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MR. SPROAT ON VANCOUVER ISLAND POLITICS.

In our evening contemporary of yesterday appears a rather remarkable communication from Mr. Gilbert Malcolm Sproat. "Having spent this Saturday," says Mr. Sproat, "in inquiry, I find that the merchants and traders do not recognise Mr. Rhodes and Mr. Finlayson as the representatives in the Council of their opinions on the question of Union, or annexation, or call it what you like,"—the conclusion naturally to be inferred from which is that Messrs. Rhodes and Finlayson have been expressing views contrary to the opinions of the merchants and traders of Victoria. Now, after the recent expression of public sentiment in this city, it savors something of a joke in Mr. Sproat telling us that Union, as it is understood in the Assembly or the Council, is not desired; but waiting this point, we would like to know what the merchants and traders of Victoria have to do with the nominees of the Upper House? No one ever asked the "merchants and traders" to have "their opinions" represented in the Council. There is a properly organized body called the Legislative Assembly, for the expression of the opinion of the mercantile as well as the mechanical and agricultural classes. If Mr. Sproat's coterie of "merchants and traders" are too small or too unimportant to have their ideas impressed on the action of this body—if they are outvoted by those holding more expansive and less visionary views, how can they reasonably expect unofficial members in the Upper House to stultify themselves and become the mouthpiece of an unpractical minority. The position taken by both Mr. Rhodes and Mr. Finlayson on the Union question is one maintained by certainly three out of every four of the inhabitants of Vancouver Island. The Union resolutions passed the Assembly before the recent election by a vote of ten to five. The return of Mr. McClure to the House makes the position of parties at present eleven to four; yet, in the face of this condition of affairs, Mr. Sproat expects the gentlemen who were nominated to seats in the Upper House to accept the views of the small minority—to speak the sentiment of four men who, were they out of the House to-morrow, could not get returned by any constituency or constituencies on the Island.

Starting from a false basis, it is not surprising that Mr. Sproat should continue to blunder. "Considering" says this gentleman, "the fundamentally diverse systems of government and taxation in the two colonies, which systems the boldest political quacks among us have not ventured to suggest any way of amalgamating, yet which they seem to think the Secretary of State will cheerfully undertake to compound and unite without any hint of our wishes or expectations, and notwithstanding the opposition of British Columbia," &c. Now we know the free port "political quacks" have asked time and again for this "amalgamation" of "diverse systems of Government and taxation in the two colonies"—we know they have demanded a union that would preserve to them their beloved free port; but this is the only party on the island—the only "quacks" in politics who have promulgated such an absurdity; and Mr. Sproat is, unconsciously it may be, bestowing the "unkindest cut of all" on his own friends, when he brings the circumstance forward. The resolutions of the House placed no diverse schemes or systems before Mr. Cardwell; on the contrary they removed every element of antagonism by leaving no free port restrictions in the way. And so far from any party not having

suggested any scheme of amalgamating the diverse systems of taxation of the two colonies, Mr. Sproat has only to recur to the recent Victoria election to discover his error. He will there find a battle-cry which has spread over the Island, which has been taken up on the mainland, and which will no doubt find its way in due time to Mr. Cardwell himself—he will see, in letters as large as printing facilities could make them, the words—"Union and Tariff." The assimilation of the "diverse systems of taxation" was really the great feature in the union party's programme, and we are rather astonished it should have slipped Mr. Sproat's memory so very quickly. Equally astonishing is it that Mr. Sproat should, after all that has been said and written, assert that the Union and Tariff party are hostile to Customs' duties in British Columbia. It is rather a logical inference to draw, certainly, that because we are opposed to a large increase to the tariff at New Westminster we should desire the total abolition of import duties.

There is another rather extraordinary assertion in this extraordinary communication. "The merchants and traders in Victoria," says Mr. Sproat, "and many others penitent since the late Saturnalian election, now firmly believe that it would be inexpedient to barter the certainty and the advantages of our present position for the uncertainty and the hazards of unconditional union." Now, with all due respect for Mr. Sproat, we maintain that the "merchants and traders in Victoria" who at present believe in keeping the colonies separate are few in the extreme, and that every day diminishes their number. Scarcely a man of them can now be found who will avow the same sentiments he expressed before and at the time of election. The majority of them are in fact as strong unionists as any to be met with in even "Uncle Abe's" cabinet. As for "the others penitent," we can assure Mr. Sproat they do not belong to the Union and Tariff party; unless indeed they are those unfortunate who were thrown out of work, arrested for debt, or had their mortgages foreclosed, because they were wicked enough, to think that union was strength and an assimilated tariff beneficial. The election may have been Saturnalian, but we think the free port party will confess that there were fewer slaves at the feast than they had counted upon.

Mr. Sproat must surely be indulging in a little sarcasm when he talks of the inexpediency of bartering for union the "certainty and advantages of our present position." It requires a courageous man at the present time to talk of "our advantages;" but it demands almost the hope and faith of the Apostles to rely on the "certainties" of our position. It is just such visionary ideas and self-sufficiency that have placed us in a position so dependent and so helpless. If dust has been thrown in any person's eyes, Dr. Tolmie has not been the operator nor Mr. Rhodes the victim. The only party that have indulged in the pastime, so far as we can perceive, have been that highly intelligent and hopeful body of men who have been deluding each other into the fond belief that they stood upon the "hub of the universe," commanded the trade of Mexico, laid Chinese commerce under everlasting contributions, and, according to that remarkable vision that was observed on the bridge of James Bay, saw Tyres and Sidons raise their heads along the Vancouver coast, and rich argosies laden with a world's commerce deposit their freight at our merchants' doors.

HOME MANUFACTURE.—If any person is desirous of ascertaining what home industry can produce, let him call at the corner of Wharf and Fort streets, and taste the bitter beer last brewed at the Lion Brewery from Island grown barley and English hops. We should not deem it necessary to point out to our readers any particular place where a good article can be had, but for the fact which we learned on enquiry that until this season the brewers have had to get the whole of their supply of grain from California, and often found it most inferior. Last year, however, Messrs. Elliott & Stuart imported a supply of seed barley from England which was sown on the Island and their last superior brew is the produce of it. This spring that enterprising firm, who certainly deserve great credit for thus seeking to stimulate home production, have made arrangements for having from 400 to 500 acres of barley sown purposely to supply their brewery. The value of the growth at present rates would amount to about \$21,000. We are glad to find that our colonial beer is appreciated in foreign markets. The Oregon took down on her last trip to San Francisco 15 hogsheads and from Honolulu large orders have been lately received.

COMPLEMENTARY DINNER.—The members of the Victoria Rifle Corps on Friday evening gave a farewell dinner to Mr. C. W. Allen late of the Evening Express, on the occasion of his leaving for England. Mr. Allen was one of the originators and most active members of the Corps.

LAND TAXATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE BRITISH COLONIST, SIR.—The outcry about the unequal burden of the Land Tax arises from the speculative value attached to property, whereby lots of land of an unimproved description are, in populous localities, greatly overvalued, and, on the other hand, lands in rural districts are paying little or nothing to the revenue. In theory a tax of one per cent on the bona fide value of property cannot be regarded as a very great burden, but the inequality of the present mode of assessment makes the tax unpopular, and at the same time comparatively unproductive.

A land tax, properly considered, should be the Government rental of the land simply, and not an increasing annual tax on the improvement of the land. Improvements, of whatever description, necessarily tend towards the progress of the country by the settlement of population and capital. If taxation is to increase in the same ratio with speculation, there is an end to progress, for capital will never settle in the country, and the revenue to be derived from such a tax will always be precarious. The idea of exacting a progressive revenue from the improvement in the value of land is fallacious. In civilized countries men generally invest their accumulated means in real property, for the reason that it is the most substantial form of investment; and by this means transmit to their children the savings of a life time. But, let me ask, who would thank his ancestors for an inheritance the rental of which might be absorbed by taxes? According to our present system there is no guarantee that the taxes will not outride the rental, because the Assessor's idea of value follows that of the speculator rather than that of the bona fide proprietor. Real estate in cities should be taxed at a fixed rate per foot or per lot, irrespective of improvements, and rural property at so much per acre irrespective of locality or improvements.

In order to determine the respective classes of property there might be a periodical adjustment, say once every ten years, or any other number of years which may be considered commensurate with colonial progress and development. Some such arrangement would give a reliable character to real estate which it does not now possess. City improvements would progress and agriculture would likewise be stimulated. It has been proposed to impose a special tax on wild lands. Such a measure would be ill advised at the present time. The principle of forcing a population into agriculture or any other description of pursuits by legislation has long since been proved to be fallacious. And most inopportune would such a measure be at the present time when the great obstacle in the way of the agriculturist, namely, the want of labor, cannot be remedied.

The objects of the special tax referred to would be brought about in a more natural way by the imposition of a fixed rate of so much per acre irrespective of improvements. Such a mode of levying the tax would not, I think, be productive of loss to the Government.

\$5 a lot on city property would yield.....	\$36,360
And twenty-five cents per acre on rural property would yield.....	\$38,286
Annual revenue from land.....	74,646
Present assessment.....	65,311
Gain to the revenue.....	9,335

I am, sir, your obdt. servt.
Crisis.

TARIFF CONTROVERSY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE BRITISH COLONIST, SIR.—I find very little to answer in Mr. C's letter of this date. His position is to prove the justice of the late changes in the British Columbian tariff. Mine and the miners' generally is, that in the face of the facts referred to in my last, and also those of Mr. B. P. A. any additional duties on the staple articles of consumption at the present time is both impolitic and unjust. Mr. C's letter of Wednesday last attempts to prove that when the wagon road is completed freight will fall from one-third to one-half.

We will now come to books. I say it cannot and will not unless from competition, to wit: The bulk of the freight from Yale and Douglas to Soda Creek in the most favorable part of the season, when the load on the road was most abundant, cost 18 cents per pound; and for the remaining 90 miles per pound. The charges by the steamer do not amount to one-half the proportion per mile charged by the teamsters.

Again, it will be admitted that the road was open for teaming all last year the entire distance to Soda Creek so that the distance up to that point cannot be done for less than last year. In this view of the case, if Mr. C's view of the problem is correct, in saying that owners of teams, after paying good wages and interest on their capital etc, can deliver goods from Yale to Williams Creek for 19 cents per pound "average," one-half of that being profit, I say we have been robbed during last summer, in being obliged to pay within one cent of that sum only to Soda Creek. The odds of proving this desirable change falls upon him, as the road to that point will not be improved this year, whatever the revenue may be. It is evident the cheapening of transit to Quesnelle Mouth must be caused by something else than the completion of the road. How then can we save from 10 to 20 cents per pound when the 30 miles from Cottonwood to Williams Creek is finished, as we shall then have all the distance connected either by wagon road or steamer. One mistake in my view of the case has been in not applying the amount expended in constructing the road from Soda Creek to Alexandria, to complete the connection from Quesnelle Mouth to the mines in the first instance, allowing that from Soda Creek to remain until we were in better position, since we were not able to complete the whole connection at once. It must not be

inferred from this that I favor monopoly—far from it; but as it is, we have over 20 miles made, which, for the present is of no earthly use.

As reference has so often been made to the onesided views expressed at the meeting, as its chairman I beg leave to say that all interested were invited freely to come forward and express their opinions, when Mr. C. should, if he was there, have given us the benefit of his views. However the fact is, every resolution was adopted without a single dissentient voice. I am not one of those who seek to find fault with our rulers, though personally, I have reason to complain of the manner they have acted in my case. Public men cannot expect to escape censure when they are wrong. No one will be readier than myself to give them due credit whenever they enable me to do so. We have within the last few days had another proof of their persistence in the same course—when one of the representatives of the people proposed a clause to compel Chinamen to pay for licenses and recording their claims like other men, it was rejected; this is neither fair nor just. It is creditable to the good sense of the hon Mr. Cornwall that he withdrew that obnoxious Pound Bill when he found it was unpopular.

JOHN EVANS.
Victoria, March 31.

[We think the British Columbia tariff has been now sufficiently discussed by its opponents and upholders for all public purposes. The strongest argument of all that can be brought to bear against the recent attempt to fleece the very men who have been the life blood of the colony, will be the monster petition that will go forward in the course of a few days, bearing the signatures of about as many miners, traders, packers, and others interested in British Columbia, as there are men, women, children, officials, and stamps in New Westminster. We understand that the miners have it in contemplation, since the meeting of the 26th ult., has been designated in New Westminster a Victoria meeting instigated for political purposes, to convene another meeting to consider the question of union of the colonies, and to follow it up by similar meetings at the various up-country towns that must inevitably suffer by the exclusive legislation at New Westminster.—Ed.]

MR. SPROAT ON UNION.

The following letter from Mr. Gilbert Malcolm Sproat to our evening contemporary we republish for general information:

TO EDITOR VANCOUVER TIMES.—Sir.—Having spent this Saturday in inquiry, I find that the merchants and traders do not recognise Mr. Rhodes and Mr. Finlayson as the representatives in the Council of their opinions on the question of union, or annexation, or call it what you like.

Bearing in mind the heavy debt of British Columbia, the necessarily expensive government of that colony, its small settled population, the apparent exhaustion already of its tax producing powers; looking also to the inevitable heavy future expenditure to be met only by fresh loans for roads to reach new mining districts which must be discovered and opened up very soon or the colony will be bankrupt; considering further the fundamentally diverse systems of government and taxation in the two colonies, which systems the boldest political quacks among us have not ventured to suggest any way of amalgamating yet which they seem to think the Secretary of State will cheerfully undertake to compound and unite without any hint of our wishes or expectations, and notwithstanding the opposition of British Columbia, I say, bearing these things in mind, the merchants and traders in Victoria and many others penitent since the late Saturnalian election now firmly believe that it would be inexpedient to barter the certainty and the advantages of our present position for the uncertainty and the hazards of unconditional union.

The general opinion is that Mr. Rhodes, able and sincere as his friends know him to be, has had his eyes dusted by the Machiavelian Tolmie and is now expected to pull ropes for the Union and Tariff party; that party whose statesmanship consists in irritating those who must in the end be conciliated, and whose opinion on a Tariff is a question of longitude, for they denounce tariffs at New Westminster and uphold them here, at least did so a fortnight since!

The resolution of the Council to let things alone is the first gleam of common sense in the late management of our affairs, but it comes unfortunately, after the community has been discouraged, after the circulation of money has ceased after investments have been transferred, after credit is "played out" and our commerce brought to a stand still.

Your obedient servant,
GILBERT MALCOLM SPROAT.

The following is an extract from the log book of the pirate Florida: Of the Port of Bermuda: Heard from our agent that any salute fired in honor of her Majesty the Queen by the Florida would be returned gun for gun. At 1:30 fired a salute of twenty-one guns, with the English colors at the fore. The commander of the fort returned the salute gun for gun. This is the first time since the war that the Confederate flag has been saluted by a foreign nation.—American paper.

SENTENCED.—William Harris was sentenced on Saturday to four months' imprisonment with hard labor for stealing five dollars from the till of Burns' Saloon.

THE SHIP FRIGATE BIRD.

Teaklet, W. T., Feb. 25, 1865.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE BRITISH COLONIST.—SIR.—I crave the insertion of the following in your columns. Your readers must be familiar with the troubles of the above ship, so I need not trouble you with them. Mr. Hamilton, the chief officer, who has been in charge since the death of the late Captain Watt, left here for Victoria on Monday last on some business matter connected with the ship. Much to the surprise of all here, a report reached us the other day that he has been incarcerated in your gaol. I venture to state that an opinion exists here almost to a man, that he is a very superior officer and that he has acted most honorably during the misfortunes of the above ship, and with praiseworthy efforts on behalf of the owners. It is much to be deplored that there are those who for some end or other have been base enough to calumniate the character of a man who to the utmost of his ability has endeavored to perform the duties of his difficult position. We wish him well, feeling in our conscience that through no fault of his, he has been treated most harshly. Victoria already possesses a not very enviable notoriety for the facilities afforded of thrusting persons into gaol, and the oft repeated saying on this side of the Straits of Fuca is, "that in Victoria there is a great deal of law, but not much justice." I hope the contrary is the fact and that we shall see justice awarded Mr. Hamilton.

"Think sir, would it not be a serious check to a young colony were a belief to become general that private influence could mar the ends of justice?"

Yours,
A LOVER OF JUSTICE.

A PRECOCIOS YOUNG SCAMP. A few days ago a certain young gentleman, pupil at one of our principal schools, went to a livery stable in this city and asked for a saddle horse for a day's excursion. He was accordingly supplied with a good "mount," and cantered gaily off into the country. Evening came on, but the youth did not return; next day came and went, and still the caballero made not his appearance; at length, towards the close of the third day, the owners of the horse heard that a young man had been offering one of their horses for sale at Saanich. One of the partners of the firm immediately went out to hunt for the truant and, by good luck, arriving at the settlement, covered into conversation with one of the residents on the matter. While thus engaged who should dash up but our hero, mounted on the runaway charger. After stabling his horse the youth sauntered up and joined the group, not knowing that one of them was a partner of the man from whom he had hired the horse, and after a few moments' conversation he actually offered to sell him his own horse!

This exactly suited our liveryman, who at once entered into the trade, asking his price. "Well," said our fast young friend, "I'm laid up for money and I'll let you have him cheap; you can have him, saddle, and bridle, for \$50." A bargain was at once struck, and the purchaser said he would take the horse back with him to Victoria. This seemed to suit the youth, who forthwith became very friendly, and volunteered to accompany him to town, kindly offering him a large bowie knife to protect his self with on the way home. At the same time, ostentatiously pulling out a "six-shooter," two barrels of which were still loaded, he coolly asked if they were likely to see any Indians on the way to town, as he should like to "pot" two or three before he returned. "I've potted many of the redskins in California," laughed he. This rather alarmed the owner of the horse, who began to suspect he had a rather dangerous companion, and thinking the revolver would be safer in his own hands, he proposed that he should carry the pistol. Our youth, however, declined, saying he "could not part with his old and tried friend in that way." The horse was now trotted out, but on seeing him, the owner at once claimed him as his own property, and threatened to take the young scamp to Victoria for horse-stealing. It was now our hero's turn to be alarmed; he however went into the house and loaded the remaining chambers of his revolver, muttering to himself, "I'll shoot that fellow on the way in!" The threat was overheard by a by-stander, and conveyed to the ears of our liveryman, who deeming that the sooner he placed a safe distance between himself and so truculent a customer the better, put spurs to his horse and dashed off towards Victoria, bringing the missing charger along with him, and every now and then glancing backwards for fear the revengeful pursuer should be on his trail. He, however, reached the city in safety, and at once conveyed the above information to the master of the school, who proceeded to Saanich in a buggy and brought back the truant, and it is to be hoped administered a caning to the precocious young scamp sufficiently vigorous to cure him of his silly and criminal bravado.

FROM BARCLAY SOUND.—The sloop W. B. Naylor arrived from Copper Mountain, Barclay Sound, yesterday morning, bringing the workmen, five in number, from the Copper Mountain mine, with their tools and a small quantity of the ore. The men had been employed in running a tunnel into the vein, and have completed their contract. The specimens of ore brought down are very satisfactory. The captain of the Naylor reports the Indians very saucy and troublesome; they complain about something in reference to Mr. Hankin, the Police Superintendent, but our informant did not ascertain the particulars.