Weekly Colonist

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10TH, 1888.

JUDGE GRAY ON "COMMERCIAL UNION."

One of the most interesting contributions to "Commercial Union" literature is an able article from the pen of the Hon. J. H. Gray, one of the Supreme Court Judges of this province, in the February number of the *Overland Monthly*. It is entitled "Commercial Union between the United States and Canada." Quoting an extract from his book on the "Confederation of Canada," which our readers will remember as having been reproduced in these columns very recently, the learned writer proceeds to discuss the question to which he had referred some fifteen years ago from four different standpoints:

1. What does the term "Commercial Union with the United States" mean, when applied to Canada? How far does the proposition extend?

2. What effect would such a Union have upon the financial, commercial, and manufacturing interests of Canada?

3. What effect upon the agricultural interests, the fisheries, the provincial subsidies, federal and provincial taxation, and incidentially upon the relative positions of the Dominion and provincial governments towards each other?

4. In a business point, and for the true interests of Canada without regard to any political party, what course is it best for Canada to adopt?

5. Let it be distinctly understood that the question is, what is best for Canada, not for the United States, or for both together, or for the outside world of nations, but what is best for Canada?

Judge Gray believes that the discussion should be carried on dispassionately, and that due deference should be allowed those who hold a contrary opinion. "The cool heads outside of the combatants, (that is, public opinion), will decide which is right, which is wrong." He tells us that "the broad question of Commercial Union" is not one of Government or Opposition. It is not one of party politics. It is to be passed upon by mercantile and business men, by the producer and buyer, by the trader and by the purchaser, by the earnest workers of the country, by the calm sense of the people—the silent thinkers, the keen observers, and by the well read statesmen. It is not a mere question of locality, it is for the whole Dominion. It is not a question for to-day, but for years. He then proceeds to answer his first question, and, judging from the views of the advocates of this measure, "it means, in all articles of trade and commerce, the most unrestricted intercourse with the United States, the abolition of all tariff and customs dues on articles coming from the States into Canada—whether manufactured or of raw material, whether pertaining to the growth and manufactures of the United States, or imported from foreign countries, even to the extent of passing by the Canadian Parliament discriminating duties against similar English goods and manufactures imported from England direct into Canada." Canada practically becomes a slaughter-house for American goods and foreign goods entered at American ports. Reciprocity of trade in specific articles, or absolute freedom from duties on some, is an entirely different matter; Commercial Union, he held, as a term simply means "A complete union and a common entity." He next addresses himself to his second proposition. It is not a question whether the amalgamation of the two would or would not be better for both. Here is the point, Canada and the United States being separate territories, and each intending to continue separate, what effect will such Commercial Union have upon Canada. Nor is it to examined in the light of the judiciousness of past or present tariffs; in Canada the majority rules and Napoleon's words "*It faut laver le linge sale chez nous* becomes appropriate in this case. As showing the effect such a Union would have on our financial condition he looks to the payments to be made, and the sources from which the means to do so come. The annual payments amount to about $36,000,000. The means of payment are derived mainly from Customs and Inland Revenue. Of the former, which amounted for the fiscal year terminating June, 1886, to $19,427,397, some $6,769,354 were from duties on importations from the United States, leaving in round numbers $12,600,000 on importations from other countries. By Commercial Union this $6,769,354 would be swept away, and how is it proposed to be made up? This is a question of business, not of sentiment, and as yet no satisfactory answer has been given to it. Direct taxation is out of the question for many years to come. What would be the effect of such a Union on Canada's commercial interests? The bulk of the articles of commerce produced in other parts of the world would find their way into the United States more readily than into Canada. With Commercial Union established we would lose not only the carrying trade for the articles of our home consumption but would lose the advantages of return cargoes and the export of our home productions. Commercial annihilation for all but internal intercourse with the United States would be the end. Canada could not lower her duties below those of the United States; the consent of Congress would have to be had before a revenue by duties on foreign or even English goods could be raised. There must be the same duties on importations or no Commercial Union. As to the effect. Forty-four other countries besides the United States trade with Canada, and seven of these alone contribute $11,631,201 in duties to the Canadian revenue, or $4,861,847 more than the duties paid by the United States. Have Commercial Union and Canada could not trade with a single one of those countries unless on terms decided by the United States, the terms of 60,000,000 of people, not of 5,000,000. The interests of those who control and influence the policy of the United States would direct those terms. Had Commercial Union been in existence does any one believe the transcontinental lines of the United States would have permitted the construction of the C.P.R.? Antagonized by the superior force of the United States Canada would not have had the power to advance the money to build the road. Commercial Union from such a point of view would simply mean for Canada a paralysis of power. Eloquently the writer asks:

"Of the forty-four nations with which Canada now trades, which would think it worth while to look to Canada for business? Helpless and powerless, she would have to refer them to the tariff of the United States. Without a voice in the councils of the United States, without a vote in her assemblies, without a feather's weight of influence in the scale, she would have to accept the orders of the United States as to the nations of the earth with which she might trade. What! Canada not trade with England, except by permission of the United States? What! Canada not trade with France, except by permission of the United States? Well might it be said:

"The despot's heel is on thy shore."

'O for one hour of old Sir George Cartier?'"

It is urged that Commercial Union would be beneficial to the manufacturers of the Dominion, since they would have the advantage of an unrestricted market with 60,000,000 of people, instead of 5,000,000 as now. Judge Gray thinks that nations on equal terms as to population and general advantages, but with dissimilar elements and natural productions, with varied wants, may well demand an unrestricted exchange, but it is even doubtful then if they could have an absolute Commercial Union in all things as against all the world, where the Governments are independent and their foreign relations different. On the other hand, where the countries are contiguous, with the same natural characteristics, where the wants, callings and habits of the people are much the same, with productions and climate alike, but living under different political institutions, separate Governments, with different burdens to bear, controlled by different circumstances, one with its national existence made, the other to make it, he believes it may be gravely questioned whether it is for the advantage of the younger and weaker, if it desires to remain a distinct nationality, to merge itself practically into the larger and greater by a Commercial Union which ties it hand and foot "to a power controlling its destinies in the proportion of twelve to one." Our debt in June, 1886, was $273,165,000. On December 30th, 1884, that of the United States was $1,413,920,951, and since then materially reduced. In the competition, assuming the Canadian manufacturer could go into the United States market and the United States manufacturer into the Canadian, the Canadian would be handicapped by at least fifty per cent.; the American, for his share of the public debt, bearing $23.56, the Canadian $54.63. If the two countries are to remain distinct nationalities, it has not been proposed that the United States should assume this two hundred and seventy-three millions, or any part of it, in consideration of Canada agreeing to Commercial Union. The question remains, says Judge Gray, thus handicapped, is the larger market worth so much more as to induce our manufacturers to throw away what they have for it? Our territorial characteristics are the same, our habits, language and mode of thought, while our political institutions are different, our necessities different, our national sentiments different, and different future contingencies to consider. The character of the products of skilled labor will be the same. The manufactures of one country are almost identical with those of the other and admitting them freely into each other's country simply inaugurates a competition in which the strongest wins. With a larger home market, an equal command of skilled labor, and the same command of raw material he can produce cheaper and, when he has obtained sufficient in his own market to compensate the cost of production, he can deluge the smaller market of his competitor. When the commodities are in each case the same the weaker must go to the wall. Says the forcible writer:

"The St. Lawrence is admittedly one of the largest rivers of the world, as to its volume of water one of the largest. Pour the waters of the St. Lawrence into the Atlantic Ocean, it would add but little to its depth, perceptibly not at all; but pour the waters of the Atlantic into the St. Lawrence, and the latter would disappear from its outlet to its source. As a river it would cease to exist, it would simply become a part of the ocean. Such is the relative position at present of Canada and the United States, such would be the future of the United States and Canada, and Canadian manufactures, under Commercial Union."

Judge Gray takes another position. Even supposing that his reasoning is mythical, that notwithstanding all these inequalities of burden and all the disadvantages of the greater competition, the greater market is still desirable to be had is there a necessity upon us requiring our making the sacrifice, admittedly necessary to obtain that larger market. How is our trade now with the United States. By the annual returns ending June 30th, 1886, the total value of imports into Canada from the United States was $44,858,039; the total value of exports from Canada into the United States for the same period was $33,747,471 or a balance of trade against Canada of $11,110,568. By the returns ending June, 1887, the value of imports from the United States into Canada was $34,958,110, while the value of exports from Canada to the United States was $39,523,685, a balance in favor of Canada of $4,565,575; the total volume of trade in 1886 being $78,605,580; in 1887 $74,480,765—a clear change in favor of Canada of $4,000,000. "These returns," says Judge Gray, "indicate one of two things, either a fluctuating state of business, alternating each year, dependent upon accidental circumstances, from which no definite rule can be drawn, or a quiet increase in the power of Canada to compete with the United States, which ought to remove all fears for the future, and above all prevent Canada from putting shackles on her limbs, destructive of all freedom of action with other countries for the time to come." A matter for grave consideration is the effect upon the financial condition of the country by jeopardy to capital invested in manufacture. The capital invested is estimated at $200,000,000 and manufacturers will ask before a change is made, which experience teaches will be destruction to business and capital, that it be proved conclusively that it will be beneficial to the whole country. The English is the only nation whose policy is unrestricted intercourse in everything and with everybody and she is the richest and strongest, while the United States has built up her present position on an exactly opposite policy. The faint murmurings of a change as evidenced by the the President's message does not, it may be added, lead to the belief that a change in its trade attitude will come. Canada must not change a certainty for an uncertainty, or even a certainty, unless the benefit be first clearly shown to be worth more than the sacrifice. "It must be borne in mind throughout that the question is not whether the two countries ought or ought not to be amalgamated, but whether, choosing to be separate, and to continue separate, the axiom that Canada would have a market of sixty millions, instead of being limited to five millions, for her manufacturers, applies."

We here quote Judge Gray in full:

"It is singular how much sound has to do with the formation of public opinion. At a political meeting held somewhere in British Columbia, not long since, the question of 'Commercial Union' with the United States came up for discussion. A gentleman addressed the meeting, assumed to be well informed, and unquestionably unobjectionable in position and character. He had been in British Columbia only one or two years—so far as known, never in any other part of Canada. He had very little knowledge of her past history, and none of her public men; was entirely unconscious of the struggles Canada had gone through to accomplish the practical union of the provinces, or of the difficulties she had encountered in raising the necessary funds to construct the great public works to cement that union, and lay the foundation of internal development and future commercial business abroad. He was, however, ambitious of Parliamentary distinction, and desirous to secure a seat as a representative of the people, in either the Provincial or Federal Parliament, and having cursorily read the blue book to that end, boldly urged: 'Build, if you please, a wall round all North America, but throw down the wall between the United States and Canada.' Above the views of a practical statesman, he assigned no reasons—astute judge of the character of his audience, it was not necessary to convince by argument—utilitarian by assumption, it would have been superfluous to have pointed out to his hearers the benefit Canada would derive from the contemplated construction of the imaginary wall all round, or the destruction of the imaginary wall between. Those were unimportant considerations. The sentence sounded well and took. To common sense or business men, to thinking men who have something at stake, to those who constitute the stable element of public opinion, it would seem desirable that the speakers and instructors of the people who advocate this great change in the public economy of Canada should show, by facts and figures, and by argument, why the change should be adopted, how it would provide for improvement in the future, and how, in the intermediate stages, until the improvement comes, we are to bear the annual charges of the debt now upon our shoulders. On the occasion referred to, that was not thought of; sound has a great deal to do with forming public opinion. During the present century, it may safely be affirmed that effective burst of oratory has but one parallel, and it comes from that land of sorrows where the brightest gems of wit, oratory, and song once had their unchallenged home. In the time of the fat forties, when the first potatoe famine was spreading desolation throughout Ireland, and the angel of death swept through the land from Connaught to Kildare, when pyramids of human bones attested the utter destitution and misery of the people, when the United States and British America were sending ship-loads of provisions and clothing—not for barter or sale, but for humanity to clothe and feed the starving poor, there came back from India a young gentleman who had been serving there a few years in one of the regiments of the line, an excellent young gentleman, a moral young gentleman, whose family estates and influence could easily secure for him the object of his ambition, a seat in the House of Commons. He at once grasped the situation; it inspired him. 'The famine? Ah! yes, my countrymen can't get potatoes. Dreadful! Let them try curry and rice.' The kind young sybarite, whose palate was racy with the viands of India, meant well, but he had very little common sense. 'Throw down the wall between Canada and the United States.' 'Curry and rice.'"

We opine that this effective little slap is meant for the gentleman who ran in the Grit interest at the last general elections and lost his deposit. If our memory serves us right these platitudes were delivered at a Liberal meeting in The Victoria during the campaign. But so interested have we become in Judge Gray's article that we have already written at too great length, and must leave the further discussion of it to our next issue.

BURNING OF BLAKELY MILL.

One of the Biggest Saw Mills on Puget Sound in Ruins.

Shortly after eight o'clock Friday morning the people of Seattle knew by the great smoke and bright light coming up out of Port Blakely harbor that the mills were on fire. At 10 o'clock a large number of the Seattle fire department proceeded to cross the Sound, taking with them Engine No. 2. They arrived there in time to help save the lumber piles and buildings adjoining the mill, but that great structure itself lay in heaps—a pile of smouldering timbers and warped and twisted machinery. Captain Renton, senior, and resident member of the firm, sat in his little office, cool and calm through it all. Though blind, he gave orders and instructions about how to proceed and knew just how everything was being done. The usual bucket brigade was organized and did effective work in helping to save the property. There were six vessels in the harbor at the time, *viz.*; the ships Topgallant, Prussia and Harland, barks Dorra and R. K. Ham and the schooner Fannie Dutard. None of the ships were damaged, as the wind was blowing in the opposite direction. Some of the crews lent their assistance in putting out the fire. Captain Renton says that if nothing unforeseen interferes the new mill to be built on the ruins of the old one, will be cutting lumber in sixty days, but it will take four months to get the mill in good working order again. A prominent Seattle merchant, upon being asked if the firm of Renton, Holmes & Company would feel the loss of $250,000 very much, laughed and said: "Well I should say not. Mrs. Renton, herself, could stand that loss without feeling it. The concern is a very wealthy one and could stand up under several such difficulties."

THE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE.

Proceedings of the Second Session of the Fifth Parliament.

THIRD DAY.

TUESDAY, Feb. 7.

Mr. Speaker took the chair at 2:07 o'clock.

Prayers were said by the Ven. Archdeacon Scriven.

PETITIONS.

The petition from settlers on the north arm of the Fraser river, prayed that the reserve on the lands be lifted, and that they be granted titles to the same, having fulfilled all conditions. Read and received.

The petition in reference to the Harrison Springs road was declared out of order.

Hon. Mr. Robson presented a petition from certain residents of the North Arm, Fraser river.

REPLY TO THE SPEECH.

Mr. Semlin asked the leader of the government if the manner of dealing with the speech of his honor was not irregular.

Hon. Mr. Robson said the usual order was being followed in dealing with his honor's speech.

Mr. Semlin said that it had been usual to appoint a committee to draft a reply to the speech, but the proceedings yesterday were not in accordance with that rule.

Mr. Bole stated his opinion on the question, going over the routine he thought should be followed. He did not pretend to be an authority on parliamentary procedure, but he hoped soon to become an expert in that line. He thought, however, that every possible precaution should be taken so that the procedure of the house should be accurately followed. The point taken was not in a spirit of opposition, but with a desire to have the proceedings of the house fully acted up to.

Hon. Mr. Robson said, with due deference to the views of the hon. gentleman, he would inform him that the procedure was similar to that followed previously. The provincial secretary referred to the record of proceedings in 1887, which was precisely the same as that followed this session. If hon. gentlemen would compare the proceedings they would find this correct.

Mr. Grant said both sides were right. The English rule was not followed in this house. It had been the practice here to take the speech in an informal manner; but the procedure was not provided for in the rules of the house, and must necessarily in strict practice be that followed in the English commons. However, he had no desire to deviate from the previous practice. He would like to call attention to an irregularity in the report of the proceedings where the motion to adjourn preceded that of Mr. Semlin's motion to adjourn the debate.

Hon. Mr. Robson referred to the parliamentary practice at Ottawa, which was precisely similar to that now being followed here.

Hon. Mr. Humphreys thought that the procedure should be correctly outlined and followed.

Hon. Mr. Davie thought that the country would come to the conclusion that it was about time they were proceeding to business instead of wrangling over transparent hints of order. He quoted from English commons procedure, which was the same as that being now followed in this house. He also referred to the votes and proceedings of 1879, which were also the same as the procedure now being followed, and which had been followed for past five years.

Hon. Mr. Humphreys claimed that the procedure now being followed was not the same as that of 1879.

Hon. Mr. Dunsmuir said he thought that the discussion was the result of giving way to the Opposition. The procedure was the same as that which had previously been followed in the House. It was merely through their leniency towards the weak Opposition that had allowed this discussion to result. He thought there should be no more time wasted but that the business of the country should be proceeded with.

Mr. Grant said that he would just like to state that the members on this side of the House were net to be threatened into giving up anything that was laid down in the rules of the House.

Mr. Speaker said that he trusted that members on both sides of the house would confine themselves to the point at issue.

Hon. Mr. Turner thought that the routine was the same as previously followed, and he also thought that they should at once proceed to the important business which was awaiting them (hear hear.)

After further discussion Mr. Speaker said his decision on the question was that the procedure followed yesterday was the correct one. He referred to the proceedings of 1882, which showed that the practice now being followed was the same as then, and the same as that of the English House of Commons. He considered that the procedure was perfectly formal.

Hon. Mr. Humphreys said that what Mr. Speaker had stated was what he had been contending for. (Laughter.)

Hon. Mr. Robson said it was now for the house to decide whether they should consider the speech paragraph by paragraph or as a whole. He would invite the members of the Opposition to make a choice.

Mr. Semlin thought that it should be dealt with as a whole, and then paragraph by paragraph.

Hon. Mr. Robson said if the Opposition did not decide, he would state that it was the Government's desire to take it up paragraph by paragraph.

Mr. Bole thought that the practice followed last year should be continued this, and that was the discussion of the speech as a whole and paragraph by paragraph. It was a privilege that should not be changed except by unanimous decision of the house.

Hon. Mr. Robson said it was a fair offer on the part of the government to give the Opposition a chance to decide which way the speech should be dealt with. It was the decision of the government that they should proceed to deal with the address paragraph by paragraph. The government had made a magnanimous offer to the Opposition in allowing them to choose the manner in which the speech should be dealt with. (Hear.)

Messrs. Bole and Semlin contended that they should be granted the right of discussion both ways. It was the best way to obtain the freest discussion.

After still further discussion,

Mr. Speaker said the discussion last year on the matter resulted in the decision that the speech should be considered both ways, and he thought that rule should not be deviated from.

Mr. Semlin—Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for conceding the point.

Mr. Speaker—I do not concede any point. I only endeavor to justly interpret the rules of this house. (Hear.)

Mr. Semlin regretted the absence of the hon. leader of the Opposition, and thought that the Government had made a wise selection in their choice of a mover and seconder. He hoped the Government did not intend to carry out some of the suggestions in the hon. mover's speech to the reply. He had stated in reference to the minerals that if it was decided against them, it would be the duty of the Dominion Government to provide roads, etc., within that belt. He trusted that the railway belt would not be left altogether to the administration of a foreign policy. It would result seriously to all in that district. It would leave it to the mercy of the Indians and the Chinamen, with the Dominion declining and the Province refusing to govern the country. It would soon make it necessary for that district to make a government of their own. The hon. mover had referred to the $25,000 which had been forfeited by the Kootenay and Transportation Co. He had suggested that it be spent to build a road along the sea coast from Beacon Hill. The sum was deposited as guarantee for a work which was to have been constructed in Kootenay, and the forfeit should also be dispensed there. Referring to the reply to the speech he said that it was stated that the revenue was increasing, and a good deal of it came from an increase of 100 per cent. taxation on farm property. He thought action should have been taken sooner by the provincial government in the matter of the Behring's Sea seizures. They could not discuss the Indian question until the commissioner's reports were received. He thought the trip of a government member to Ottawa and that referring to the change in the B. N. A. Act should be discussed together. He thought the province's representative should have, while in the east, taken part in the inter-provincial conference at Quebec. Rumor had it that a senatorship dazzled his eyes and he could not see his way clear to attend the conference. He would make no further remarks now, but would discuss it further when it was taken up clause by clause.

Mr. Duck said he wished to make an explanation. In his speech he had not said the government were going to build a road to Cedar Hill along the coast. He simply said he hoped that they had it in contemplation. The government was not responsible in any way for that.

On a question of privilege Mr. Grant wanted to know if it was the intention to drop the comparative tabulated statement of receipts and expenditures, which had been printed from year to year. It was a valuable and comprehensive statement and should be continued. There were other trivial mistakes.

Mr. Duck said he thought the hon. gentleman was mistaken. If he would turn a page he would find a comparative statement of receipts and expenditures for 1887.

On the Speaker asking if they were ready for the question, there was a considerable delay and a conference among the Opposition members, and finally

Mr. McLeese arose and stated that he agreed with the remarks of the hon. member from Yale, and congratulated the hon. mover and seconder on their eloquence. With regard to the statement that the crop was a good one, in his district it was a total failure, and the added taxation was keenly felt. Referring to the minerals in the railway belt, he took strong objection to the Dominion Government usurping Provincial powers in administering the laws in the belt. He thought it time for a change in the management of affairs between the province and Dominion. He (Mr. McLeese) was not ashamed of his part in the passing of the Kootenay bill. He had voted for it. Perhaps the Kootenay bill would have benefited the country if carried out. He was in favor of the construction of railways throughout the province. In regard to the Cariboo survey, it had been promised that the valley of the Fraser should be examined, but Mr. Bell said nothing about it in his report. As at present outlined it would not benefit the agricultural portion of Cariboo. The C. P. R. by discriminating in freights, had allowed the successful competition of Manitoba flour with that of Cariboo and Lillooet. It would probably ruin many of the settlers. He hoped if any more exploratory surveys were made that the Fraser valley would be examined. (Hear.)

Hon. Mr. Humphreys repeated his outside statement that it was his opinion that the present was the most corrupt government that ever existed on the face of the earth (laughter). He had heard such a statement from a man who had been twenty years in the government service. There were members now supporting the government who had made such assertions. He repeated a rumor which he had heard about the government's policy during the session. He had been accused of many things, but had not been given a fair trial, and where he had had had never been found guilty. Outside of Victoria public opinion was rife against the practices that had been followed to coerce public opinion in order to gain certain ends for certain individuals. He claimed that the government of the province, in an endeavor to gain the good opinion of the Dominion government, had given away the best things in the land. In framing the settlement bill, they made no provision for the protection of the province and a blunder was made in not reserving the minerals contained in the railway belt. Referring to the Kootenay deposit forfeit of $25,000, he claimed that it was not honest for a government to declare forfeited such surety when they had done everything in their power to prevent the carrying out of the work. He protested against boasting about its forfeiture. He deprecated the expenditure of such forfeit money in a pleasure drive, but thought it would be better placed in Comox. He said every other district in the province was riddled with roads, but Comox had none, and settlers were suffering in consequence. Referring to the bridge across the Fraser at Lillooet, he said there was more traffic over the ferry when Cariboo was prosperous in one week than there was now in twelve months. The money would have been better spent in Comox. The same could be said of the South Thompson river bridge. Referring to the million loan, he stated his belief that $750,000 of that loan had been disposed of. This was not a creditable showing. He closed by stating that it was his opinion that extras should not be given some districts while others were left without ordinary means of settlement.

Mr. Ladner was glad to know that population was flowing in, and that revenue was increasing; but the latter was due to increased taxation, and was no credit to the government. They might well call the agriculturist patient, but patience ceased at a certain point to be a virtue. He claimed that there was not a good harvest in his district. He thought if there was, as stated, a bountiful harvest in Yale district, there was no necessity of prospecting for water by artesian wells. Roads instead should be built. He did not think the mover's remarks about there being no burdensome increase of taxation was very well taken. Their taxes had been increased 60 per cent. They were either entitled to the C. P. R. bond or not, and the sooner it was known the better. The settlement bill had been promised as even better than Holloway's pills—it was to be a remedy for all evils—but their trouble was only commencing. He trusted that additional safeguards should be thrown around the miner, so that he could make an honest living.

Hon. Mr. Theo. Davie, referring to the charge of one of the Opposition speakers, that the Government had shirked their duty by not defending their policy, said that it was of no use entering into a defence until an attack had been made. Beyond referring to the speech as evil, hypocritical and inaccurate, nothing specially had been urged except dead issues. One expected that when new blood was infused we should hear new ideas but in the lengthy speech of an hour or two from the member for Comox the principal thing he had to talk of was the frequently refuted accusation of blundering by not anticipating the dispute relating to the minerals, and by not introducing language into the settlement bill which would give us the metals without peradventure. Repeated as this argument had been for the fiftieth time it had so often been answered by shewing that so far as the precious metals were concerned, legislation was identical with the terms of union, and of the statute based thereon passed in 1880 by the very government of which Mr. Humphreys was a member, conveying the land by way of Yellowhead Pass. The terms of union had settled the matter, and whether the metals passed or not was settled by their construction. The Kootenay bill was a dead issue, and not worth while to refer to. As to the doleful account of the distress amongst the settlers on Hornby and Denman islands through want of a wharf here and a bridge there, why did not the honorable gentleman long ago represent the matter at the lands and works office, instead of bottling it up and leaving his constituents to endure the pains and privations he had depicted until now? He (Mr. H.) had said himself that he had no idea of the suffering being endured until he had seen it, and how could he, expect the chief commissioner to know of this when the very member whose duty it was to represent the wants of his district concealed them until such time as it suited him to try and make political capital out of them? How did the government of which he was a member formerly treat the districts? He (Mr. D.) would remind him of—

Mr. Grant—I thought the honorable gentleman did not believe in raking up dead issues.

Mr. Davie—Well, perhaps I am wrong, and am taking a leaf out of your book. What I meant was that the opposition should look after their own affairs before finding fault with this side of the house.

Mr. Grant said he supposed he would have to get up, as there was no doubt the good dinner the other night had done great things and had made government members feel equal to swallowing any thing. He would also have to congratulate the mover and seconder of the reply upon their happy efforts. Referring to the statement of his honorable friend who had just sat down in regard to the minerals, he would take exception to it. There was a wide difference between the wording of the act brought in 1880, and that in 1884—the settlement bill. Language had been left out in the second act, which Mr. Grant read.

Hon. Mr. Davie—This did not affect the metals.

Mr. Grant—I know, but the honorable gentleman had stated, without any qualification, that the same language had been used. With regard to the increase of revenue he contended that it was not at all commensurate with the increase of population. There must be something wrong that required investigation. Referring to the minerals in the railway belt, he took strong objection to the Dominion Government usurping Provincial powers in administering the laws in the belt. He thought it time for a change in the management of affairs between the province and Dominion. He (Mr. McLeese) was not ashamed of his part in the passing of the Kootenay bill. He had voted for it. Perhaps the Kootenay bill would have benefited the country if carried out. He was in favor of the construction of railways throughout the province. In regard to the Cariboo survey, it had been promised that the valley of the Fraser should be examined, but Mr. Bell said nothing about it in his report. As at present outlined it would not benefit the agricultural portion of Cariboo. The C. P. R. by discriminating in freights, had allowed the successful competition of Manitoba flour with that of Cariboo and Lillooet. It would probably ruin many of the settlers. He hoped if any more exploratory surveys were made that the Fraser valley would be examined. (Hear.)

Hon. Mr. Humphreys repeated his outside statement that it was his opinion that the present was the most corrupt government that ever existed on the face of the earth (laughter). He had heard such a statement from a man who had been twenty years in the government service. There were members now supporting the government who had made such assertions. He repeated a rumor which he had heard about the government's policy during the session. He had been accused of many things, but had not been given a fair trial, and where he had had had never been found guilty. Outside of Victoria public opinion was rife against the practices that had been followed to coerce public opinion in order to gain certain ends for certain individuals. He claimed that the government of the province, in an endeavor to gain the good opinion of the Dominion government, had given away the best things in the land. In framing the settlement bill, they made no provision for the protection of the province and a blunder was made in not reserving the minerals contained in the railway belt. Referring to the Kootenay deposit forfeit of $25,000, he claimed that it was not honest for a government to declare forfeited such surety when they had done everything in their power to prevent the carrying out of the work. He protested against boasting about its forfeiture. He deprecated the expenditure of such forfeit money in a pleasure drive, but thought it would be better placed in Comox. He said every other district in the province was riddled with roads, but Comox had none, and settlers were suffering in consequence. Referring to the bridge across the Fraser at Lillooet, he said there was more traffic over the ferry when Cariboo was prosperous in one week than there was now in twelve months. The money would have been better spent in Comox. The same could be said of the South Thompson river bridge. Referring to the million loan, he stated his belief that $750,000 of that loan had been disposed of. This was not a creditable showing. He closed by stating that it was his opinion that extras should not be given some districts while others were left without ordinary means of settlement.

Mr. Ladner was glad to know that population was flowing in, and that revenue was increasing; but the latter was due to increased taxation, and was no credit to the government. They might well call the agriculturist patient, but patience ceased at a certain point to be a virtue. He claimed that there was not a good harvest in his district. He thought if there was, as stated, a bountiful harvest in Yale district, there was no necessity of prospecting for water by artesian wells. Roads instead should be built. He did not think the mover's remarks about there being no burdensome increase of taxation was very well taken. Their taxes had been increased 60 per cent. They were either entitled to the C. P. R. bond or not, and the sooner it was known the better. The settlement bill had been promised as even better than Holloway's pills—it was to be a remedy for all evils—but their trouble was only commencing. He trusted that additional safeguards should be thrown around the miner, so that he could make an honest living.

Hon. Mr. Theo. Davie, referring to the charge of one of the Opposition speakers, that the Government had shirked their duty by not defending their policy, said that it was of no use entering into a defence until an attack had been made. Beyond referring to the speech as evil, hypocritical and inaccurate, nothing specially had been urged except dead issues. One expected that when new blood was infused we should hear new ideas but in the lengthy speech of an hour or two from the member for Comox the principal thing he had to talk of was the frequently refuted accusation of blundering by not anticipating the dispute relating to the minerals, and by not introducing language into the settlement bill which would give us the metals without peradventure. Repeated as this argument had been for the fiftieth time

CAUSE OF THE EXPLOSION.

TO THE EDITOR:—I am very sorry to see that the miners, in mass meeting assembled at Nanaimo, have thought fit to condemn the verdict brought in by the jury at the late inquest. How any intelligent body of men could have brought in any other verdict than the one they did I fail to see. The whole of the evidence, both of miners, firemen and managers, went to prove conclusively that the level where the explosion occurred was especially free from fire-damp at all times. Not a word was said by anyone against the general management of the mine, but one and all concurred in the statement that it was one of the best, if not *the* best, ventilated mine they had ever worked in. All kinds of possible theories as to the cause of the explosion were advanced, but only two gained any credence at all. The first was that the shot in Lance Robinson's level had blown out and ignited a powder can which was found near it and in a direct line, and which can showed unmistakable proof of having exploded, and that the explosion of this can of powder had ignited the coal dust, together with other cans of powder in Robert Robinson's place, and thus commenced the dreadful stream of flame that rushed through the levels &c. The other theory advanced was that the door at the bottom of Horn's heading near the level had been left open and thus the air, which ought to have passed it and gone into the face of the level where Lance Robinson worked, had been diverted from its proper course, and owing to the want of this current of air gas had collected in Lance Robinson's place and had been fired by a shot or a lamp.

Now, sir, I might at once say that I went down the mine and examined it thoroughly after the explosion; not on behalf of the government, not on behalf of Mr. Dunsmuir or his managers, and not on behalf of the miners, but merely to satisfy myself; for as I was in the collieries some five years and was the government inspector of mines for two years previous to Mr. Dick I naturally take an interest in them. In regard to the theory of the door being left open I might say there was not one tittle of evidence advanced to show that it *had* been left open. A thousand things *might* happen, but so long as they don't, or so long as there is not the slightest evidence of their having happened, it is no use our discussing them. Even if this door had been left open, although it would have taken most of the air off the face of the level, it would not have taken *all* or nearly so. Even supposing all the air had been taken off is it likely that gas could have collected in such quantity in the face of the level where men with naked lights on their heads were working and where they were proved to have fired a shot previous to the "blown out" one. It is not a high place where gas could lodge in the roof. Gas was *never forgiven there before and none has ever been seen since*, although the place has been standing for ten days without any air and the roof is badly broken. One witness stated that he thought the explosion occurred in the face of Horn's Heading, but he could not give a single satisfactory reason for thinking so, and most certainly there are no evidences of it in the mine, as the course of the explosion is marked out as clearly as a river. The coroner gave everyone a chance to come up and give evidence, and I distinctly heard him say that if any of the miners' committee wished to give their evidence and could throw any new light on the matter he would only be too glad to hear them but it was no use hearing man after man unless they could give some new evidence. The charge made at the mass meeting that the committee were not allowed to give their evidence is entirely unfounded. I have seen a good many inquests at collieries but never have I seen one at which so much latitude was allowed or where so much opportunity was given to the miners present in the audience to question the witnesses.

The fact of the matter is that many of the miners *do not wish* to believe that coal dust will explode, and others, never having read about it or perhaps even heard of it, now laugh at the idea of it.

Nevertheless, sir, it is a positive fact that it will. The royal commission appointed in England in 1878 to enquire into the cause of accidents in coal mines, have just issued their final report, and they prove conclusively that coal dust will explode under certain circumstances without any gas being present at all.

I am firmly convinced that this explosion was the result of a blown out shot igniting a can of powder, which in its turn fired the coal dust raised by the concussion.

I cannot believe that many men who were present at the enquiry and heard the evidence given, can possibly disagree with the verdict. I would ask them to think for themselves and not be led away by men who were not present or who wish to create agitation for their own personal aggrandisement or benefit. A miner's life is a risky one at the best of times, but the risk is never lessened by the miners being on bad terms with the management. Let them consult all together, managers and men, and see if between them they cannot devise means to stay these accidents. A manager's or a fireman's life is just as dear to him as a miner's who is digging the coal, and they stand the same chance of being killed when anything occurs. Therefore I trust, Mr. Editor, they will not let any bitterness of spirit enter into this affair. I might say in regard to the *personnel* of the jury that out of the ten there were six practical miners, so surely no fault could be found on that score.

I sincerely hope that this letter will be received in the spirit in which it is written, namely: A desire to bring about measures that will lessen the danger to those who work in our coal mines.

E. G. PRIOR.

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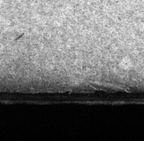

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