riots".

By agreeing to come to the Confederation, Prince Edward Island hopes that it can reach some sort of agreement with the other colonies on absentee landlord holdings. The Island believes that the Union can help solve the problem and in return Prince Edward Island can aid the Union with its fishing, shipbuilding, farming and timber industries.

**Topic Three: Foreign Policy and Protecting our Borders.**

In 1861, a civil war erupted in the United States of America which posed a threat to the safety of the British North American colonies. In order not to be absorbed by the United states of America some colonial politicians felt the need to unite all the BNA colonies. However, the islanders in Prince Edward Island do not feel entirely threatened. Prince Edward Island does not share any borders with the United States of America, so there will be no possible invasion from the United States of America into the Island. If the country did attack by sea, Great Britain would defend us. Additionally, Prince Edward Island has a militia which can help defend the island. This militia was created in 1780, with the Island's first Militia Act, passed by the general assembly. It stipulated that the Island's habitants should be well armed and properly trained to defend themselves. They trained once a year, and by 1829 there were 5400 men in the militia, and they formed many localized units that spread out over the a number of Island communities.

Britain has decided to reduce military spending in the British North America colonies, which worries the habitants of the Island because they are now more vulnerable. The recent Chesapeake Affair (1863) also worries the habitants as a big conflict happened in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, which are neighbouring colonies of the Island. This new state of vulnerability in Prince Edward Island, might lead to them joining an united BNA so the island would be protected by British North American army.

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