

# Tartanism Triumphant: The Construction of Scottishness in Nova Scotia, 1933-1954

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## Tartanism Triumphant: The Construction of Scottishness in Nova Scotia, 1933-1954

IN 1952, HAROLD CONNOLLY WROTE A LETTER to his political leader, the Liberal premier of Nova Scotia, Angus L. Macdonald. Although, as minister of industry and publicity in the 1940s, Connolly had approved of promoting the province as the "Scotland of the New World", as a Haligonian of Irish descent he could not help finding the theme a little strange. In his letter, he reminded Macdonald of a paper he had once written (entitled "Let's Cash In on Antiquity") about Nova Scotia tourism, in which he had advised the province to exploit to the full the "English, Irish, German and even Scotch origin of our peoples". Yet somehow the Scots had come out on top in the ways the province was represented in the world. At the border with New Brunswick one even found a Scottish piper, piping summer visitors into the province. Connolly mischievously imagined what a truly multicultural border crossing would sound like:

I have now determined to take my own advice of that year and join in the preparations for the annual 'Irish Mad' [Mod] now being talked about. I shall then turn my devious talents towards arranging nationalistic displays of one kind or another for the other racial groups. Visualize if you can at the Broder [Border] alternating groups of Irish harpists — English trumpeters — French Fiddlers and German Bands of the well known variety referred to in that great ballad, Macnamara's Band.<sup>1</sup>

It was still possible, as late as 1952, for someone like Connolly to find the piper at the border both an amusing novelty and a rather improbable sign of Nova Scotia's

1 Harold Connolly to Angus L. Macdonald, 25 August 1952, Macdonald Papers, vol. 972, f.40-1/12, Public Archives of Nova Scotia [PANS]. My thanks go to Andrew Nurse and Linda Little for research assistance, to Justice Angus Macdonald of the Nova Scotia Supreme Court for permission to consult the papers of Angus L. Macdonald in the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, and to the Principal's Development Fund at Queen's University for its assistance. This is a revised version of a paper delivered at the Canadian Historical Association meeting in Victoria in 1990. I thank Ken MacKinnon, Suzanne Morton, Rosemary Ommer, George Rawlyk, Graeme Wynn and the four anonymous *Acadiensis* reviewers for their helpful suggestions and criticisms. I owe a special debt to Norman Macdonald, who was good enough to share his insights into Scottishness in Cape Breton with me. I take full responsibility, however, for the errors of fact and interpretation that remain.

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identity. Yet over the previous two decades, as he knew very well, the notion that Nova Scotia is essentially Scottish had truly taken hold.

This notion has since become a "commonsense". Today, the province's most important emblems — the provincial flag, the coat-of-arms, and an "official tartan" — proclaim that Nova Scotia is New Scotland. Summer visitors are often "piped in" by a bagpiper stationed at the border, welcomed by a Gaelic motto (*Ciad Mile Failte* — A Hundred Thousand Welcomes), and entertained by a wide assortment of ceilidhs and clan gatherings. Tartanism<sup>2</sup> — the system of signs testifying to the supposed Scottish essence of Nova Scotia — has proved a durable way to represent the province. How and why did this system emerge?

The question is not answered merely by responding that the province *is* Scottish, and that its official emblems quite naturally refer to this fact. A description of Nova Scotia as "Scottish" must clearly involve something much more complicated than an assertion that the origins of the province were Scottish or, alternatively, that a majority of 20th-century Nova Scotians were of Scottish descent, because neither claim can be sustained.

If the case for actual Scottish "origins" is founded on the 17th-century history of "New Scotland", it is founded on shifting sand. In 1624, in an effort to make concrete a plan for colonization that had hitherto been rather nebulous and abstract, the Crown instituted an order of knight-baronetcies in Scotland. A small section of Edinburgh Castle was designated "Nova Scotia", where some of the baronets took *sasine* (possession) of their lands. (None of the baronets took physical possession of these lands.) Around 1629, small "Scottish" settlements were founded at Cape Breton and Port Royal. The Cape Breton settlement, whose population may well have been chiefly English, lasted a very short time; the Port Royal settlement endured until 1632, when it was surrendered to France. It is from this period that the Nova Scotia flag, coat-of-arms, and the name itself are derived: the name "Nova Scotia" has applied since France ceded Acadia to Britain (not including Ile Royale, the present-day Cape Breton) in 1713.<sup>3</sup> On this basis, it is clearly difficult to ascribe a Scottish "origin" to Nova Scotia.

To claim that Nova Scotia is Scottish in origin (and therefore is in some sense essentially or foundationally Scottish) is to commit oneself to three hazardous procedures going well beyond the empirical evidence: first, that of explaining why the "original" peoples should not be considered to be those who were in the area first (namely the native peoples of the region); second, that of arguing that a "New Scotland" which was more ephemeral than Acadia and of less economic significance than the Basque presence in the fisheries should still be considered the

2 Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London, 1977), speaks of "tartanry" (p. 286) and the "vast tartan monster" (p. 285). I think "tartanism" is preferable, in that it conveys a less pejorative image. I mean to convey the notion that this network of Scottish words, images and things was internally coherent and was associated with political ideas for those who developed and received it. For a serious nationalist critique of Nairn's approach, see Craig Beveridge and Ronald Turnbull, *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture* (Edinburgh, 1989).

3 See John Reid, *Acadia, Maine, and New Scotland: Marginal Colonies in the Seventeenth Century* (Toronto, 1981), Chapter 1, for a detailed discussion of New Scotland; the suggestion that Scotland's colonists on Cape Breton appear to have been chiefly English is found on p. 31.

most "foundational" European presence; and third, that of attempting to construct a post-17th-century pattern of Scottish continuity from empirical evidence of stark discontinuity. To suggest that the contested claim of Scots over lands populated by natives somehow made the peninsula "Scottish" is surely to confuse Scottish ambitions with obdurate North American realities, and to discriminate against the claims of other European states. Simply stated, the greatest legacy of "New Scotland" to tartanism was not any plausible story of origins but merely the name "Nova Scotia".

What of the second possible justification, that of the demographic weight of those claiming Scottish ancestry in modern Nova Scotia? Northern Nova Scotia and Cape Breton (which was a separate colony until 1820) did receive thousands of Scots, responding to the disruption of the clans and the promise of the New World. A great number, although by no means all, of the Scots who came to Nova Scotia between 1770 and 1840 were Highlanders. Many settled in the province's northern counties, particularly in Pictou and Antigonish counties on the mainland, and on Cape Breton Island.<sup>4</sup> Some authorities persuasively follow Dr. Johnson in suggesting that Highlanders tended to recreate in Nova Scotia some of the dense kinship and communal structures of their homeland, which made the trans-Atlantic passage more a transplanting of communities than an exile of individuals.<sup>5</sup> The Gaelic language was imported by the Scots and spoken in many parts of the northern counties, particularly in rural Cape Breton. Sermons were commonly preached, and numerous books and periodicals published, in that language.<sup>6</sup> Spoken by at least 24,303 Nova Scotians, according to the 1931 census, Gaelic was an important language in the province.<sup>7</sup> Scottish influences in political debate, religious discussions and culture can be documented throughout the 19th century. Scottish national societies were formed in the latter 19th century to "foster a taste for the literature...and develop the noble characteristics of the Scottish people", as the "loyal Scotch of River John" put it in 1871.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the most important of

4 See J.M. Bumsted, *The People's Clearance, 1770-1815* (Winnipeg, 1982), which should be read in conjunction with Rosemary Ommer's important critical review (*Labour/Le Travail*, 14 (Fall 1984), pp. 291-6) in mind, James Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community* (Edinburgh, 1976), and D. Campbell and R.A. MacLean, *Beyond the Atlantic Roar: A Study of the Nova Scotia Scots* (Toronto, 1974), which contains many empirical facts and fewer explanations. Rusty Bittermann, "The Hierarchy of the Soil: Land and Labour in a 19th Century Cape Breton Community", *Acadiensis*, XVIII, 1 (Autumn 1988), pp. 33-55 suggests new ways in which the history of rural Highlanders might be interpreted.

5 See especially Rosemary Ommer, "Primitive Accumulation and the Scottish *Clann* in the Old World and the New", *Journal of Historical Geography*, 12, 2 (1986), pp. 121-41, for both Newfoundland and Cape Breton evidence. Ommer suggests that kinship networks characteristic of the clan system may have been reconstituted by emigrant Highlanders in Cape Breton and Newfoundland.

6 D. MacLean Sinclair, "Gaelic in Nova Scotia", *Dalhousie Review*, vol. 30 (October 1950), pp. 252-60.

7 *Census of Canada, 1931*, vol. 4, Table 61. It is considered likely that the *Census* underestimated the number of Gaelic-speakers in later years.

8 *Colonial Standard* (Pictou), 26 September 1871. The Antigonish Highland Society was founded in 1861. Angus L. Macdonald was president of the North British Society of Halifax in 1930; this, the oldest of the Scottish societies, began in 1768.

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these Scottish societies was founded in Antigonish in 1862 as the Highland Society of the County of Sydney, which in 1864 became the Antigonish Highland Society.<sup>9</sup> (The Society's Highland Games, first held in 1863, have become a famous event in the province's summer calendar.) By the 20th century, persons claiming Scottish descent were numerous in the northern counties of the province, and constituted a majority in some. Although much work has been done with regard to persons of Scottish ancestry in Nova Scotia, many questions remain. But no serious historian disputes their importance in Nova Scotia's history.<sup>10</sup>

However, none of this evidence of Scottish settlement made Nova Scotia a "Scotland of the New World". According to the 1921 census, the 148,000 Nova Scotians of "Scottish origin" represented just over 28 per cent of the provincial population of 523,837. They were outnumbered by 202,106 Nova Scotians of "English origin", representing about 39 per cent of the total population. The remaining 173,731 Nova Scotians were assigned a wide range of "principal origins" by the census: Irish, French (i.e. Acadian), German, Black, "Indians", and others. Not only was Nova Scotia *not* predominantly Scottish, but it was also not the most Scottish of Canadian provinces: Prince Edward Islanders of Scottish origin accounted for a larger percentage of their province's population; 465,400 Ontarians of Scottish origin were about three times more numerous than those of Nova Scotia.<sup>11</sup> The second empirical argument for Nova Scotia as New Scotland seems as weak as the first.

We are left with an intriguing puzzle, which seems to go to the very heart of the provincial identity as it has been constructed through officially sanctioned signs and a large library of travel books and novels. How did the words, practices, actions and objects which today speak of what is called the "Highland Heart" of Nova Scotia come to be so self-evidently true? Why in an advanced capitalist society did traditions and customs — kilts, mods, clans — drawn from a pre-capitalist Highland culture attain such prominence?

Nova Scotia "became Scottish" in the second quarter of the 20th century. Before then, no single vocabulary of "Nova Scotianness" was in use. Somehow, in little over three decades, a collection of hazy generalizations and ethnic stereotypes about Nova Scotians was transformed into a natural and obvious "commonsense" about Nova Scotia's identity. Why was tartanism triumphant? The broad answer is that it was part of an international anti-modernist wave, a local version of a general middle-class search for something *outside* and better than the crisis-ridden modern

9 Alice Taylor Cheska, "The Antigonish Highland Games: A Community's Involvement in the Scottish Festival of Eastern Canada", *Nova Scotia Historical Review*, 3, 1 (1983), pp. 51-63, Patrick F. Walsh, *The History of Antigonish* (Antigonish, 1989), and Pat Lotz, "Scots in Groups: The Origin and History of Scottish Societies with Particular Reference to Those Established in Nova Scotia", M.A. thesis, St. Francis Xavier University, 1975.

10 Some have been content to repeat 19th-century condemnations of the Highland Catholic as a farmer; for an exploratory reassessment of these negative impressions see Alan MacNeil, "Cultural Stereotypes and Highland Farming in Eastern Nova Scotia, 1827-1861", *Histoire sociale/Social History*, 29 (37), May 1986, pp. 39-56.

11 *Census of Canada, 1921*, vol. I, Table 23.

world it inhabited.<sup>12</sup> The narrow answer is that tartanism was triumphant because Premier Angus L. Macdonald, convinced of certain self-evident truths — the truths of his own particularly romantic and essentialist reading of the Scottish tradition, and of the redemptive role of tourism — used the state's cultural power to fuse these two truths into one commanding commonsense. He thereby "naturalized" tartanism and made it seem to be the spontaneous expression of the province's cultural identity. In the triumph of tartanism we have an illustration of the cultural impact of tourism as it was powerfully focused by the activist 20th-century state, and of the ways in which anti-modernism influenced the vocabulary with which the Nova Scotia identity was constructed and diffused.

This article explores the phenomenon of tartanism in three steps. First, representations of ethnicity in the province before the second quarter of the 20th century are examined, to substantiate the argument that tartanism must have been constructed in some later period. Then the focus is on a detailed description of how tartanism was constructed by the state from 1933 to 1954 under Angus L. Macdonald. Finally, some of the correlates of tartanism are considered, namely the decline of the Gaelic language and the strengthening of a liberal ideology of individualism.

Before the 1930s, no single dominant vocabulary of "Nova Scotianness" was in general use. There were many different and often conflicting ideas about the "essential Nova Scotia", but no one official and influential notion of the ethno-cultural "essence" underlying (and somehow explaining) how Nova Scotians thought and behaved. Thus the idea of Scottish essence cannot be equated with recognition of the Scottish "fact", for this "fact" could be produced from writings about the province without in any way implying a doctrine of ethnic essence or identity. Nineteenth- and early-20th-century writings on the "Scottish fact in Nova Scotia" can be divided into two sub-categories: those which disparaged the Scottish immigrants and saw them as one rather uncivilized and undesirable group among many others in the province, and those which subordinated ethnicity to the story of material progress.

Most Victorian representations of Nova Scotia esteemed those landscapes and societies approximating the pastoral ideal. The "Nova Scotia" constructed by this tradition was either very similar to southern England (as in landscape painting) or, conversely, dissimilar in amusing ways (as in the brilliant works of Thomas Chandler Haliburton) — a cultural pattern that was not very surprising in a colony of England dominated by people whose cultural world centred on London.<sup>13</sup> From this metropolitan perspective, there was little that was attractive or admirable in Scottish pioneers. According to Richard Dashwood, writing in the 1870s of

12 See T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880-1920* (New York, 1981), who defines "American antimodernism" as "the recoil from an 'overcivilized' modern existence to more intense forms of physical or spiritual experience supposedly embodied in medieval or Oriental cultures" (p. xv) — and, I would also add, in the "simple life" and in "nature".

13 See Mary Sparling with Scott Robinson, *Great Expectations: The European Vision in Nova Scotia 1749-1848* (Halifax, 1980), for an exemplary treatment of this theme as it pertains to landscape, and Richard A. Davies, ed., *The Letters of Thomas Chandler Haliburton* (Toronto, 1988), for documents on Haliburton as a Nova Scotian-cum-English gentleman and intellectual.

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Catholic "Highland Scotch" in Cape Breton, "These people were most kind and hospitable, but some of them very ignorant, and rather lawless. As an instance of their ignorance, we were actually asked by a well-to-do settler, if it was true the Duke of Wellington was dead, and if he was not a great general!"<sup>14</sup> For his part, William Moorson was repulsed by the intensity of religious debate among mainland Protestants: "I believe, all the feuds of all the Macs from A to Z, throughout the Scottish alphabet, have emigrated from their ancient soil, in order to concentrate their violence within the precincts of Pictou. Half a dozen parties with half a dozen different ends in view have lately made a clatter in the province, that puts to the blush all the acclamation of the ex-agitators of Ireland".<sup>15</sup> The American travel writer Frederick Cozzens — who valuably remarked on the 19th-century absence of bagpipes, sporrans or philabegs (all part and parcel of 20th-century tartanism) — denounced the Pictou Scots as "a canting, covenanting, oat-eating, money-gripping, tribe of second-hand Scotch Presbyterians: a transplanted, degenerate, barren patch of high cheek-bones and red hair, with nothing cleaving to them of the original stock, except covetousness and that peculiar cutaneous eruption for which the mother country is celebrated".<sup>16</sup> Haliburton, the province's most celebrated 19th-century writer, was scarcely less critical of Cape Bretoners: "The present amount of the population, including all classes of inhabitants in Cape Breton and its dependencies, is estimated at thirty thousand, the great number of whom are indigent and ignorant Scotch islanders, every year receiving an increase of a thousand or two fresh emigrants, equally poor and illiterate, and almost all of the Roman Catholic persuasion".<sup>17</sup> Although Joseph Howe was more charitably disposed toward the Highlanders, with their "extravagant desire...to purchase large quantities of land", he also condemned the "degrading and paltry bickerings" between Kirkmen and Antiburghers.<sup>18</sup> Whether we look at Cozzens' vitriolic denunciation or Howe's more nuanced and sympathetic assessment, the point remains that the Scots were being weighed and assessed on a universal Victorian scale of civilized values. They violated unspoken but understood norms of physical beauty, political economy and civilized religious discourse. One searches far and wide for a description of the Scot as the archetypal, typical or exemplary Nova Scotian.

It is true that some 19th-century descriptions of the Scots treated their defining absence of civilized qualities with fond amusement rather than with condemnation.

14 Richard Lewes Dashwood, *Chiploquorgan; or, Life by the Camp Fire in Dominion of Canada and Newfoundland* (London, 1872), p. 75. Here and elsewhere, one must be skeptical about claims regarding the "extreme isolation" of the Gaels in Nova Scotia: how can we be sure that the difficulties of translation from Gaelic to English are being taken into account?

15 W. Moorsom, *Letters from Nova Scotia* (London, 1830), p. 353.

16 Frederick S. Cozzens, *Acadia; or, a month with the Blue Noses* (New York, 1859), pp. 150, 199.

17 Cited in Brian Tennyson, ed., *Impressions of Cape Breton* (Sydney, 1986), p. 101. One wonders if Haliburton would have appreciated being included in Wilfred Campbell's exceedingly catholic list of the "Scots Who Founded Canada"! (Wilfred Campbell, *The Scotsman in Canada* (Toronto, 1911), vol. I, p. 114.)

18 Joseph Howe, *Western and Eastern Rambles: Travel Sketches of Nova Scotia* (Toronto, 1973), quotations at pp. 152, 149.

The key text here is Charles Dudley Warner's *Baddeck, And That Sort of Thing* (1874), wherein the Scot is still Other but one who can be safely patronized. *Baddeck, And That Sort of Thing* has angered Cape Bretoners for more than a half century because it portrayed them as peculiar, ignorant country folk, good-natured savages far removed from the modern age.<sup>19</sup> Warner's book ranks with J.F.B. Livesay's *Peggy's Cove* (1944) among the classics of Maritime travel literature. Like Livesay with *Peggy's Cove*, Warner helped launch a community into a centre of tourism: Baddeck became Alexander Graham Bell's summer retreat and a major centre of handcraft revivals. The instructive difference between the two books is that the Victorian Warner thinks the Scots are simple, backward, pathetic and odd, whereas the anti-modern Livesay sees his fisherfolk as simple, backward, admirable and archetypal. Warner's treatment of Cape Breton emphasized its supposed total isolation, but in a mocking, ironic way. He was, for example, delighted to meet a Scot who had never heard of Robert Burns, and wrote of one isolated farm near Middle River, "I could conceive of no news coming to these Highlanders later than the defeat of the Pretender".<sup>20</sup> These words do not pretend to an admiration of simplicity; they merely find in it a rich source of amusement.

Warner established a way of seeing Cape Bretoners which influenced many tourists. Even some early-20th-century publications celebrating industrial progress sought to reassure visitors that Warner's droll, quaint communities were still open for viewing. The Intercolonial Railway's 1908 guide, *Forest, Stream and Seashore*, after long descriptions of coalfields and steel mills, reassured prospective visitors that "the primitive simplicity which has amused some writers of years ago still exists here. The farmers along the shores of the Mira, who wring from the soil a comfortable living, are mostly Highland Scotch, and the Gaelic speech is heard everywhere. Quaint, indeed, are the ways of many of them, amusing their maxims, and droll their wit".<sup>21</sup> Some turn-of-the-century readers of Rudyard Kipling's '*Captains Courageous*' hoped they would find quaint Gaelic-speaking Cape Breton blacks; they were drawn by that novel's famous description of a "coal-black Celt with the second sight", who came "from the innards of Cape Breton", and spoke a "home-made Scotch".<sup>22</sup> "The primitive simplicity which amused Charles Dudley Warner and other humorous writers is still to be found in many districts", advised another pamphlet, "but it is no longer a troublesome journey to reach even the

19 Charles Dudley Warner, *Baddeck, and That Sort of Thing* (Boston and New York, 1874). C.W. Vernon, *Cape Breton, Canada, at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century* (Toronto, 1903), documents the resentment of Warner by citizens of Baddeck (p. 302), and D.J. Rankin, in *Our Ain Folk And Others* (Toronto, 1930) remarks, "To observe only superficially is very misleading, as we can easily notice from the works of writers who have written about our own country. We have still some old copies of *Baddeck and That Sort of Thing* written by Charles Dudley Warner whose account of his stay among our people was very offensive to them. It is true, the work is written in a humorous vein, but even those of us who are fond of humour can hardly see the reason for a traveller who has enjoyed the hospitality and friendship of a people, exposing to the gaze of future generations skeletons that would have been better off untouched" (p. 162).

20 Warner, *Baddeck*, p. 149. If the citizen of Cape Breton was a Gaelic-speaking Highlander, it was hardly surprising that he would not have heard of Robert Burns, who wrote in another language.

21 Intercolonial Railway of Canada, *Forest Stream and Seashore* (n.p., 1908), p. 176.

22 Rudyard Kipling, '*Captains Courageous*': *A Story of the Grand Banks* (London, 1897), pp. 42, 121, 244.



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mysterious Baddeck".<sup>23</sup> It was of a piece with a tourism industry which both fed and prompted the creation of ethnic stereotypes, some relatively benign, and others fiercely disparaging and racist.<sup>24</sup>

Crude or polished, hostile or fond, most pre-1930 descriptions of Scots are sharply separated from modern tartanism in a two-fold sense: first, by virtue of the absence of those simple peasant virtues, traditional values and "authentic cultures" that defined the idealized folk in 20th-century ethnographic tourism; and second, by virtue of the absent concept of essence. There was no bedrock under the stubborn sectionalism of the "Nova Scotians" — they stubbornly remained English, Scottish, Irish, or Acadian. No one single group was "typically Nova Scotian".<sup>25</sup> There was no one master narrative of the true Nova Scotian; there were instead the plural stories of Nova Scotians.

Beginning in the mid-19th century, and attaining dominance in the first decade of the 20th century, a "progressive" perspective built on and transformed this Victorian way of seeing.<sup>26</sup> C.W. Vernon's *Cape Breton, Canada, at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century* (1903) is clearly such a progressive construction. His Cape Breton population is "cosmopolitan in character", populated by natives, Acadians, Loyalists, Highlanders, Newfoundlanders, English immigrants and a wide variety of Europeans in search of industrial jobs; especially in Cape Breton County, the growth of the coal and iron industries has led to the arrival of a large mixed population, "including Americans, English, Italians, Austrians, Swedes, Germans, and negroes from the United States, who are employed about the blast furnaces at Sydney".<sup>27</sup> As for the Highland customs a Victorian would have either condemned or patronized, Vernon writes (with specific reference to massive open-air religious services), "That this custom should eventually become a thing of the past is indeed a pity, but the remorseless march of modern ideas, and the busier lives that men live to-day, cannot but bring about this result".<sup>28</sup> Vernon's photographs emphasize the mansions of industrialists, the bankheads of coal mines, and the belching chimneys of the new steel mills, while virtually ignoring quaint fisherfolk and colourful Highlanders. This visual emphasis was not surprising once progress was made the driving, uniting theme of a teleological view of history. Why overburden an essential and inspiring narrative

23 Intercolonial Railway of Canada, *A Ramble and a Rest. Pure Air, Sea Bathing, Picturesque Scenery on the Intercolonial Railway of Canada, Summer of 1895* (Ottawa, 1895).

24 See, *inter alia*, Daniel Elisha Hatt, *Digby Chickens* (Digby, n.d. [c. 1910]) for humorous poems aimed at Acadians, the principal ethnic attraction in pre-1914 Nova Scotia.

25 A point made well by Paulette M. Chiasson, "Travellers in Nova Scotia, 1770-1860", M.A. thesis, Queen's University, 1981.

26 For my purposes, "progressive" denotes an approval of industrialization and urbanization, often combined with a critique of certain of their attendant problems, whose remedy was thought to lie in the application of "scientific" reforms rather than in a change in the mode of production.

27 Vernon, *Cape Breton, Canada*, p. 14.

28 Vernon, *Cape Breton, Canada*, p. 61.

with trivial folk detail? In Vernon's progressive *Cape Breton*, there is not a piper or a kilt to be seen.<sup>29</sup>

Did the "Nova Scotia Scots" see their own world from this progressive perspective? Some of them clearly did. A proudly progressive Antigonish presented itself to the world in 1916. Here was no sleepy Brigadoon, clinging to its Highland Games and its ancient traditions; quite the contrary. The vision of the Antigonish board of trade and town council was, thanks no doubt to the efforts of the "Ladies' Civic Improvement League" and the "Forward Movement", in the very vanguard of progressive improvement. Here was a town that had left all traces of the "primitive" far behind.

Where once the Indian wigwam stood and where the bears a pathway trod, a town of large proportions and every new convenience stands. Where once the savage lived in sloth and superstitious fear, a group of buildings have been raised to hold aloft rich learning's torch, to those who dwell within their walls. It is the centre of a noble shrine, a symbol of the faith which conquers by the words of hope and love, while stretching outward all around lie smiling farms, wrought from the formless forests of the past, and from which the golden threads of time and change have woven a panoramic nature scene as rare as any which the eye could care to see.<sup>30</sup>

What did the board of trade consider special about Antigonish? Its splendid cathedral, women's college, and St. Francis Xavier University — equipped with the latest in scientific equipment and with professors trained in Europe; the town's fine water supply and efficient fire protection; its electricity and telephone services; its well-equipped hospital; its recently macadamized Main Street; and, in a lengthy description with sumptuous photographs, the Eastern Automobile Company, the Home of the Ford Cars for the counties of Antigonish, Guysboro, Inverness and Pictou, housed in a splendid four-storey building, "with a modern two and a half ton elevator, large enough to carry the automobiles to any of the floors...."<sup>31</sup> Only the most attentive reader would have picked up the faintest trace of the theme of the Highlander — buried in a discussion of the bustling town's religious life.

Long before anyone had coined the phrase "invented tradition", Hugh MacLennan in 1964 recorded the "plain fact that the kilt was never worn in Cape Breton before the tourists came".<sup>32</sup> This "plain fact" may not be as plain as all

29 Indeed, even in 1930, when revived Scottish traditions were enjoying a greater prominence, the province's official brochure made only factual reference to the history of Scottish settlement; it featured no kilts, bagpipes, or stereotypically brawny Scotsmen. *Nova Scotia: The Ocean Playground* (n.p. [Halifax], n.d. [1930]).

30 *Antigonish Town and Country* (Antigonish, 1916), p. 5.

31 *Antigonish Town and Country*, p. 37.

32 Hugh MacLennan, "The Scottish Touch: Cape Breton", *Holiday* (April 1964), reprinted in Elspeth Cameron, ed., *The Other Side of Hugh MacLennan* (Toronto, 1978), p. 222. Scottish forms have been particularly prone to re-invention and appropriation by romantic consumerism. Hugh Trevor-Roper valuably documents the invention of the modern kilt by an Englishman after the Union of 1707, and the even later invention of the differentiated "clan tartan", supposedly of great antiquity,

that; MacLennan's rather incautious statement will probably be overturned.<sup>33</sup> Scottish cultural forms in Nova Scotia — the Gaelic language, Scottish ballads, political ideals, bagpipes *and* kilts — were by no means an invention of modern tourism.<sup>34</sup> Yet his remark seems mainly accurate. In the main descriptions of the Scottish Nova Scotians before the 1930s, we search high and low for the signs which today mark the Scot, and by extension the Nova Scotian: we look for the tartans, kilts, bagpipes, haggis and mods, and for the most part they are not to be found. We do find Scottish national societies, we find some Scottish dancing, we find Scottish overtones in the public observances at the landing of the *Hector*. But what impresses one the most when descriptions of "throwing the heavy hammer" and "tossing the caber" crop up is the casualness with which these ethnic signs are intermixed with "standing long jump" and the "boys' sack race". The *Hector* celebrations in 1876 featured Scottish music *and* a baseball game — and a noteworthy absence of claims about the supposed Scottish essence of the province.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, we search in vain through thousands of Victorian and Edwardian words on the nature of Nova Scotia to find a solid argument for its Scottish essence.<sup>36</sup> Before it could become a dominant vocabulary of Nova Scotia ethnicity, tartanism needed anti-modernism's recoil from progress and its withdrawal in "nature" and "the folk"; it needed an economic base, a greatly

but in fact the invention of an English Quaker. Hugh Trevor-Roper, "The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland", in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 15-41. The concept of "invented tradition" is a useful one, provided it is acknowledged that *all* traditions are historically constructed, and not merely those held dear by non-academics and marginalized nationalities. Trevor-Roper's influential essay relies on a naive historical realism (which allows him to "debunk" Highland traditions rather than enquire into why these traditions came to mean so much to so many Scots) and on an unargued concept of the "real", "authentic", "uninvented" traditions, presumably those believed in by Professor Trevor-Roper. All in all, a rather safe adventure in relativism, which views as problematic only certain traditions and not others.

- 33 George Patterson, in his classic *History of the County of Pictou, Nova Scotia* (Montreal, 1877), has the young men on board the *Hector* wearing "kilts, with *skein dhu*, and some with broadswords" (p. 82). Patterson *may* have been succumbing to High Victorian romanticism, but he was unlikely to have selected this particular detail if he thought it would be controverted by the still relatively fresh stories of the *Hector*. And if Patterson is accurate, there would be little reason to suppose that some Scots arriving in Cape Breton in roughly the same period would not wear the same costume.
- 34 Even in 1919 in bustling, progressive Antigonish one could find the Macdonald Music Store, specializing in "Celtic Music and Literature", whose catalogue included Highland bagpipes and costumes, "Brian Boru" Irish warpipes, bagpipe and Celtic music, and so on. *Antigonish Town and Country*, pp. 38-9. One might more generally observe that local interest in things Scottish and in Sir Walter Scott's historical novels can be found in areas and times quite untouched by tourism. See, for example, a major controversy in Amherst ignited by a Methodist clergyman's attack on Walter Scott, among others (*Amherst Daily News*, 6 June 1906).
- 35 *Acadian Recorder* (Halifax), 16 September 1873, 17 September 1874; *Eastern Chronicle* (New Glasgow), 21 September 1876.
- 36 Somewhat later, Archibald MacMechan of Dalhousie University got close to tartanism in 1921. He made an attempt to define "The Nova Scotia-ness of Nova Scotia" (to distinguish it from the "Quebecacy of Quebec, the Ontariosity of Ontario, and the New Brunswickedness of New Brunswick"), but just glimpsed the unifying potential of the Scottish theme. He gave the Scots of Cape Breton more attention than any other ethnic group, but he stopped significantly short of making them the bearers of his "Nova Scotia-ness". Archibald MacMechan, *The Nova Scotia-ness of Nova Scotia*, Nova Scotia Chap-Books No. 2. (Halifax, 1924).

expanded tourism industry; and it needed a strategically located leader who could bring ideas and industry together in a new and powerful truth about Nova Scotia.

Many forces contributed to the emergence of tartanism in the 1930s. Weight must clearly be attached to the popularity of Highland Regiments during the First World War and the use of Scottish traditions in recruiting.<sup>37</sup> Soldiers in the 185th Cape Breton Highlanders wore their kilts (in the Argyle and Sutherland tartan) at all times, except in cold weather and in the front of support lines.<sup>38</sup> Thomas Fraser's 1919 sketch of "The Spirit of the Maritimes" can be considered an early text of tartanism, in that it sought to link this Maritimes spirit with the Highland tradition of Cape Breton, seen as the very embodiment of manliness:

Looking out of the train window early one morning, I saw two returned soldiers, who had just alighted at a lonely platform at the foot of a steep hillside, with nothing but trees and snow for a background, as far as the eye could reach. They were fine types of the young Cape Breton Highlanders and they stood tightening up their straps, and looking after the train. I could imagine them climbing the hills together, perhaps thinking about some of the companions who had gone away with them but who did not come back, and keeping the thoughts to themselves. When they came to the parting of the paths, they would go their separate ways without any elaborate ceremony of leave taking. And when they reached home I question if either got any more effusive greeting, from the head of the house, at least, than an: 'Aye, Sandy, you're back!'<sup>39</sup>

As another scholar has observed, the first "Gathering of the Clans" in Sydney in 1919 was held to welcome returned servicemen.<sup>40</sup> Echoes of the Highland regiments could be heard in the *Hector* celebrations of 1923, which were interesting in their own right as demonstrating the tourism potential of history.<sup>41</sup> As Norman Macdonald has plausibly argued, the emergence of the "Scottish simulacrum" in Nova Scotia was influenced by the uncertain fortunes of British imperialism and the interpretations Canadians made of the world economic order.<sup>42</sup>

Nor should we imagine that only the Scottish tradition was influenced by anti-modernism. In Nova Scotia not only the Scots, but all the white ethnic groups (or "races") came to be seen as people whose cultures were virtually unchanged from ancient times. (Representations of Acadians had developed this theme since the

37 See especially Paul Maroney, "Recruiting the C.E.F. in Ontario, 1914-1917", M.A. thesis, Queen's University, 1991, and "'Braw Kiltie Lad! The Highland Tradition and the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1917", research paper, 1991, on the use of Highland imagery during the Great War.

38 Frank Parker Day to Charles Bruce, 26 November 1947, Charles Bruce Papers, MS 2 297, Dalhousie University Archives.

39 Thomas Fraser, "The Spirit of the Maritimes", *Busy East*, July 1919.

40 Norman Macdonald, "Anglo-Canadian disengagement in the 1930s and the growth of the Scottish simulacrum in Nova Scotia", unpublished paper.

41 Michael Boudreau, "The 1923 Hector Celebrations: Freezing History to Relive the Past", research essay, Queen's University, 1990.

42 Macdonald, "Anglo-Canadian disengagement".

19th century.) Victorian commentaries on the province's ethnic complexity assumed that a process of economic change was fast eroding old cultural specificities; the new essentialist truth of the province proclaimed, on the contrary, the timelessness of ethnic particularism. Adding "DISTINCTIVE RACES" to the list of provincial attractions, the 1936 official publication observed,

Nova Scotia is a place where beauty has had time to grow, where memories have gathered, giving depth and meaning to the lives of its people. The races that settled the Province have preserved many of their national traits down the centuries, the English, Scotch, Acadian and Hanoverians. The Acadians have preserved the habits of their French ancestors and are in contact with the long ago. The Hanoverians are a typical sea-faring folk, industrious, rugged and wholesome. The Highland Scotch, still cherishing the Gaelic of their forefathers, are a warm-hearted, hospitable and self-mastered people who always have leisure to be kind. The English Nova Scotians are quietly friendly, their well-kept towns and orchard farms reflecting their nature.

The original inhabitants, Micmac Indians, are a colorful folk on their reservations where they make baskets and beadwork to sell to visitors....<sup>43</sup>

In 1947 Margaret L. Perry, the provincial film officer, announced that soon the public would be able to watch three "Racial Films", sponsored jointly by the department of industry and publicity of Nova Scotia, the National Film Board, the National Geographic Society, and Crawley Films of Ottawa. These were to treat the Acadians, the so-called Hanoverians, and "the Scotch" [i.e., Scots].<sup>44</sup> Other "races" were allowed their moment beside the Scots, although the Scots were clearly *primum inter pares*.

Tartanism, then, clearly did not spring forth, fully kilted, from the forehead of Angus L. Macdonald after his election in 1933. Yet there are also reasons for thinking that without him, it would not have become so powerful a force in Nova Scotia. Ontario, with more people of Scottish descent, and as vigorous a participation in Highland regiments, did not seek to become the Scotland of the New World. The *Hector* pageant demonstrated the value of the Scottish tradition as a vehicle for tourism promotion, but until Macdonald's rise to power it did not bear fruit in a significant heightening of Scottish imagery in provincial promotions. (The "Land of Evangeline" promotion, pioneered by the Dominion Atlantic Railway, showed how anti-modernism and the exploitation of ethnic identity could be profitably merged in tourism, but its impact was mainly confined to the Annapolis Valley.) Tartanism's full development awaited Macdonald's coming to power. What made Macdonald a pivotal figure in the history of tourism was the

43 *Nova Scotia, Canada's Ocean Playground* (n.p. [Halifax] n.d. [1936]), insert.

44 Report of Film Officer Margaret L. Perry, *Journal of the House of Assembly, Nova Scotia [JHA]*, p. 88.

intensity of his commitment to the industry (which, despite state efforts in the 1920s, had yet to adapt to the automobile by the 1930s) and his conviction that tourists should be exposed to a Scottish province.

In September 1934, Premier Macdonald addressed a meeting of the Nova Scotia tourist advisory council on the subject of "Nova-Scotianness". The premier noted "the importance as a tourist feature of retaining in Nova Scotia the distinctive habits and customs that characterize the various races represented in our population".

The Highland games and customs of Pictou, Antigonish and Cape Breton; the old French culture and customs of the Acadian districts; the fine old Hanoverian flavour<sup>45</sup> of Lunenburg, are priceless attractions from a tourist standpoint; and their retention should certainly be encouraged, for these are the things that will help attract more visitors to our shores. Any adequate tourist survey of Nova Scotia should include these racial characteristics and customs as genuine tourist resources.

The *Halifax Herald* added its approval to the premier's idea: "when visitors come to Nova Scotia", it remarked, "they desire to see not so much what they can find in their own lands, but something authentically Nova Scotian — something with the atmosphere of Nova Scotia and the lure of bygone days in its presentation".<sup>46</sup>

The man who made these path-breaking suggestions, popularly known as "Angus L.", is generally regarded as modern Nova Scotia's most important statesman. His cultural significance as a promoter of anti-modernism is scarcely less significant. Born at Dunvegan, Inverness County, on 10 August 1890, Macdonald was educated at the Port Hood Academy and St. Francis Xavier University. After distinguished service in the war, as a lieutenant in the 25th and captain in the 185th battalions, he spent most of the rest of his life in Halifax. He made his mark at the Dalhousie Law School, from which he graduated in 1921 and where he became a full-time lecturer in 1924; at the attorney-general's department, where he served as assistant deputy attorney-general for three years; and above all in public life, as leader of the Liberal party after his unexpected victory at the convention of 1930, and as premier and provincial secretary of Nova Scotia after he won the provincial election of 1933. Macdonald's short career as a federal politician remains overshadowed by his opposition to Mackenzie King in the Conscription Crisis, but his long career as a provincial politician (he regained the premiership in 1945 and died in office in 1954) made him the most revered premier

45 This "Hanoverian" business provides another example of the re-description of ethnicity. Most of the foreign Protestants who settled in Lunenburg in the 18th century did not originate in Hanover; they came from a wide range of German states. They became "Hanoverians" because of a mistaken inference from the name "Lunenburg", and because it was much easier during the Great War to be a Hanoverian (with implied connections to English royalty) than a German. See Winthrop Pickard Bell, *The 'Foreign Protestants' and the Settlement of Nova Scotia* (Toronto, 1961).

46 *Halifax Herald*, 29 September 1934.

in the history of Nova Scotia.<sup>47</sup> George Farquhar, the Liberal editor of the *Halifax Chronicle*, said of Macdonald, "At times, his words were winged with an almost mystic quality, in striking contrast to the cold, matter-of-fact Anglo-Saxon".<sup>48</sup> A crowd estimated at 100,000 turned out for his funeral in Halifax, and he was eulogized in the *Halifax Mail-Star* as the "most beloved Nova Scotia statesman and scholar since Joseph Howe".<sup>49</sup>

Macdonald was a brilliant, contradictory politician, an orthodox 19th-century liberal who nonetheless became the first major Canadian politician to concede the inevitability of modern labour legislation. Henry Hicks insightfully suggests he attempted to apply a 19th-century model of direct departmental supervision to a vastly changed post-1945 state, which meant a significant difference between the first Macdonald regime (1933-40) and the second (1945-54).<sup>50</sup> Yet this 19th-century liberal had an intuitive grasp of 20th-century social realities, and fashioned a thoroughly modern "information" apparatus for his fledgling tourism state.

As a cultural figure, Macdonald was an anti-modernist who identified wholeheartedly with a rather hazily conceived Scottish tradition.<sup>51</sup> He was interested in acquiring tangible artefacts in Britain that, once brought to Canada, could anchor him to an imagined past. His intense identification with Scotland may have begun in the First World War. For Macdonald, the pursuit of the romantic Scottish past was quite literally escapist — it was a diversion from the sordid realities of combat. Macdonald spent three weeks' leave from France in the Scottish Highlands, and toured Inverness-shire and the district of Moidart, where his grandfather had been born in 1811. He returned to France heavily burdened: with heather from the Moidart hills, stone from Castle Tirrim, souvenirs of the Highlanders' last stand at Culloden, and two heavy volumes, the *History of the Highlands and Gaelic Scotland* and *A History of the Macdonalds and Lords of the Isles*.<sup>52</sup> Macdonald liked to remind audiences that an ancestor of his had drawn

47 For Angus L. Macdonald, see *Speeches of Angus L. Macdonald* (Toronto, 1960); an adequate biography has yet to be written.

48 Transcript of Interview with Henry Hicks Regarding Angus L. Macdonald with George Farquhar, C.B. Fergusson Papers, MG1, vol. 1857, f.1/5, PANS.

49 *Mail-Star* (Halifax), 13 April 1954.

50 Transcript of Interview with Henry Hicks Regarding Angus L. Macdonald, C.B. Fergusson Papers, MG1, vol. 1857, f.2/3, PANS.

51 Although "Gael", "Celt", "Highlander", "Scot", "North Briton" and "Caledonian" are not in fact synonyms, they were blended together in Macdonald's speeches on "the tradition"; for Macdonald, the "Highlander/Lowlander" distinction was not one separating different nationalities. Macdonald, though identifying with "Highlanders", spoke fondly of Burns, and participated in Burns nights — he spoke, for example, at one in St. John's, Newfoundland, 25 January 1943. He was himself a member of the North British Society in Halifax.

52 Angus L. Macdonald Papers, MG 2 [Macdonald Papers], vol. 1507, f.436, PANS. Speeches to Scottish Societies, 1924 to 1944, Speech to the St. Andrew's Society, New Glasgow, 1924. The volumes referred to by Macdonald were probably Dugald "Mitchell", M.D., *A Popular History of the Highlands and Gaelic Scotland From the Earliest Times Till The Close of the 'Forty-five* (Paisley, 1900), which weighed in at 707 pages, and Alexander MacKenzie, *History of the Macdonalds and Lords of the Isles; with Genealogies of the Principal Families of the Name* (Inverness, 1881), which was a slightly less impressive 534 pages long. My thanks to Professor

the first sword that flashed in Scotland for Bonnie Prince Charlie.<sup>53</sup> Although a third-generation Nova Scotian, Macdonald talked far more often about the Scot than he did about the Canadian, the Maritimer, or even the Nova Scotian. Macdonald's treasures connected him to a national tradition to which he felt deeply and personally committed.

In developing Scottishness as the "brand-name" of the province, Macdonald was honouring his own ancestry and developing an attractive tourism package. He was also acting like many other middle-class residents of urban Canada. Like them, he did not seriously intend to adopt the rural way of life for which he professed so much admiration. (Macdonald himself had grown up in small towns, not on the farm.) Across interwar urban Canada, things Scottish — in "St. Andrew's nights" and "Burns nights" for instance — provided bank presidents and insurance salesmen, boards of trade and chambers of commerce, with opportunities to engage in some recreational nationalism, and to bond together as leaders of the community. Macdonald's romantic conception of the past was more serious, in two senses. First, it was not merely a recreational nationalism. The tartanism he espoused and articulated rooted itself so firmly partly because it gave Nova Scotians of Scottish descent, many of them decidedly marginal in provincial society, a sense of validation. Such people were ambiguously positioned in Nova Scotia and in Canada. Many defined themselves as "British" and hence as a "founding people" with special rights and, notoriously, a disproportionate amount of economic and political power. Across Canada, to join in public celebrations of the Scots was to celebrate those who were constructed as winners, as one of the great "race" whose powerful men could be found congratulating themselves on their collective prowess, as they ate haggis and drank copious amounts of alcohol.<sup>54</sup> Macdonald often played, with great success, to these urban and affluent audiences. For the Nova Scotia Scots, however, his use of the Scottish identity had a significance far beyond such recreational nationalism, and he was in a position to write the saga of the Scottish soul into the province's collective memory — on its roads and signs, its festivals and gatherings, on innumerable words and things which called into being the very Scottish essence of which they spoke. For Macdonald, this potent vocabulary may well have been partly designed to surmount the province's powerful religious divisions by constructing an identity with which both Catholics and Protestants could identify, and through which a rather aloof Halifax lawyer could become a man of the people — not "Mr. Macdonald", but "Angus L.".

When various Halifax painters and poets turned to "the folk", they looked, somewhat patronizingly, to the local fisherfolk. Macdonald's "turn to the folk" was inherently more plausible and more powerful. Macdonald could speak Gaelic,

Elizabeth Ewan of the University of Guelph for pointing these volumes out to me.

53 Speech at Flora Macdonald College, 7 May 1946, Macdonald Papers, vol. 904, f.28-f1/161, PANS.

54 The piping in of the haggis — canned, generally — was part of the ritual of Canadian St. Andrew's Day dinners; see *Chronicle-Herald* (Halifax), 28 April 1958. In an assault on Scottish traditions, the wartime prices and trade board, in ruling that Tuesdays should be meatless, endangered the eating of haggis on St. Andrew's Day, which in 1943 fell on a Tuesday. The board ultimately relented and made an exception for haggis (*Kingston Whig-Standard*, 26 November 1943).



albeit haltingly.<sup>55</sup> His Scottish romanticism was wholly sincere and heartfelt. It was one thing to play, one night in the year, at being a member of a primitive clan society; it was another thing entirely to try to become, at least symbolically, that permanent Other, to write a fictional sense of belonging to a clan into the province's icons, historic sites and public memory. Without Macdonald, anti-modernism might well have been the new vocabulary of tourism — it was an international trend, which the province was unlikely to avoid — but it may not have been as insistently Scottish nor as persuasively "naturalized".<sup>56</sup>

When Macdonald spoke of using ethnicity as a way of promoting tourism, he perceived no ethical difficulties. He does not seem to have believed tourism raised the problems Dorothy Duncan likened to "prostitution" in her travel book *Bluenose: A Portrait of Nova Scotia*.<sup>57</sup> He was so untroubled by the issue of commercialization that he urged one correspondent to "follow pretty generally the famous Macdonald Tobacco ad which appears on a card that I am sending herewith", when asked for his opinion on the representation of Highland dress.<sup>58</sup> The clearest instance of his response to the problem of "invented tradition" is found in his approach to Flora Macdonald College in Red Springs, North Carolina, which he visited in the 1930s:

I was forcibly reminded of the value of tradition and the importance of a name when I was down in Carolina some years before the war [1937]. I had to speak to the St. Andrew's Society in Charleston,...and on my trip I paid a visit to the Flora Macdonald College at Red Springs, North Carolina. Flora lived in this community for a few years in pre-revolutionary days. The College is a Girls' College with an enrollment of about 400, and was established in 1896. The real name was the Southern Seminary for Young Ladies,<sup>59</sup> but a very enthusiastic Scot, Dr. J. A. Macdonald, formerly of 'The Toronto Globe,' whose immediate ancestors came from Carolina, urged them to change the name to Flora Macdonald

55 As Macdonald noted himself in his address to the National Mod in Scotland in 1953, English was the language of his childhood; although Gaelic was the first language of his father, his mother did not speak it. *Weekly Scotsman*, 1 October 1953.

56 An instructive contrast can be found in the very different trajectory of tourism in Prince Edward Island, which did not entail such a marketing of identity (even though the "celtic motif" could have been persuasively developed there). For this see Alan MacEachern, "No Island Is An Island: A History of Tourism on Prince Edward Island, 1870-1939", M.A. thesis, Queen's University, 1991.

57 Dorothy Duncan, *Bluenose: A Portrait of Nova Scotia* (New York and London, 1942), p. 249. She was referring specifically to the impact of tourism on the Highlanders' supposed traditions of hospitality.

58 Angus L. Macdonald to T.J. Courtney, 2 February 1953, Macdonald Papers, vol. 979, f.40-2/5, PANS.

59 Macdonald was not being quite accurate here. According to the *Souvenir Program, Semicentennial Celebration, Flora Macdonald College* (n.p., 1946), the college was founded by the Fayetteville Presbytery in 1896 under the name of the Red Springs Seminary, and became the Southern Presbyterian College and Conservatory of Music in 1903. It was renamed at Dr. Macdonald's suggestion in 1914.

College, which they did. They at once passed from being just another school to a school with a distinctive and appealing flavour, and they received gifts from Scotsmen in every part of the world.

A cynic might draw from this episode a jaded impression of the uses of cultural tradition by a money-hungry educational institution. (Flora Macdonald College's "Scottish credentials" amounted to little more than possession of the name and a brooch, alleged to contain two locks of hair from Flora Macdonald and Bonnie Prince Charlie.)<sup>60</sup> Macdonald went in the opposite direction: Nova Scotia's St. Francis Xavier University, he argued, should follow the example of the North Carolina college and stress "the Scottish side of things".<sup>61</sup>

Why was Macdonald so willing to see his own beloved Scottish traditions put to commercial purposes? The answer lies in his strong commitment to 19th-century economic liberalism, with its emphasis on the primacy of the individual and the free market. Macdonald could see nothing objectionable about the link between profits and Scottish traditions; the first testified to the worth of the second. This led the anti-modernist and individualist Macdonald, perhaps even more than it led 20th-century liberals in general, into fascinating contradictions. Under Macdonald, the state's role in tourism expanded enormously. As premier, he was responsible for the investment of public monies in tourist accommodation, through generous grants to private entrepreneurs and the establishment of the publicly owned Keltic Lodge in Ingonish. In company with A.S. MacMillan, he was responsible for a massive paving programme, including the construction of Cape Breton's Cabot Trail, a road whose expensive construction was justified on the grounds of tourism revenues. The most post-liberal of all the new Liberal tourism policies was a massive expansion in the state's role in tourism promotion, through a new department, which eventually bore the Orwellian name of "The Department of Industry and Publicity". The upshot of these innovations was a level of state involvement in economic and cultural life far greater than most liberals had publicly contemplated. Yet the ideology promoted through this newly expanded state apparatus was one of individualism, and the machine had the effect of bringing hitherto uncommodified activities into capitalist exchange relations. Macdonald sometimes spoke as though he believed in an idealized version of a 19th-century "nightwatchman state", yet he often acted in a different way: he used the state to extend capitalist relations of production into once marginal areas — notably, the production of cultural goods.

After Macdonald became premier, tartanism triumphed. The 1935 *Nova Scotia, Canada's Ocean Playground* (the centrepiece of promotional literature) continued with the Evangeline theme, itself anti-modernist, when it portrayed Acadians in all

60 See Frank Baird to Angus L. Macdonald, 14 May 1946, Macdonald Papers, vol. 904, f.28 f.1, PANS. Baird, clerk of the Synod of the Maritime Provinces, Presbyterian Church of Canada, informed Macdonald that the college's name had been changed "mainly for FINANCIAL reasons — so as to appeal to Scots outside not from real interest in Flora". The college was rumoured to contain other sacred relics as well — the bodily remains of two of Flora Macdonald's children; but this view was dealt a severe blow by Dorothy MacKay Quynn, "Flora Macdonald in History", *North Carolina Historical Review* (July 1941).

61 Angus L. Macdonald to Charles J. MacGillivray, 3 May 1944, Macdonald Papers, vol. 1518, f.746/27, PANS.

"the pleasing simplicity that marked the lives of their ancestors" who still spoke "the French of their forefathers" and retained quaint customs, such as using "spinning wheels and kirtles". For the first time, however, Acadians had to share the top "folk" billing with the Scots, depicted in traditional Highland dress.<sup>62</sup> D. Leo Dolan, who as director of the Canadian Travel Bureau could be considered tourism's leading guru, hailed the new promotional material in an address to the Nova Scotia Motor League. "Keep this province distinctively Nova Scotian, Canadian, and British,...for those characteristics possessed the appeal for the 30,000,000 or 40,000,000 people in the U.S. who spend five billion dollars annually on travel. They were being educated to the fact that they might 'be foreign' — go abroad — merely by crossing a borderline without necessity for an ocean voyage", he was reported to have said. He then picked up *Nova Scotia, Canada's Ocean Playground*, which he hailed as "one of the most distinctive published by any province in Canada....It reflects the Nova Scotian atmosphere". There was no need to compete with the French atmosphere of Quebec or with the mountains of Alberta and British Columbia, he added: "You have a more potent appeal in your Scottish ancestry and in your sea".<sup>63</sup>

Dolan would sound this theme repeatedly in his correspondence with Macdonald on tourism. After the opening of the Gaelic College in 1939, he wrote a glowing letter to Macdonald, which suggested how closely the two men agreed on the benefits of selling ethnicity:

You and I have talked over many times that one of Nova Scotia's great charms is the character of its people. And here we have a striking example of a College which is unique on this Continent. I am hopeful that I can get a good writer down there this summer and, if successful, it will undoubtedly be a new attraction for the 'Sons of Scotland' all over this Continent to visit during the summer. Like yourself, I sometimes think I am a bit of an idealist, but I visualize the day when this Gaelic College may become a new Scottish Shrine for Cape Breton, if not North America.<sup>64</sup>

Macdonald was delighted at the prospect of publicity, agreeing with Dolan that "the most attractive feature of Nova Scotia is her interesting people".<sup>65</sup> "You and I both have the same idea with respect to these matters", Dolan replied, "and it has always been a mystery to me why the people of Nova Scotia generally have not grasped the importance from a tourist standpoint of the character of the people who

62 *Nova Scotia, Canada's Ocean Playground* (n.p. [Halifax], n.d. [1935]).

63 *Halifax Herald*, 26 April 1935.

64 D. Leo Dolan to Angus L. Macdonald, 1 August 1939, Macdonald Papers, vol. 1505, f.409/14, PANS.

65 Angus L. Macdonald to D. Leo Dolan, 4 August 1939, Macdonald Papers, vol. 1505, f.409/15, PANS.

reside within that province".<sup>66</sup> Dolan was clearly preaching to the converted. So was I. H. Macdonald of the Canadian Daily Newspaper Association, who informed the premier that "our considered opinion is that Nova Scotia, with the development of the celtic motif, holds out a travel lure that is hard to beat".<sup>67</sup>

In the 1930s, following Macdonald's lead, writings about northern Nova Scotia and Cape Breton duly executed a turn towards ethnic essentialism. An area once construed as a progressive and industrial hive of coal mines (not to mention Ford dealerships) was now described as a haven of simple folk. Neil MacNeil, a journalist with the *New York Times* who had been a college friend of Macdonald's, achieved renown with *The Highland Heart in Nova Scotia* (1948), which painted a heart-warming portrait of the MacNeils of Barra, who exemplified Darwin's "survival of the fittest, for only the strong, the brave and the intelligent could survive the rigors of their climate and the hardships of their life". Life in Washabuckt "was simple and innocent and its tempo was sluggish". The Highlanders "felt sufficient unto themselves and did not court the frills and artifices, the luxuries and mechanics, of modern civilization. They knew that there were such things but they looked with contempt upon such effete influences....They were content with little, and thus they had the deepest secret of life". There were no locks, and burglary and robbery were unknown, as were all other crimes of violence. Living "a wholesome but primitive life close to the soil", the Highlanders' needs were elementary, and living "mostly in the open air, with plenty of simple food, lots of invigorating work, and almost no worry, the people of Washabuckt were rarely sick". They were also rather stupid, but that was part of their general charm: "few external things, and occasionally an idea, came along to disturb his [the Highlander's] complacency, like the telephone, the wireless, and the airplane, but not with enough force to cause him to delve more deeply into the problems of life, government and the hereafter". They compensated for their stupidity and insularity by being "kindly at heart". Here were simple folk, "transplanted Scots [who] had pride of name and pride of race".<sup>68</sup>

Developing this theme of "pride of race" required a rereading of Cape Breton's geography: what "progressive" writers had emphasized, the new essentialists marginalized. From the new perspective, attention was focused not on industrial areas (where most Cape Bretoners lived) but on the rural areas where their "essence" was to be discovered. These became rechristened, at least in the tourism vernacular,

66 D. Leo Dolan to Angus L. Macdonald, 16 August 1939, Macdonald Papers, vol. 505, f.409/16, PANS.

67 I.H. Macdonald to Angus L. Macdonald, 3 September 1952, Macdonald Papers, vol. 972, F.40-2/12, PANS.

68 Neil MacNeil, *The Highland Heart in Nova Scotia* (New York, 1948; reprinted — amazingly enough — in Toronto, 1969), pp. 6, 21, 23, 33, 34, 51, 58, 90-91. As is typical of such descriptions of contented rural simplicity, the narrator does not include *himself* or *his family* among the "extremely simple" — his Washabuckt grandfather subscribed to three newspapers and read extensively in Gaelic and English. Somehow, too, the author reconciles the image of the crime-free community with an account of a local murder. The *Highland Heart* was the basis of a radio play by Nova Scotia playwright Don Wetmore, and a stage play in Canada's centennial year. See Jim Lotz, "Straight from the (highland) heart", *Atlantic Insight*, June 1983, Special Edition for the Gathering of the Clans, 'Ciad Mile Failte'.

"the Highlands" — a name which never quite caught on in everyday language. There had been attempts to develop "Highlands" elsewhere — visitors to the area north of Yarmouth were once advised that the "Highlands" there matched the scenic beauties of "Bonnie Scotland", with a road winding around mist-capped hills and a silver chain of lakes which had "a true Gaelic quality of their own"<sup>69</sup> — but, thanks to Angus L. and the new essentialism, the name and the notion attached itself most firmly to the rural areas of Cape Breton, particularly after the emergence of Cape Breton Highlands National Park in 1937.

Gordon Brinley's *Away to Cape Breton* (1936) is instructive as an illustration of this new geography. He constructed a purely pre-industrial island brimming with stout-hearted fisherfolk and quaint Scots, with not a coal mine, factory or steel mill in sight — a feat he accomplished by the simple expedient of steering clear of those urban areas where most Cape Bretoners lived.<sup>70</sup> Dorothy Duncan's solution to the problem of somehow making an industrialized society (*gesellschaft*) into a pre-industrial folk community (*gemeinschaft*) — in *Bluenose: A Portrait of Nova Scotia* — is both more honest and more daringly essentialist. Throughout *Bluenose* all Nova Scotians live and die in strict obedience to the iron laws of their blood; she establishes a kind of bio-tourism, obsessed with muscles, faces, bodies viewed with pleasure within a distanced and objectifying gaze:

These men [the rural Highlanders of Cape Breton, naturally] are all broad-shouldered creatures with pale-blue opaque eyes, high complexions, gnarled hands, and features so inelegant as to seem handsome. The girls are pretty, and the mature women are fair to look upon at any age. All of them, including their polite children, speak with a lilt in their voices that clings to one's memory like the odor of lavender or the sound of the sea....

Most of Duncan's Nova Scotians find that nature is a tough but fair taskmaster, and live happily within the limits of their biological destinies. Highlanders particularly — Duncan went further than most writers in arguing, wrongly, that Lowlanders had had *nothing* to do with Nova Scotia — are defined by their heredity. This is emphatically the case for one MacGregor, whom Duncan portrays digging a trench for a cesspit behind Duncan's house. There is something about his eyes — a deep folk wisdom, "a knowledge that he had no needs which he could not fulfill, no questions about what he must do next, and no doubts about the sense in what he had done so far. Here was one of the rarest persons left alive — a strong man who was gentle, a wise man who was simple, a thoughtful man who was contented". His quaint accent suggests his folk simplicity, but it is above all his walk — his gait was "heavy" and "shambling, like an amiable and clumsy animal" — that bespeaks the essential truth of his nature. But MacGregor was one of the last of his breed. (This was almost a matter of definition: the unspoiled folk discovered by 20th-century travel writers are almost *always* the last of their

69 The Halifax & South Western Railway, *Summer Resorts Along the Road by the Sea* (n.p., n.d [pre-1914], not paginated).

70 Gordon Brinley, *Away to Cape Breton* (New York, 1936).

"breed".) The hardy stock has been tampered with, and MacGregor's generation is on the way out, ruined by mines and racially diluted through mixed marriages:

The Highlanders who first went down into the mines two or three generations ago [sic] have produced children smaller in size, duller of the eye, and slower of wit. Their stubbornness has grown into combativeness, their dignity can often seem nothing but sullenness, and their imagination has required strong drink in order to be still. So they work until they are bone-tired, and enough of them fight after they have become roaring drunk on Saturday night to give Glace Bay the reputation of being one of the toughest towns in Canada. Inter-marriage with the Poles and Bohemians who have joined them for work underground [Duncan presumably meant with the daughters of these immigrant men] has produced a further mutation of character, but every once in a while the real Highlander will show through a coal-begrimed face....<sup>71</sup>

The idea of racial "mongrelization" allows the essentialist Duncan to admit difference while denying it. There was an *essential* Highland nature, but it could rarely, if ever, surface in a world tainted by industry and racial mixing. There were pure Celts, Gaels and Scots, characterized by honest pride in their lineage; and then there were those who had lost their way, who had developed (as Wilfrid Campbell said as early as 1911) the "modern vulgar mind of a mongrel people, which has lost its race individuality...."<sup>72</sup> Since the miners were not *real* Highlanders, but Cape Bretoners of adulterated stock, nothing they did — not their strikes, radical politics, trade unionism — qualified the "deep psychological insights" Duncan had acquired (largely via her husband, the novelist and "Highlander" Hugh MacLennan) into the true nature of the "essential" folk of Cape Breton, its rural Highlanders.<sup>73</sup>

It would be unfair to associate Macdonald with this racist theorizing, for Macdonald does not appear to have been a racist. Macdonald wanted romance and inspiration, not vulgar Darwinism, from the "call of the blood", and although he shared Duncan's pessimistic sense of a decline, he did not attribute this to racial mixing. Yet, in 19 major speeches to Scottish societies from 1924 to 1944, Macdonald developed concepts of history, Gaelic and the call of the blood which, far more intelligently and subtly than Duncan, developed a notion of racial essence.

Macdonald's view of Scottish history was a romantic one — history was the

71 Duncan, *Bluenose*, pp. 232-3, 236, 247. For further discussion of the description of industrial Cape Breton, see Don Macgillivray, "Glace Bay: Images and Impressions", in Benjamin H.D. Buchloh and Robert Wilkie, eds., *Mining Photographs and Other Pictures 1948-1968: A Selection from the Negative Archives of Shedd Studio, Glace Bay, Cape Breton* (Halifax and Sydney, 1983), pp. 171-91.

72 Wilfrid Campbell, *The Scotsman in Canada* (Toronto, 1911), vol. I, p. 29. Campbell's credibility on questions of race was rather diminished by his suggestion that the Scots were descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel, a claim light-heartedly adopted by Neil MacNeil in *The Highland Heart*.

73 C.W. Dunn, *Highland Settler: A Portrait of the Scottish Gael in Nova Scotia* (Toronto, 1953), while certainly romantic in places, nonetheless generally avoids the essentialist pitfalls of other contemporary descriptions.

"lamp of memory" which burned in Scottish breasts.<sup>74</sup> "We spring from the same soil, you and I", he told Prince Edward Islanders at a memorial to commemorate the late Bishop MacEachern, "we honour the same heroes, we venerate the same names....The call of the blood is strong and our hearts are still Highland."<sup>75</sup> Macdonald's conception of history tended to an "entropic", preservationist sense of a "heritage" besieged, and perhaps even doomed to extinction. Even when the premier was opening a new athletic facility in Antigonish, home of the Highland Games, he talked, not about the bright progressive future of physical fitness and wholesome recreation under his far-sighted regime, but of the melancholy grandeur of the Gael's last stand:

Here in New Scotland is the last great stronghold of the Gael in America; here, indeed, is the greatest outpost of Scotland in the whole world. Here is heard more frequently than anywhere else — and here, I hope, will be heard for all time — the beautiful accents of the ancient tongue of the North. Here, too, the great Gaelic music is faithfully preserved, and here is carefully cherished the deathless song and the immortal story of Scotland....

It is something in the nature of a pious duty to preserve their language, their customs, their simple forms of innocent entertainment....You do well to preserve these things, but you will do better, infinitely better, if you preserve with even greater fidelity the spiritual and moral virtues of the pioneers.

Let us not forget the rock from which we are hewn.<sup>76</sup>

Nova Scotia had a mission in the world, Macdonald argued. "I come from a part of Canada which, in its name, in its racial character, in its traditions and even in its language, is the greatest outpost of Celtic Scotland in the whole world", he told the St. Andrew's Society of Philadelphia in 1948. "All of the great Highland and Lowland clans are represented there and the very place-names have been, in many cases, taken from Scotland....Some thirty thousand of my people speak the ancient tongue of Caledonia, and the great songs, the music, the folk-tales of the north, are faithfully preserved and cherished in Nova Scotia".<sup>77</sup>

Macdonald's reading of the Scottish tradition operated through the reduction of complexity to essence. It remembered only those events closely linked to the romantic episodes in Scottish history, not those that might be said to have had a

74 Speech of Angus L. Macdonald at New Glasgow, 1924, Macdonald Papers, vol. 1507, f.436, PANS.

75 Memorial to the Late Bishop MacEachern of Prince Edward Island, 1929, Macdonald Papers, vol. 1507, f.436, PANS.

76 Address to the Antigonish Highland Society, 1937, Macdonald Papers, vol. 1507, f.436, PANS.

77 Address to St. Andrew's Society of Philadelphia, November 30 1948, Macdonald Papers, vol. 1507, f.437, PANS.

direct relevance to Nova Scotia. It focused on the Highlander rather than the Lowlander,<sup>78</sup> and on the clan rather than on the Scottish Enlightenment or on Scotland's democratic and radical traditions. Macdonald's history of Nova Scotia was perfectly suited to tourism, because it was very much like that of many tourists: it constructed isolated monuments to a romantically conceived past. The history of the Scots in Nova Scotia now consisted of a series of discrete events which, like separate planets, derived their light from the distant sun of Scottish romance.

Within this essentialist romance of history, the most sacred shrine was to be found at Edinburgh Castle, where the "Nova Scotia baronets" took *sasine* of their distant estates on ground symbolically turned into Nova Scotia soil. International negotiations from 1948 to 1952 culminated in a ceremony in October 1953, in which Macdonald sprinkled Nova Scotia earth on the castle grounds. "Nova Scotia more than 300 years ago was annexed to Scotland by a fiction", Macdonald said. "Let me complete the task today by depositing...a handful of Nova Scotia earth. Thus the fiction becomes a reality and Nova Scotia and Scotland are united in soil".<sup>79</sup> Macdonald was re-enacting the supposed deposit of a quantity of earth from 17th-century New Scotland, alleged to be covered by the pavement of the Castle's esplanade.<sup>80</sup> It was a wonderful moment in a compelling romance of blood and soil.

If Edinburgh Castle provided a suitably romantic shrine for Macdonald's new history, Flora Macdonald was no less ideal in the role of the tragic heroine in an otherwise very masculine romance of history. "Her high courage, often tried and always proven, her unswerving loyalty, joined to the aura of romance which surrounds that record of chivalrous gallantry and unselfish devotion which we know as the Rising of 1745, have combined to make her loved and revered not only by her own countrymen but by all to whom such qualities have any appeal", Macdonald told a receptive audience at Flora Macdonald College, adding that it was "well that such deeds as hers should be kept in remembrance in a world that is now sorely distressed, and that needs greatly more of the spirit of loyalty, courage and unselfish service which moved and guided her in her varied and adventurous career".<sup>81</sup> In 1950 the Historic Sites Advisory Council approved a plaque commemorating the fact that Flora Macdonald had spent the winter of 1779 in

78 The privileging of the "Highlander" over the "Lowlander" was also suggested by the attention paid to the coming of the *Hector* in 1773, which was seen as historically significant because it brought Highlanders with it. When these Highlanders arrived, however, Lowland Scots were already settled in Colchester and Pictou counties. We do not actually know what percentage of Scottish immigration to Nova Scotia was "Highland". Many Scots miners, from the Lowland coalfields, emigrated to Nova Scotia from the 1820s on to work in the collieries of the General Mining Association.

79 *Daily News* (Truro), 21 October 1953. For negotiations regarding the Edinburgh Castle commemoration, see numerous letters in the Macdonald Papers, vol. 933, f.24 and vol. 972, f.40, PANS.

80 *Halifax Herald*, undated clipping in the Macdonald Papers, vol. 979, f.40-4/10, PANS.

81 Speech at Flora Macdonald College, 7 May 1946, Macdonald Papers, vol. 904, f.28-f.1/161, PANS.



Windsor, Nova Scotia, en route from North Carolina to her old home in Skye.<sup>82</sup> Deftly erased from the public record was Flora Macdonald's wretched experience of near-starvation, cold, injury and confinement in Nova Scotia, one which made her extremely anxious to leave it, "tho' in a tender state".<sup>83</sup> Commemorating Flora Macdonald was consistent with Macdonald's filiopietistic view of Scottish history as a static heritage; it made no sense from the perspective of the province's own history, upon which Flora Macdonald made little discernible impact.

The case of Norman McLeod raises similar questions about the external focus of this new history. In the mid-19th century, Rev. Norman McLeod decided that his Presbyterian followers at St. Ann's, Cape Breton, would be better off somewhere else. He therefore led them on a remarkable voyage to New Zealand. The story of McLeod could be made to fit easily into a local historical narrative: it could be made to speak to the general histories of acute poverty, out-migration and religious authority in the 19th century, as well as to Scottish themes of clansmen following chieftains wherever they led.<sup>84</sup> In the romantic view of history, however, which generally marginalized Calvin, the Great Disruption and all the other divisive realities of Scottish history, McLeod was at best an ambiguous figure. Macdonald conceded that the authoritarian McLeod was "in some respects a peculiar man. He seems to have been in every way [way] a stern man". Nonetheless, Macdonald made the loss to his province of more than eight hundred people simply one more part of the romantic Scottish saga, the story of a man, undaunted by adversity, whose voyage to New Zealand "will stand as one of the great sagas of the New World".<sup>85</sup> In 1947, describing a historical re-enactment of the McLeod emigration from St. Ann's, the *Halifax Mail* noted that at a time when Cape Breton workers were emigrating in large numbers "to the greener economic fields of Upper Canada, their friends and relatives paused during the Gaelic Mod to honour the memory of other migrants...."<sup>86</sup> In 1952, when Waipu, New Zealand, celebrated the landing of McLeod and his flock, Nova Scotia sent them a provincial flag and noted its official pride in being part of "a voyage of courage and enterprise, an adventure worthy of the true Scottish spirit of accomplishment".<sup>87</sup> Even an episode of out-migration and economic disaster could be reinterpreted as an isolated moment of the heroic individualism of the Scots.

Nationalists were raising similar shrines to Dollard and others in Quebec, but there was a marked difference. Macdonald's reading of history was far more externally focused, and as a "heritage" it did not necessarily imply political implications in the present (such as, for example, a commitment to regionalism).

82 Minutes of the Seventh Meeting, Historic Sites Advisory Council, 27 October 1950, PANS.

83 James A. Roy, *The Scot and Canada* (Toronto, 1947), p. 80.

84 Bittermann, "Hierarchy of the Soil", p. 45, for example, discusses McLeod in connection with the potato blight of 1848.

85 Draft of a Speech by Angus L. Macdonald to the Gaelic Mod, n.d. [1940], Macdonald Papers, vol. 1507, f.437/2, PANS.

86 *Halifax Mail*, 6 August 1947.

87 Statement "To the People of Northland, New Zealand", 15 December 1952, Macdonald Papers, vol. 980, f.41, PANS.

Emphasis on Scottishness played more easily into a vague enthusiasm for Canada as "Scotland-writ-large" (as Lord Tweedsmuir, the former John Buchan, put it) than into coherent politics based on distinctive traditions.<sup>88</sup> Tartanism implied no affiliation with Scottish nationalism.<sup>89</sup> If one were actually to derive a political position from the romantic perspective, one would resist the pretensions of the members of the current royal family, who were (from the perspective of Macdonald's own revered Jacobite ancestors) mere pretenders, the descendants of the bloodthirsty tyrants who put down "the '45". When he unveiled a plaque to Flora Macdonald, just weeks before a visit by Princess Elizabeth, Macdonald took great care to distance himself from any such position. Nothing about honouring Flora Macdonald, he cautioned, implied reservations about the present royal family.<sup>90</sup>

We should not think, however, that such political withdrawal made Macdonald a passive Scot. On purely symbolic issues, he was a zealous militant. In 1936 he wrote a long confidential letter to Ian Mackenzie, the minister of defence, asking him to consider forming a "Macdonald Regiment" if any reorganization of the militia were contemplated. ("Here and there, as with nearly every clan, there may be found an instance of selfishness and treachery", he wrote somewhat apologetically, "but, on the whole, the clan stood firm in all the struggles for Scottish independence".)<sup>91</sup> When in 1946 the Antigonish Highland Society faced the grim prospect of celebrating its centenary while confronted with a critical postwar shortage of kilts and plaids in the Blackwatch tartan, Macdonald urgently telegraphed the deputy minister of national defence to see if he might make surplus Scottish supplies available.<sup>92</sup> Three years later, Macdonald wrote a long, personal and confidential letter to J.A. MacKinnon, who as minister of mines and resources was responsible for the national park in Cape Breton. He raised three burning issues:

1. Would it not be an excellent idea to have the foresters wear the kilt? For visitors to the Park this would appear as a very spectacular garb and very distinctive....
2. There is some question as to the color of the bonnet. The traditional Scottish bonnet is blue. It is true that green is a forester's color, but I think perhaps some attention should be given to maintaining the tradition of the Scottish blue....

88 "Lord Tweedsmuir's Address at St. Andrew's Day Dinner, Winnipeg", 1936, Macdonald Papers, vol. 1507, f.436, PANS.

89 D.H. McNeill to Angus L. Macdonald, 23 July 1935, Macdonald Papers, vol. 1518, f.747, PANS; Macdonald to McNeill, 6 August 1935, Macdonald Papers, vol. 1518, f.747, PANS, a correspondence relating to the Scottish National Party.

90 Speech of Angus L. Macdonald at the Unveiling of a Plaque for Flora Macdonald at Windsor, 13 September 1951, Macdonald Papers, vol.966, f.40/6, PANS. Perhaps Macdonald mollified the ghost of Flora Macdonald by noting that the (non-Stuart) queen was at least a "noble Scottish lady".

91 Angus L. Macdonald to Ian Mackenzie (Personal and Confidential), 20 October 1936, Macdonald Papers, vol. 1535, f.1384/51, PANS.

92 Angus L. Macdonald to A. Ross, 23 May 1946, Macdonald Papers, vol. 904, f.28/2, PANS.

3. As to a tartan to be worn under the badge, this would be quite correct. The question is, of course, as you put it, which tartan to select. There is something to be said for several tartans. The name Macdonald is the most common Scottish name here, as it is in Scotland....I should, of course, be very pleased to see the tartan worn more generally. On the other hand, I suppose the Stuart tartan would be acceptable to all clans, it being a Royal tartan....There is something, of course, to be said for your own tartan, and something also for the MacIntosh tartan.... If the kilt should be considered unsuitable for use by Park officials, possibly the use of tartan breeches might be considered....<sup>93</sup>

Such urgent matters occupy file after file — often solemnly designated "Scottish Affairs" — of the "Chief" of the Clan Ranald and the first "Grand Noble Chief of the Scottish Clans of Nova Scotia" who also happened to be the premier of Nova Scotia.<sup>94</sup>

Tartanism was resolutely pursued in Nova Scotia. Two years after the correspondence about the foresters, a brawny Scots piper made his appearance at the border, "piping tourists" into Nova Scotia. "This move," wrote W.C. Wilson, the president of the St. Andrew's Society of Amherst,

was undoubtedly a great boon to the tourist influx and a splendid advertising medium for 'New Scotland' and one which we hope will be continued year after year. Wally Roy [the piper] was a colorful figure due to his size, and his willingness to oblige those who wished to hear him and photograph him, made a great hit with the tourists....tourists were continually asking for Wally and I must say he came out to play for them at all hours.<sup>95</sup>

The piper at the border, decked out in appropriate attire and sheltered against the chilly blasts off the Tantramar, became a permanent fixture of the tourist season. The applause from the travelling public was deafening. "The Highland piper at the border near Amherst has proven to be a great publicity gesture", the delighted tourism authorities reported in 1955; they recorded such comments from tourists as, "What pleases the heart of every Scotch person is to be greeted by a piper dressed in Nova Scotia tartan and the sound of the pipes", "the burly Scotsman in full dress

93 Angus L. Macdonald to James A. MacKinnon, 17 February 1949, Macdonald Papers, vol. 951, f.19-8A/1, PANS. MacKinnon first raised the matter by asking which tartan should be represented on the patch fixed on the green bonnet worn by Park officials, in a letter he considered so sensitive that he called for Macdonald's "personal, wholly confidential reaction", and assured him, "I am not keeping a copy of this letter and I will keep wholly confidential, of course, your view". James A. MacKinnon to Angus L. Macdonald, 12 February 1949, Macdonald Papers, vol. 951, f.19-8A/2, PANS.

94 Both positions were 20th-century inventions, as was the very idea of the Nova Scotia "clan" as a distinct and organized entity.

95 Angus L. Macdonald to Harold G. Sutherland, 17 April 1952, Macdonald Papers, vol. 972, f.40/2, PANS.

playing bagpipes gave us a warm reception", and "The serenading of the bagpiper was most impressive on our entry into the province".<sup>96</sup> The public was being offered a living, "real" spectacle on a par with such contemporary "Highland" box-office hits as *Whisky Galore* (1948), *Rob Roy* (1953) and *Brigadoon* (1954)—all films which "brought the mythic kilted Highlander living in a land of milk and heather to the attention of the whole spellbound world".<sup>97</sup> How wonderful that there was a *real* province, headed by a *real* kilted Gael named Angus, where one could hear the *real* sounds of the Gaelic language once again! The premier was photographed repeatedly at the annual Gaelic Mod, and sitting at a loom in a display of Highland handicrafts in Scotland itself.<sup>98</sup>

The premier also focused his attention on the tartaning of the provincially owned Keltic Lodge. The 18 holes of the hotel's golf course already carried individual Scottish names — "Cuddy's Lugs", "Dowie Den", "Muckle Mouth Meg".<sup>99</sup> However, as newspaperman I.H. Macdonald suggested, there was scope for even more tartanism. "Pipers, tartans, shieling, are all individual parts of a montage that makes up the whole highland scene", he remarked perceptively. "No one part of that montage is more colourful than highland cattle with their magnificent heads and shaggy hides. Would it not be a good idea, if for no other reason than a publicity stunt, to have two or three highland cattle browsing in the little pasture that now exists in full view of the dining room at Keltic Lodge?" And why shouldn't the waitresses in the dining room, each one of them already attired in a distinctive clan tartan, be required to carry a small card identifying the tartan for the convenience of diners who might want to purchase tartaned gifts after their meal? The premier loved these suggested additions to what his correspondent had openly called the "celtic motif".<sup>100</sup> The picturesque primitive, Julian Stallabrass pertinently observes, allowed interpretations to be made merely by examination of signs inscribed on its surface.<sup>101</sup> Celebrations of Nova Scotia's pre-modern essence tended to forms of description obsessed with colour and ornament.

All this redesigning of golf holes and border crossings had a dramatic impact on the travelling public. Albert Deane of New Rochelle was one traveller who found the *motif* so completely convincing he titled his article on the "steadfast, industrious..., friendly, God-loving" Nova Scotians, "How To See Scotland Without Crossing the Atlantic". As he explained,

96 *JHA*, Department of Industry and Publicity, 1955, pp. 14, 10 and 1956, p. 21.

97 Malcolm MacLean and Christopher Carrell, eds., *As an Fhearann/ From the Land: A Century of Images of the Scottish Highlands* (Glasgow, 1986), p. 99.

98 *Sydney Post*, 16 November 1953 (reporting on *The Scotsman's* coverage of Macdonald's tour of Scotland).

99 Albert Deane, "How To See Scotland Without Crossing the Atlantic—Impressions Gained While Roaming the Province of Leisurely Loveliness — Nova Scotia", unidentified clipping [1950], Macdonald Papers, vol. 972, f.40-2, PANS.

100 I.H. Macdonald to Angus L. Macdonald, 18 August 1952, Macdonald Papers, vol. 972, f.40-2/11 and Angus L. Macdonald to I.H. Macdonald, 28 August 1952, Macdonald Papers, vol. 972, f.40-2/10. PANS.

101 Julian Stallabrass, "The Idea of the Primitive: British Art and Anthropology 1918-1930", *New Left Review*, 183 (September/October, 1990), p. 110.

The lady of our party had come to Nova Scotia for one impelling reason. Her ancestors were Scottish and she had long hoped to get to Scotland — the old, the original Scotland. But fate hadn't co-operated, so she had settled for Nova Scotia on a hunch — and the hunch paid off. Its rocky coast *was* Scotland; its rugged hills *were* Scotland; its clear, tumbling streams sang of Scotland....<sup>102</sup>

Ironically, this romantic reading of history and landscape trivialized the Scottish legacy of which it spoke. Although Scots in Nova Scotia had been prominent in geological exploration and education and coal mining, this aspect of their history went uncommemorated. Indeed, Macdonald almost never spoke of the Scottish Enlightenment, which in a different narrative might figure as Scotland's most notable contribution to the world.<sup>103</sup> Perhaps this was (reductively) considered wholly unrelated to the Highlands; or perhaps Macdonald, a Roman Catholic, could not imaginatively enter Presbyterian Edinburgh. But what of the immense disruption of the clan system, the event which explained why so many Scots were in Nova Scotia in the first place? The social upheaval in the Highlands from 1745 to 1840 could be presented, in a different reading of history, as *the* central issue of Scottish history in Nova Scotia. But capitalist transformations in general, or the Clearances more specifically, could hardly be cited or considered within Macdonald's romantic framework, because they undermined the anti-modernist idea of the organic clan unity of the Scots (the imperishable bonds of kin-folk and clan) and so subverted the essentialist concept of the Scottish character. The Clearances became the property of the increasingly marginalized left; they were deftly written out of official public history.<sup>104</sup> Jackson Lears has observed the presence within

102 Deane, "How to See Scotland", Macdonald Papers, vol. 972, f.40-2, PANS.

103 In this Macdonald followed in the path of "ben and glen" nationalists in Scotland, who often actually derided the Scottish Enlightenment as inherently un-Scottish and rootlessly "cosmopolitan", as Tom Nairn notes in *The Break-up of Britain*. Macdonald makes fleeting reference to James Watt and Adam Smith in his speech to the St. Andrew's Society of Charleston — he revealingly hails Smith as "the Scotsman whose ideas were to do so much toward releasing the economic energies of mankind from the shackles of authoritarian government". "The Day We Celebrate", Response to the toast by Col. Robert S. Henry at the two hundred and seventh anniversary dinner of the St. Andrew's Society of Charleston, November 30 1936, in Macdonald Papers, vol. 904, f.28/1/46, PANS.

104 For an example of an attempt to mobilize a popular memory of the Clearances by a left-wing cultural figure, see Kenneth Leslie, "In Halfway Cove", *The Commonwealth*, vol. 25 (26 February 1937), p. 490. Leslie was a brilliant poet and a noted proponent of Gaelic. In the late 1930s, Leslie organized Gaelic broadcasts for the CBC; he believed that his programmes were "just *ahead* of the people and educative to the glory of the Gael". He believed that the cancellation of his programme resulted from the opposition of the conservative Gaelic Revival interests associated with the Cape Breton *Post*. Interestingly, Angus L. Macdonald was on very friendly terms with Leslie, and rather tended to see the controversy from his point of view — not because he was politically sympathetic to him, but because he knew him personally. See Kenneth Leslie to Angus L. Macdonald, 26 March 1938, in Macdonald Papers, vol. 1504, f.403, PANS; Gladstone Murray to Kenneth Leslie, 7 March 1938 (copy), *ibid.* For Leslie's radical career, see Burris Devanney, "Shouting His Wares: The Politics and Poetry of Kenneth Leslie", *New Maritimes*, IV, 10 (June 1986), pp. 4-11. Rev. Frank Baird, in a sermon delivered to the Cape Breton Island Gaelic

American anti-modernism of an enthusiasm for a simplified medievalism, one shorn of its scholastic philosophers and other complications; the parallel with the later development of the Nova Scotia image of the Scottish baronet, the colourful tartans and the warm and integrated clans, from which theology, political economy and philosophy were all removed, is striking.<sup>105</sup>

The editing out of the Clearances from the new official romance of history was exemplified by the Lone Shieling episode, perhaps the oddest event in the annals of tartanism. In 1934 Donald S. MacIntosh, who for years held the chair of geology at Dalhousie University, died in Halifax. MacIntosh was a native of Pleasant Bay, Inverness County, and a past president of the North British Society of Halifax. Although he was not a man of wealth, MacIntosh's will had an enormous posthumous effect. He left to the Crown 100 acres at Pleasant Bay, Inverness County. "It is my wish", his will said, "that the government of the Province will maintain a small park at the Intervale and will build there a small Cabin which will be constructed in the same design or plan as the lone shieling on the Island of Skye, Scotland". Angus L. Macdonald termed Professor MacIntosh's bequest "an appealing and magnificent gesture". Many Dalhousie students, he said, had thought the professor a quiet man, interested only in his home, books, and work. They had not seen the Celtic essence of the man, the "rich vein of sentiment which is never absent from the Celtic soul", dramatized by this "appealing and magnificent gesture, expressive of deep affection for the two Scotlands, the Old and the New".<sup>106</sup>

Professor MacIntosh's bequest was a reference to "The Canadian Boat-Song", a poem known by heart by a generation of Nova Scotia school children. The poem, first published anonymously in 1829, expresses a Highlander's longing for the land of his forefathers, as remembered in Canadian exile. (It was, alas, most likely written by a Lowlander resident in Scotland and it was also probably *not* "from the Gaelic".)<sup>107</sup>

From the lone shieling of the misty island —  
Mountains divide us, and the waste of seas —  
Yet still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland,  
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.

Foundation at St. Ann's, on 25 August 1940 (*Eastern Chronicle* (New Glasgow) , 24 September 1940) did draw a parallel between the Clearances and the German occupations of Norway, Denmark, Holland and Belgium — a somewhat doubtful card to play, if one were attempting to develop the argument that the British (or Scottish lairds) were intrinsically more moral than the Germans.

<sup>105</sup> Lears, *No Place of Grace*, p. 142.

<sup>106</sup> *Halifax Chronicle*, 25 July 1934. Macdonald wrote to the secretary of state for Scotland to obtain "designs or drawings or pictures" of a shieling — evidently local memories of just what a shieling looked like had grown more than a little dim. Angus L. Macdonald to Lt. Col. D.J. Colville, M.P., 10 July 1939, Macdonald Papers, vol. 1505, f.409, PANS. A "truly authentic" ancient shieling -- that is, a rude thatched hut on a mountain side — should ideally have been made of tough heather stems, twined with wisps of straw, and plastered with peat mud. This, however, would have placed a severe strain on the province's limited supply of heather.

<sup>107</sup> See Roy, *The Scot and Canada* (Toronto, 1947), p. 73, who cites G.H. Needler, *The Lone Shieling* (1941), and Edward MacCurdy, *A Literary Enigma* (1935).

Once the Province of Nova Scotia accepted the gift, the campaign to establish a national park in Cape Breton was strengthened immeasurably. In 1947, after long and intricate federal/provincial negotiations, Flora MacLeod of MacLeod unveiled the tablet at the newly constructed Lone Shielling, while a piper played "The Skye Boat Song".<sup>108</sup> This was the crowning moment of tartanism in Nova Scotia. It represented the full naturalization of the new truth of the province's inherently Scottish nature. The shieling quickly became a prominent, if for some uninformed visitors rather mysterious, part of the province's tourism repertoire.<sup>109</sup>

Erased from public tartanism was the political point of "The Canadian Boat-Song". Only one verse of the poem was placed upon the plaque erected at the reconstructed lone shieling. There was more to the "Canadian Boat Song", however, than a melancholy lament for a lost land:

No seer foretold the children would be banish'd,  
That a degenerate lord might boast his sheep....

Here was the unresolved pain of the tradition, words within an alternative vocabulary which could not be admitted into the official and hegemonic story of the Nova Scotia Scot. To admit them would be to undo the romance of the clan, and to replace the melodious escapism of *Brigadoon* with something more like *The Grapes of Wrath*. The edited text at the Lone Shielling stands today, a monument to one generation's drive to tame and to commercialize its vividly re-imagined, incompletely Scottish past.

As a merry tartanism covered Nova Scotia, the Gaelic language once spoken by thousands in Nova Scotia was fast disappearing. By a savage irony, while Nova Scotia *appeared* to become more and more Scottish every year, the Gaelic language was fast *disappearing*. The "naturalization" of Gaelic in the welcome the province gave to tourists (*Ciad Mille Failte* — One Hundred Thousand Welcomes) coincided with official neglect of the needs of Gaelic-speakers interested in retaining the language. Tartanism exploited Gaelic as one of its raw materials. It did not sustain it.

That he could speak Gaelic was a big selling point for Macdonald. Yet Macdonald, like many Nova Scotians of Scottish descent, actually had a somewhat ambiguous relationship with Gaelic. A romantic legend grew around Macdonald's ability in the language. The *Halifax Chronicle* and many other newspapers retailed a story about Ramsay Macdonald's visit to the province in 1933. Angus Macdonald was reported to have greeted the former British prime minister with a long, fluent and flowery speech in Gaelic; a perplexed Ramsay

108 For negotiations with the National Parks Bureau, see Angus L. Macdonald to J. Smart, 24 February 1947, Macdonald Papers, vol. 921, f.31/9J, PANS; for the ceremony itself, see Flora MacLeod of MacLeod to Angus L. Macdonald, 6 November 1947, Macdonald Papers, vol. 921, f.31-9J/40, PANS.

109 Some visitors arrived thinking that a "shieling" was a natural rock formation peculiar to Scotland. See Will R. Bird, *This is Nova Scotia* (Toronto, 1972 [1950]), p. 233.

Macdonald could not understand a word.<sup>110</sup> The point of the story was to suggest that cultural forms which had vanished in Scotland itself were still flourishing in the New Scotland across the seas. The story was a newspaperman's invention. Angus Macdonald had not spoken Gaelic to Ramsay Macdonald. "Some newspaper man conceived the idea that the thing would make a good story," the premier remembered, "which it did, having been referred to in papers as far away as South Africa and Australia".<sup>111</sup> There was a certain romance to signing letters "Aonghas MacDhomhnuill, Priomh Mhinistir, Albainn Nuadh", but in fact Macdonald needed expert assistance to draft even a short note, not to mention a Gaelic tablet marking an historical site.<sup>112</sup> As he explained to the secretary and organizer of the Highland Association, Glasgow, in connection with his forthcoming visit to the Gaelic Mod, Oban, Scotland: "I must...apologize for not replying to your letter in the ancient language. To do this would require more time than the writing of an English letter, and I am now in the midst of a Parliamentary Session, which makes very heavy demands indeed on my time and my energy".<sup>113</sup> "Like many others in this country", he told one correspondent, "I can speak Gaelic and read it, but I cannot write it sufficiently well to attempt a reply to your letter".<sup>114</sup>

When Macdonald thought of Gaelic, it was as the ancient tongue of Caledonia, a direct line to the essence of the Celt, not as an ever-evolving, functional language, which might require words for "telephone" and "electricity" as well as for "clan" and "sword". Gaelic was important to him as the "real link between the new lands over the seas and the old country".<sup>115</sup> Macdonald argued in a characteristically essentialist fashion that Gaelic was important because it tied the Gael to his heroic past. "No Highlander can fully understand the great history of his race, unless he can understand the language of that race", he told an audience of the converted at the founding meeting of the Gaelic Foundation of Cape Breton in 1939. "It is in Gaelic, in Gaelic song, in Gaelic story, in Gaelic music that the long tale of Highland glory, Highland joy and sorrow, is told...I believe that every Highlander who is proud of his blood should be interested in the survival of Gaelic and in all steps that are taken for the purpose".<sup>116</sup> Macdonald was such a Highlander, and he did take an interest in the survival of Gaelic, but in a manner consistent with both his liberalism and his romanticism.

110 *Halifax Chronicle*, 20 May 1947.

111 Angus L. Macdonald to W.F. Chisholm, 21 August 1934, Macdonald Papers, vol. 1535, f.1369/54, PANS.

112 Angus L. Macdonald to K.A. Greene, 6 June 1947, Macdonald Papers, vol. 921, f.31/9H, PANS.

113 Angus L. Macdonald to Neil Shaw, 19 March 1953, Macdonald Papers, vol. 978, f.30/A, PANS.

114 Angus L. Macdonald to Judge Caldaire, 9 September 1935, Angus L. Macdonald Papers, vol. 1535, f.1384/7, PANS. It was thought that of approximately 30,000 Gaelic-speakers in Nova Scotia in the 1940s, only about 15 per cent could read or write in the language. *Halifax Chronicle*, 15 May 1947. (However, many statistics pertaining to Gaelic in Nova Scotia seem to be, at best, educated guesses.)

115 Report of Angus L. Macdonald's speech to the National Mod in Scotland, 1953, in *Daily News* (Truro), 21 October 1953.

116 Untitled address by Angus L. Macdonald, n.d. [1939], at the founding of the Gaelic Foundation, Macdonald Papers, vol. 1505, f.409/48, PANS.



There is something sombre about the collapse of a language. Gaelic, after a century as a living language in Nova Scotia, entered a phase of acute crisis under Macdonald's premiership.<sup>117</sup> Gaelic was a significant language in Nova Scotia, and on the basis of the numbers at least, no less likely to survive than Micmac or French. However, it was more susceptible to assimilationist pressures, and those who spoke it felt stigmatized, both in Scotland and in Nova Scotia. Only if the state intervened to protect it from the powerful assimilating force of North American commercial culture could Gaelic survive. Macdonald's premiership aroused high hopes among those who identified strongly with the language. The problem with Macdonald as a guardian of Gaelic was his anti-modernism. Anti-modernism made Macdonald *less* likely than other politicians to defend Gaelic, as he alone was in a good position to do. (It was well within his purview, for example, to increase very substantially the presence of Gaelic in public education.) But Macdonald saw the Gaelic language as he did history, as a racial "treasure" handed down from the romantic Scottish past. Moreover, as a traditional liberal suspicious of the state, he seemed incapable of going beyond "the individual" to defend the existence of something as collective as a language. The *Gaidhealtachd* might have been sustainable as a significant Nova Scotia language community when Macdonald came to power in 1933. His inaction, combined with the inroads of American mass culture in the 1920s and 1930s, made its future far more uncertain when he died in 1954. Macdonald took only weak steps to strengthen the position of Gaelic in the educational system. His one practical measure was the establishment of a Gaelic department in the adult division of the department of education, and to appoint Major C.I.N. MacLeod, from Ross-shire, to the position in 1949, for which he was warmly congratulated by proponents of the Gaelic Revival, and by himself when he visited the National Mod in Oban; but one good appointment was not very much to show for 16 years as premier and 21 years in active politics.<sup>118</sup> Macdonald pointed a reproachful finger at St. Francis Xavier University for not specializing earlier in Gaelic language, literature and music, but his own record of inaction and purely passive support for the language was no more inspiring.<sup>119</sup> He boasted that Scotland, with five million people and only 90,000

117 The decline of Gaelic was occurring in Scotland as well; for a moving account of the fate of Gaelic there, see Nancy C. Dorian, *Language Death: The Life Cycle of a Scottish Gaelic Dialect* (Philadelphia, 1981).

118 The full story of Macdonald and the Gaelic revivalists cannot be told here. Some valuable insights can be gleaned from: A.W.R. MacKenzie to Angus L. Macdonald, 7 February 1950, Macdonald Papers, vol. 953, f.32/1., PANS; Angus L. Macdonald to James MacNeil, 4 March 1936, Macdonald Papers, vol. 1535, f.1384/65, PANS; J.G. MacKinnon to Angus L. Macdonald, 20 March 1939, Macdonald Papers, vol. 1505, f.409/33, PANS; James MacNeil to Angus L. Macdonald, 25 February 1938, Macdonald Papers, vol. 1504, f.403/3, PANS; James MacNeil to Angus L. Macdonald, 22 July 1938, Macdonald Papers, vol. 1504, f.403/4, PANS; Angus L. Macdonald to James MacNeil, 15 March 1939, Macdonald Papers, vol. 1505, f.409/35, PANS; and see D. Maclean Sinclair, "Gaelic in Nova Scotia", *Dalhousie Review*, 30 (October 1950), pp. 252-60, and Gilbert Foster, *Language and Poverty: The Persistence of Scottish Gaelic in Eastern Canada* (St. John's, 1988), Chapters 4 and 5.

119 Angus L. Macdonald to Senator Donald MacLennan, 10 May 1940, Macdonald Papers, vol. 1506, f.419/19, PANS.

Gaelic speakers, ran second to Nova Scotia, where one out of 25 people could "use the ancient language of Scotland". He was convinced that "the last stand of Gaelic outside of Scotland, itself, and perhaps not excepting Scotland, will be in Eastern Nova Scotia".<sup>120</sup> But the very way he thought through this issue — of an "ancient language" making its "last stand" — suggested an anti-modernist romantic fatalism, not a forward-looking, practical strategy for maintaining a language.

Instead of supporting those who wanted an effective policy of supporting the survival of Gaelic, Macdonald supported a strange tartan fantasia at the Gaelic College at St. Ann's. The brainchild of one Angus William Rugg MacKenzie, a Presbyterian minister and gifted activist, the Gaelic College emerged in 1938, and created much publicity for the province. A.W.R. MacKenzie had excellent qualities as an activist. He could be immensely persuasive, to the extent of extracting money from parsimonious county councillors and labour from many ordinary people in a time of economic misery. He was single-minded and selfless in his pursuit of the Gaelic cause. MacKenzie thus had many of the qualities that one could have demanded in someone who was presented to the world as a crusader on behalf of Gaelic — except, apparently, the ability to speak the language.<sup>121</sup> The institution founded by him, although called the "Gaelic College", was from the beginning not really about the teaching of Gaelic but the promotion of tartanism. Although MacKenzie probably could not speak Gaelic, he *could* create an immense whirlwind of Gaelic activities. The first issue of this *Canadian-American Gael* (whose motto was *Clanna Nan Gaidheal Ri Guaillibh A Cheile* — Children of the Gael, Shoulder to Shoulder) conveyed an impression of immense institutional dynamism. It first listed the ten existing "wings" of the imposing edifice of the Gaelic College—

1. The Annual Highland Gathering (1938). 2. The Gaelic College Summer School (1939). 3. The Gaelic College Library (1939). 4. The Highland Folk Museum (1939). 5. The Annual Gaelic Mod (1939). 6. The Annual Registration of Clans (1940). 7. The Gaelic College Scholarships (1940). 8. The Gaelic College Extension Department (1941). 9. The Handcrafts (weaving) Summer School (1943). 10. The Canadian-American Gael (1943).

—with an *additional* eleven sub-institutions, departments and programmes in the works:

11. The Cape Breton Ceilidh [a radio broadcast]. 12. The Gaelic Weavers Home Industry. 13. The Gaelic College Primary and Home Department. 14. A Folk-Art Summer School. 15. A Celtic Music Summer School. 16. An Annual Folk-Art and Handcrafts Exhibition. 17. Annual Highland

<sup>120</sup> Angus L. Macdonald to Roy Fraser, 11 December 1953, Macdonald Papers, vol. 1507, f.443/33, PANS.

<sup>121</sup> Gilbert Foster, *Language and Poverty: The Persistence of Scottish Gaelic in Eastern Canada* (St. John's, 1988), p. 91.

Games. 18. An Annual "Ceist" Day. 19. A Gaelic School of the Air. 20. A Canadian National Gaelic Mod. 21. An International Gaelic Mod.<sup>122</sup>

Here was a list of programmes, institutions, "departments" and activities that would have taxed the resources of Dalhousie University — and every single one of them was driven by the energetic MacKenzie. Indeed, after he had alienated more solidly rooted supporters in the Gaelic-speaking community who had rallied to his project in the late 1940s,<sup>123</sup> most of these institutional names were simply synonyms for the word "MacKenzie". One critic, the Reverend Alexander Murray, captured the strangeness of St. Ann's when he wrote, "The whole thing is in the air and will never materialize".<sup>124</sup>

The whole thing *was* "in the air", but it was a fantasy which played perfectly to the mood of the 1940s — and this meant that, after a fashion, and in the strange half-light of the new world of tourism, the "thing" did *materialize*, did *become real* — at least in that special and qualified sense that "real" has acquired in the modern age. The press loved the idea of a Gaelic College — "the only Gaelic college in North America" — and lapped up every detail about the annual Gaelic Mods. *Time* magazine covered the Clan MacLeod festivities in 1947; wildly inaccurate accounts of "misty glens" in the American press prompted Helen Champion, herself a writer of romantic travel books, to exclaim, "How we like to fool ourselves...and all for a bit of sentiment or romance".<sup>125</sup> "You cannot realize what an attraction you had in the Gaelic Mod or you would have had news of the 1948 meeting mailed in quantity all over the continent", one ecstatic Montreal travel promoter told Angus L. Macdonald. "The programme strikes the right note for these times".<sup>126</sup> The annual Gaelic Mod was a perfectly designed for tourism promotion. It was strategically scheduled in the middle of the newspapers' "silly season", with a different clan theme each year. The "election" of prominent Canadian Gaels to newly invented "Clan" positions provided a spurious newsworthiness to the affair. Apart from the jealous Antigonish Highland Society, sponsor of the Antigonish Highland Games and thus a rival source of authority in

122 *Canadian-American Gael*, vol. 1, 1943-4, p. 2.

123 Foster, *Language and Poverty*, pp. 86-90 suggests that in the first decade of the Gaelic College it enjoyed substantial support and attained to a high cultural level, particularly given the level of its resources, but that MacKenzie was unable to hold the allegiance of Gaelic scholars. He seems radically to underestimate (p.98) the structuring role of the tourism industry, right from the College's beginning.

124 Rev. Alexander D. Murray to Harold Connolly, 11 April 1947, Macdonald Papers, vol. 921, f.31-9h/82, PANS. For more on the tangled relations of the government with St. Ann's, see Harold Connolly to A.W.R. MacKenzie (copy), Macdonald Papers, 22 March 1947, vol. 921, f.31-9h/75, PANS; A.W.R. MacKenzie to Angus L. Macdonald, 26 March 1947, Macdonald Papers, vol. 921, f.31-9h/76, PANS; cited in A.W.R. MacKenzie to Angus L. Macdonald, 30 June 1948, Macdonald Papers, vol. 933, f.31/29, PANS; Angus L. Macdonald to Rev. Alexander D. Murray, 8 April 1947, Macdonald Papers, vol. 921, f.31-9h/80, PANS.

125 *Halifax Herald*, 13 August 1947; see also *Eastern Chronicle* (New Glasgow), 21 August 1947.

126 S.R. Gordon to Angus L. Macdonald, 22 September 1948, Macdonald Papers, vol. 933, f.31/46, PANS.

all things Gaelic,<sup>127</sup> everyone loved the Gaelic Mod. Even normally hard-nosed politicians succumbed to the spell of St. Ann's; Charlotte Whitton, the right-wing conservative expert on social welfare and not someone one readily associates with Celtic romanticism, wrote especially to Macdonald in 1947 to ensure her friend Agnes MacLeod was invited to the 1947 Mod, at which the MacLeod of MacLeod, her clan chieftain, was the guest of honour.<sup>128</sup> Every year, A.W.R. MacKenzie told Macdonald, "it will be our duty to invite one of the hereditary [hereditary] Chieftains of Scotland to Cape Breton which will be a great source of inspiration to Cape Breton Gaels".<sup>129</sup>

Angus L. Macdonald, who never mustered much energy to support Gaelic as a language, was hooked on the High Tartanism of St. Ann's. He might grumble about MacKenzie's tendency to add "speech upon speech and dance upon dance", which sated even his appetite for things Scottish. "I must say that having seen five girls, say under twelve years of age, on the sword dance, and then four or five between twelve and sixteen do the same dance, and then a similar number over sixteen, I am a little weary of sword dancing", he remarked with understated feeling.<sup>130</sup> He might acknowledge to his correspondents that the "College" was not really a "College" and "may never amount to a college in the real sense of the term".<sup>131</sup> But, in the end, the College embodied perfectly the Macdonaldian concept of Scottishness. It was a living example of that hierarchy and loyalty Macdonald thought characterized the "traditional clan system", with the premier at the top. The clans still lived. The great Scottish family was being knit back together.<sup>132</sup>

127 A.W.R. MacKenzie to D.P. Chisholm, 18 May 1950 (copy), Macdonald Papers, vol. 953, f.32/4, PANS.

128 Charlotte Whitton to Angus L. Macdonald, 25 March 1947, Macdonald Papers, vol. 921, f.31/9H, PANS.

129 A.W.R. MacKenzie to Angus L. MacDonald, 14 February 1947, Macdonald Papers, vol. 921, f.31/9H, PANS.

130 Angus L. Macdonald to A.W.R. MacKenzie, 11 June 1948, Macdonald Papers, vol. 933, f.31, PANS.

131 Angus L. Macdonald to D. Leo Dolan, 4 August 1939, Macdonald Papers, vol. 1505, f.409/13, PANS.

132 The "College" survived the death of Macdonald; it even managed (barely) to survive MacKenzie. Its connection with the Gaelic language became increasingly fictitious, as its role as craft centre and gift shop grew ever larger. (This transition was evident in 1952, when it officially became "The Gaelic College of Celtic Folk Arts & Highland Home Crafts".) The link to Gaelic was stretched to the breaking point when, perhaps in the name of pan-Celtic unity, the College invited leading Boston Irish personalities to a "Massachusetts Day". (It snared only the President of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, "as Irish as Paddy Murphy".) Perhaps the nadir of the Mods was reached in 1958, when the "official bard and historian of the worldwide clan MacMillan", one Rev. Somerled MacMillan of Paisley, Scotland, pronounced the fatal word, "farce". In a heated quarrel with MacKenzie, fiery as ever, the visiting Scot insulted MacKenzie in Gaelic. The head of the Gaelic College seemed suspiciously unresponsive — almost as though he did not understand what Rev. MacMillan had been saying! "The St. Ann's affair is a travesty of a genuine mod", said the vengeful MacMillan, "the biggest farce I ever attended...a phoney from top to bottom". Just where was the "Cradle of Celtic Civilization in America" Reverend MacMillan had been promised? "This island, I was told was the stronghold of Gaelic in North America. I received a shock when I found out how little Gaelic was spoken in Cape Breton. All I could find who could

In addition to its impact on the tourist image of the province, tartanism was a powerful and persuasive *political* vocabulary. There were many reasons for the collapse of the left in 20th-century Nova Scotia, ranging from outright repression to the out-migration of many leading radicals. A complete account of the triumph of the right, however, would also have to show how it worked positively in the ideological sphere; and here a subtle reworking of notions of the province's ethnic essence is significant. Macdonald, perhaps better than any other Canadian politician, had mastered the art of winning consent: he made men and women of very different class backgrounds love him and identify whole-heartedly with his programme. (As one of Macdonald's admirers exclaimed, "You represent more than any other man the character and the traditions which everyone of Highland blood holds dear".)<sup>133</sup> The most obvious example of Macdonald's brilliant reconceptualization of hegemony was the "historic compromise" he achieved with the labour movement; the more important example, perhaps, was that of tartanism itself, of the re-enchantment of the drab realities of underdevelopment and economic crisis through the magic of language. Stated baldly, as a political sermon to workers and primary producers in times of crisis, Macdonald's brand of 19th-century individualist liberalism should not have made hearts beat faster: paving roads and attracting tourists were not the stuff of song and legend, especially not when many people were desperately looking for more permanent solutions to economic and social crisis. Yet as part of the great Nova Scotia tradition, part of the true clan legacy of every real Nova Scotian, such liberal nostrums suddenly seemed far more formidable. One begins to understand how so traditionalist a politician could exert so powerful a moral and intellectual leadership, even in a time of crisis.

In Macdonald's thought, Scottishness provided a bedrock, an unquestionable essence. He plainly had a growing, receptive audience for his views. "In a day when there are great questionings and vast stirrings in men's minds", he proclaimed in 1937, "when we hear doubts as to the validity of much that once was regarded as almost sacred — doubts, economic, social, political and religious; let us remember that while we ought never to lose the inquiring mind, there are some things about which there should be no questions asked and no doubts raised".<sup>134</sup> Doubt and critique could be contained, and an innocent and trusting attitude resumed towards certain unchanging ethnic truths. Thus, in the Depression, the Scottish essence — what Macdonald called the "chief characteristics of the Scot" — was gradually made to stand against both socialism and even against the new Keynesian liberalism. The chief characteristics of the Scot were

his strong religious sense, amounting sometimes to mysticism; his love of education; his high sense of loyalty; his pride, and his self-reliance.

speaking the language were a few older people". *Chronicle-Herald*, 9 August 1957; *Chronicle-Herald*, 7 August 1958. In the 1980s the College — by this point quite plainly a tourist gift shop more than a "College" — was the centre of a fierce storm over patronage. Heather Laskey, "A big Gaelic squabble in the land of the giant MacAskill", *Atlantic Insight*, June 1986, pp. 8-9.

133 Roy Fraser to Angus L. Macdonald, 5 December 1953, Macdonald Papers, vol. 1507, f.443/34, PANS.

134 *Scotland Forever! Being an Address by Angus L. McDonald [sic] Premier of Nova Scotia to the St. Andrew's Society of Charleston, S.C. (n.p., n.d. [1937])*, p. 16.

These, it seems to me, are the very foundation stones of Scottish character. Scotland is a rugged country, and something of the strength and endurance of the Scottish hills seems to have impressed itself on the natures of the Scottish people. The ruggedness of their character and its sturdiness, the strengths and yet the humility of it, the reverence with the independence — in one word, the greatness of that character, constitutes the magic of Scotland.<sup>135</sup>

This archetypal Scot could *not* be a socialist, for Scots were essentially true "individuals", for whom "paternalism" (Macdonald's code word for socialism, or more generally the welfare state) could never be attractive:

The value of the great homely Scottish virtues of thrift, of honesty, of reverence, of independence, of self-reliance, of honest pride, is beyond the scope of reckoning or argument....I see in certain countries a tendency to some or other form of paternalism — it may be benevolent, but it is still paternalism — that must rob manhood of much of its character, and life of the joy of individual achievement. Against any direct invasion of our liberties I know that Scotsmen will stand again as they have stood before, but I would fain hope that the vigorous manhood of Scotland's sons would also assert itself against all forms of action which will tend to produce, it may be slowly, unsuspectingly, but nevertheless surely, a generation whose pride has vanished, and whose sense of independence has been lost.<sup>136</sup>

That there were some Scots who tried to link fascism and the Celtic Revival, and many thousands more who had found radical socialism attractive in both Scotland and Nova Scotia, did not create a problem for Macdonald, for such people were clearly lapsed Scots who had lost touch with their essential natures. Even taking up somewhat Keynesian solutions to the Depression raised suspicions about the Scottishness of those who did so: Macdonald, after noting the "thrift and frugality" the Scots had learned from their tough environment, turned a skeptical eye upon "a large and increasingly vocal school" of economists who, he claimed, were telling people "that the sense of thrifty independence which centuries of struggle with such conditions bred into the Scot, no longer has a place in this new and kindlier American dispensation".<sup>137</sup> Macdonald thus created a "subject-position" within this ideology, that of the true, frugal, careful and "Scottish" Nova Scotian, who was very much a 19th-century liberal like Macdonald.

The same Scottish essence which spoke so eloquently against collectivism was expanded during the Second World War to include a new concept: the democratic principle. Rather than rooting this in the Protestant Reformation in Scotland or in

135 *Scotland Forever!*, p. 15.

136 *Scotland Forever!*, pp. 16-17.

137 Angus L. Macdonald, "The Day We Celebrate", Response to the toast by Col. Robert S. Henry at the two hundred and seventh anniversary dinner of the St. Andrew's Society of Charleston", 30 November 1936, Macdonald Papers, vol. 904, f.28/f.1/46, PANS.

the ideas of David Hume and Adam Smith, the anti-modernist Macdonald typically made the case for the "democratic principle" rest on his interpretation of the "Clan System", which he redescribed as "the finest illustration of democracy". The clan system was "democratic" because the humblest member of the clan might be a blood relative of the chief himself. Consequently, Macdonald argued, "There was no source of inferiority among Clansmen, there was no caste system. All were equal members of one great family. Hence it is that the Scots, wherever they have gone, have carried with them, as a sacred fire, the true spirit of democracy".<sup>138</sup> There was insight and illusion in this analysis: like North American natives, the Highlanders, within each clan, did practise a form of social equality, in which the chief and his clansmen were tied to each other in a dense web of mutual obligations.<sup>139</sup> However, attempting to read into such pre-capitalist social formations the comforting eternal truths of liberalism overlooked the warlike relations among clans and the dissolution of the system: "egalitarian democracy" is not the first phrase the Clearances bring to mind. Macdonald's focus on the clans was of a piece with his intense anti-modernism and meshed well with the organic social philosophies of Roman Catholicism. Thus redescribed, the Highland clan tradition could be associated with a loosely defined "British" heritage, or exploited in a wartime cult of heroism. (Lord Sempill, who was not only a peer but a "Baronet" of Nova Scotia, called upon the "Gaelic Race" in Nova Scotia in 1944 to carry on the romantic history of their people, whose latest chapter was "Gaelic Triumphs in Aeronautics".)<sup>140</sup>

A wide range of ideologies drew upon Scottish history,<sup>141</sup> but it was most commonly used to support a conservative argument. Thrifty, independent, self-reliant; pious, mystical, religious; proud, virile, anti-paternalist; democratic, educated, tolerant: in brief, the true Scot was the true liberal individual — someone not unlike Angus L. Macdonald himself. Although Macdonald's postwar resistance to the welfare state and to expanding the jurisdiction of the federal government may

138 Angus L. Macdonald, speech at Gaelic Mod, n.d.[1940], Macdonald Papers, vol. 1505, f.409/16, PANS.

139 See Ommer, "Primitive Accumulation", p. 125 for an interesting discussion.

140 *Halifax Chronicle*, 7 March 1944.

141 As the World War turned into the Cold War, Scottish history continued to be ransacked for examples that purportedly shed light on the Gouzenko Affair and other contemporary questions. A.R.M. Lower, for example, told the 83rd annual banquet of the St. Andrew's Society in Winnipeg that Scottish history illuminated the Gouzenko Affair by showing how a small nation might resist a larger one; as well, the history of a once bicultural Scotland possibly suggested that "before Canada can truly become a united nation, one of its languages, like Gaelic, will have to go". *Winnipeg Free Press*, 1 December 1953. Meanwhile, the *Toronto Globe and Mail* denounced local Communists for holding a "gala Burns Night", when everyone knew that Burns was "mightily opposed to snivelling sneaks and double-dealers, and, consequently, would not have been pleasant company for those who now try to use his name as sucker-bait". "Commies", the newspaper intoned, "should leave him alone". Clipping in the Macdonald Papers, n.d. [January 1952]. A study of the rhetoric of the Burns Night suppers (a widespread phenomenon in Canada), which so often involved Presbyterians tip-toeing around the biographical details of Burns' life (or in the Catholic Macdonald's case, drawing scholastic distinctions between "passion" and "lust") might open up some interesting new questions in cultural history.

be explained in relation to his disillusioning experience in Ottawa, it may also be useful to consider his identification as a Scot with the free-standing individual. How could the welfare state be reconciled with the rock from which he was hewn? And how much more powerfully could labour and social democracy be resisted when one could claim that there was something intrinsically *alien* in the collectivist vision that true Nova Scotians must oppose!

Tartanism helped undermine the left; it also defused regionalism. Macdonald's insights into the ways in which postwar centralism could work against Nova Scotia were often perceptive, but they did not issue in any coherent regional politics. Macdonald took a general Nova Scotia sense of regional grievance, merged it with a doctrine of the Scottish essence, and thereby helped transform regional protest from a form of "progressivism" into something that was more like the "conservatism" many scholars have diagnosed.<sup>142</sup> Consider the ways out-migration, always a key regionalist issue, could be handled through appeals to the Scottish identity. Within other frameworks, out-migration can be seen as an indictment of a political and economic system which does not allow Nova Scotians to prosper in their own province. Tartanism, however, allows one to "understand" out-migration as part of an ethnic essence. If the true Scot was footloose, "out-migration" could then be redescribed as an adventure, one more chapter in the romantic Scottish conquest of the world. "Scotsmen in the past have gone into every corner of the earth, exploring, colonizing, settling; establishing schools, churches and universities; contributing greatly to civilization in its every form, and enriching mankind by the splendour and the stability of their achievements", was the way Macdonald put it.<sup>143</sup> Meanwhile, fiddle music and Gaelic on the CBC kept sadness at bay for homesick "guest workers" across Canada. "The Cape Bretoner has not yet been born", Macdonald wrote to one homesick correspondent, "who does not long for the feel of Cape Breton soil beneath his feet and the sound of the Cape Breton accent in his ears".<sup>144</sup> "The region" could not emerge as an important category within a network of words and things so centred on "the Scot". Macdonald was hardly working out a vocabulary or strategy of regionalism or Nova Scotian neo-nationalism as he spoke to Scottish gatherings from Oban to Winnipeg.

Tartanism implied ethnic and racial hierarchies which could only work against any inclusive regionalist neo-nationalism. These hierarchies were not overtly racist; they worked in a subtler way. Neither A.W.R. MacKenzie nor Macdonald were

142 See Ernest Forbes, "The Origins of the Maritime Rights Movement", in *Challenging the Regional Stereotype: Essays on the 20th Century Maritimes* (Fredericton, 1989), pp. 100-13, *The Maritime Rights Movement, 1919-1927: A Study in Canadian Regionalism* (Montreal, 1979), and R.A. Young, "Teaching and Research in Maritime Politics: Old Stereotypes and New Directions", in P.A. Buckner, ed., *Teaching Maritime Studies* (Fredericton, 1986), pp. 153-73.

143 *Scotland Forever!* For another kind of linkage between tartanism and economic crisis, see Hugh MacLennan, "The Miracle That's Changing Nova Scotia", *Mayfair* (July 1953), p. 58, who argued that the crisis of the region's economy was itself the outcome of the Scottish essence (and consequently not of economic exploitation or mismanagement): an older generation of Scots had simply been *too* thrifty and had discouraged their young.

144 Angus L. Macdonald to Judge Caldaire, 9 September 1935, Macdonald Papers, vol. 1535, f.1384/7, PANS.



racists in the sense of justifying in their public or private words discrimination against other races. MacKenzie's *Canadian-American Gael* clearly tried to distance itself from any suggestion of racism. It proclaimed its policy to be without "Religious, Political, Racial or National Prejudice, Believing in the human right of every race to liberty and a place in the sun".<sup>145</sup> Yet racial hierarchies were quietly at work in tartanism. In the very issue of the *Canadian-American Gael* that carried the strident disclaimer of "racial aggrandizement", one finds a discriminatory immigration policy aimed at strengthening the Scottish nature of rural Cape Breton, to the clear disadvantage of other intending immigrants:

The Gaelic College as a Rural Institution, devoted to the development of the Cultural life of its immediate constituency, has a keen consciousness that underlying a robust cultural life must be maintained a healthy economic progress. Therefore The Gaelic College is deeply interested in the speedy solution of:

1. The unoccupied farm

2. The re-settlement of rural Cape Breton farms — (a) with Native Sons, — (b) with Highland Scottish immigrants who are suited to the soil, sea and forest way of life....<sup>146</sup>

One senses tartanism's more down-to-earth consequences in a letter received by Macdonald from James A. MacKinnon, the federal minister of mines and resources, who wondered if Macdonald could recommend "a young Canadian, Scottish background, with suitable qualifications" for a public relations job in Cape Breton Highlands National Park.<sup>147</sup> It could be objected that, "naturally", a Scottish Canadian would be more appropriate for employment in a park named after "the Highlands", but this merely begs the question of how this "naturalization" of the Highland motif had occurred, in an area that was far from being homogeneously Scottish.<sup>148</sup> Furthermore, the "recovery" of the province's "true" Scottish emblems in the 1920s — notably the coat-of-arms and provincial flag — proceeded from no innocent reading of history, in that it meant the dissemination of a dubious theory of Scottish primacy and the perpetuation of an image of a "kilted Savage" happily co-operating with the conquering whites.<sup>149</sup>

While Macdonald played a supporting role in the popularization of these forms, he was much more centrally involved in the triumph of the official tartan in 1953-4. Over the strenuous (but now forgotten) opposition of the Antigonish Highland

145 *Canadian American-Gael*, vol. 1, 1943-4, p. 1.

146 *Canadian-American Gael*, vol. 1, 1943-4, p. 2.

147 James A. MacKinnon to Angus L. Macdonald, 2 March 1949, Macdonald Papers, vol. 951, f.19-8A/7, PANS.

148 In this instance, the idea of "Scottish essence" read into the name of the area clearly discriminated against the numerous Acadians at Cheticamp, who had lived in the area for years.

149 See John A. Stewart, *Notes on the Arms of Nova Scotia* (Glasgow, 1928), pp. 26-7. For Macdonald's comments, see Angus L. Macdonald to Rev. Andrew MacDonnell, 18 April 1939, Macdonald Papers, vol. 1505, f.409/26, PANS.

Society, which discerned in the new form an innovation too likely to be commercialized and abused,<sup>150</sup> Nova Scotia became the first province to acquire a tartan. The tartan was designed in Nova Scotia by an English immigrant from Crewe. As the Lord Lyon, the Scottish guardian of such things, informed Macdonald, extending the tartan idea to an entire province was a rather audacious step. Nevertheless, the tartan subsequently became part of the official heraldry of Nova Scotia in 1963 and now can be found on book marks, ash trays, coffee mugs, and other articles for tourist consumption.<sup>151</sup> With the coming of the tartan, Nova Scotia could at last make its own *distinctive* contribution to what Tom Nairn called the "boundless realm of short-cake tins, plaid socks, kilted statuettes and whisky-labels that stretches from Tannochbrae to Tokyo".<sup>152</sup>

The tartan completed a complex network of words and things that summoned up Scottishness. What Margaret Laurence called the "Dance of the Ancestors" could now proceed with this most colourful and exquisite of props. It could be "slicked up, prettified, and performed forever in the same way. Nothing must ever change. The tourist trade wants everything to be settled and nice. Nothing must ever make reference to reality, to real sores, to *now*. The tourists are paying to be provided with an embodiment of their own fantasies".<sup>153</sup> As Dean MacCannell remarks, "the institutions of modern mass tourism are producing new and more highly deterministic ethnic forms than those produced during the colonial phase. The focus is on a type of tourism in which exotic cultures figure as key attractions: where the tourists go to see folk costumes in daily use, shop for folk handicrafts in authentic bazaars, stay on the alert for a typical form of nose, lips, breast, etc., learn some local norms for comportment, and perhaps learn some of the language".<sup>154</sup> Tartanism in Nova Scotia was in many respects an instance of the international phenomenon which MacCannell terms *reconstructed ethnicity*, the transformation of ethnic identities in response to the pressures of tourism, as ethnic forms are used for the entertainment of others. This is a world phenomenon, whose impact can be traced from Hawaii to Halifax, as a world cultural system emerges in response to a globally triumphant capitalism: "The new reconstructed ethnic forms are produced once almost all the groups in the world are located in a global network of interactions and they begin to use their former colorful ways both as commodities to be bought and sold, and as rhetorical weaponry in their dealings with one another, suddenly, it is not just ethnicity anymore, but it is understood as rhetoric, as symbolic expression within a purpose or a use-value in a larger system".<sup>155</sup>

Tartanism has clearly worked for many tourists; how well did it work for individual Nova Scotians? How completely did Nova Scotians themselves come to

150 *Casket* (Antigonish), 2 December 1954.

151 See Marjorie Major, "History of the Nova Scotia Tartan", *Nova Scotia Historical Quarterly*, vol. 2, No. 2 (March, 1972), pp. 191-214.

152 Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain*, p. 168.

153 Margaret Laurence, "Road from the Isles", in *Heart of a Stranger* (Toronto, 1980), p. 169. I thank Margaret McKay for this reference.

154 Dean MacCannell, "Reconstructed Ethnicity: Tourism and Cultural Identity in Third World Communities", in *Annals of Tourism Research*, 11, 3 (1984), p. 377.

155 MacCannell, "Reconstructed Ethnicity", p. 385.

identify with the figure of the Scot? In the absence of firm historical data, answers must take the form of impressions, but these are suggestive. Apart from some isolated grumbling from traditionalist Scots, few serious debates ever erupted over tartanism: there were apparently no movements of protest mounted by blacks, Acadians or natives against it. We do know that some Nova Scotians chose to highlight their Scottishness and found the call of the blood deeply powerful. A romanticized Scottishness could be interwoven with other strands of anti-modernism to powerful effect. Wallace R. MacAskill, the great romantic photographer, lived in a house called "Brigadoon", was reputed to drink only Drambuie and the finest Scotch, and "every New Year's Eve...asked his dinner guests to rise, put one foot up on a bench, and drink a toast to Bonnie Prince Charlie".<sup>156</sup> Although it seems unlikely that Nova Scotians without a drop of Scottish blood would suddenly have seen themselves as sons and daughters of the heather, "blood lines" can be imaginatively reconstructed. A long tradition of intermarriage among ethnic groups in Nova Scotia meant that many Nova Scotians could claim to be Scots, if only through one distant branch of their extended family, or through marriage. Robert MacNeil suggests just this possibility in his memories of childhood in Nova Scotia in the 1930s. Although his mother was an Oxner of Lunenburg, and apparently not Scottish on either side of her family, she embraced tartanism passionately after marrying MacNeil's father and assuming his name. Indeed, she became far more enthusiastic about Scottishness than did her "Scottish" husband.<sup>157</sup> Ethnicity is not a thing but an immensely complex field of relations and discourses, through which individuals and self-defined groups articulate differences and similarities with the wider world. Angus L. Macdonald himself provides perhaps the best illustration of this social and personal construction of ethnic markers. He was a "Scot" in his own vivid imagination more than he was in straightforward genealogical terms. As J. Murray Beck reminds us, by one reckoning he was only one-quarter Scottish, and could have, with as much historical accuracy, established himself as a true Acadian (from his Acadian mother) or a genuine Irishman (from his half-Irish father).<sup>158</sup> It was only through a particular reading of his own biography that Angus L. became the Highlander of his own vivid imagination.

Since Macdonald's day, tartanism has attained a stature far beyond his ambitions. Macdonald's piper at the border is still piping away, but he is now merely the advance guard of a vast tartan army. As one writer notes, in an interesting and oddly chilling phrase, today's tourists will find their stay "inescapably enhanced"<sup>159</sup> by Scottish dances, Scottish games, Scottish tartans, Scottish memorials, and Scottish advertisements. Yet Macdonald might note something strange about today's tartanism. Macdonald's tartanism was anti-modernist in its emphatic allegiance to a romantic ideal of the clan; and it always

156 Harry Bruce, introduction to *Wallace MacAskill: Seascapes and Sailing Ships*, p. 14.

157 Robert MacNeil, *Wordstruck: A Memoir* (Markham, Ontario, 1989), p. 70.

158 J.M. Beck, *Politics of Nova Scotia*, vol. 2, *Murray-Buchanan, 1896-1988* (Tantallon, 1988), p. 237.

159 Glen Hancock, "The Clans are Gathering Again", *Atlantic Advocate* (June 1987), pp. 27-32.

meant to say something deep: the words were supposed to take us to origins, calls of the blood, rocks from which we were hewn. On his bedrock of identity, those truths that should not be questioned, Macdonald planted his liberal church. How would he take a new post-modern definition of the Scottish essence that includes "good parties"?<sup>160</sup> What are the politics of this new, totalized representation of "Scott-land",<sup>161</sup> and what message is conveyed by the state's new picturesque past, by this vast tartan patchwork quilt? Have we not shifted, in ways difficult to analyze, from an anti-modernist tartanism to something much less definable or contestable, a post-modern tartanism whose sole logic is that of commodification and consumption? Macdonald's tartanism can be debated, because it made some claims about history; but post-modern tartanism, dancing merry Highland flings on the grave of memory, advances no such arguments. Scottish forms have become free-floating signifiers, which may be attached to highways, oil companies, and even (in one recent promotion) to cartons of milk. Macdonald's appreciation of the survival of the romantic forms he did so much to perpetuate would surely be qualified by his disquiet at learning of the eclipse of the meanings they once conveyed to him.

In 1954, Angus L. Macdonald received yet another breathless note from A.W.R. MacKenzie at the Gaelic College. In one of his romantic moments, Macdonald had mused about opening the new Canso Causeway in 1955 between Cape Breton Island and the mainland — Cape Breton's modernized link to a motorized North American tourism industry. It would be lovely, Macdonald thought, to have "One Hundred Pipers" to play "Road to the Isles". MacKenzie knew the premier was speaking figuratively, but he seized the opportunity to involve the Gaelic College in a crash programme of training pipers — who MacKenzie, for some reason, thought should be "child pipers". "To produce this Pipe Band is a major task in our program in promoting Celtic Culture in Nova Scotia", MacKenzie wrote Macdonald.<sup>162</sup> It was another interweaving of tartanism and commerce: the pipers would march Cape Breton into the brave new world of spectacular tourism. Macdonald died in his sleep on 13 April 1954, before the opening of this gateway to modernity. In his eulogy to Macdonald, Harold Connolly remembered how, in his droll fashion, Macdonald had enjoyed twitting him about his Irish forebears, "only to reassure me before the evening ended — thinking perhaps I might have been hurt — that the Highland Scot and the Irish were really one and the same people". Connolly concluded: "He will not lead the hundred pipers across the Canso Strait".<sup>163</sup> But surely, in a deeper sense, he already had?

160 Hancock, "The Class are Gathering Again", p. 32.

161 To paraphrase George Moncrieff's discussion of the Victorian appropriation of Scottish history in James Roy, *The Scot and Canada*, p. 313.

162 A.W.R. MacKenzie to Angus L. Macdonald, 30 December 1953, Macdonald Papers, vol. 978, f.30/1, PANS.

163 *Halifax Mail-Star*, 19 April 1954.