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A VANCOUVER ISLAND INQUISITION.

If there wanted anything to prove the necessity of a radical change in the *modus operandi* of the land investigation, yesterday's meeting of the Crown Lands Committee would assuredly afford the most abundant evidence. Mr. Pemberton is asked by one gentleman a question of considerable importance, when another member rises up to amend the query, by substituting something that will admit of the most vague and indefinite reply. After the answer is given and recorded another member of the Committee, with a consideration that would do him credit were the matter private instead of public interest, suggests that the witness has said something he did not mean. The witness here looks a little confused, and thanks the gentleman with the blandest of smiles, assuring the Committee that he did not mean what he stated, and that he would therefore feel obliged if the answer was corrected. Another attempt is made by the indefatigable interrogator, when up go the hands of a sturdy gentleman in rebuke, that the question should be so ambiguous; and, after considerable alteration, a revised edition of the intersogation is made, which, for all practical purposes, if we take what we get from the answer as a criterion, might as readily have been left unasked. Another question is put which does not admit of an escape, and immediately the witness asks leave to make an explanation that leaves the matter in a much worse condition than before. Here the witness turns to a gentleman and modestly requests him to put a few questions which he has arranged for the occasion. These being asked to the intense satisfaction of both parties, the examination goes on as before, interrupted occasionally by the considerate members, who will insist that the questions are too ambiguous, and who proceed to put them in already hinted, in a tenfold more ambiguous shape than ever, much to the relief of the witness, who seems always anxious to answer these erratic and mystifying queries. There is one fact which stands out prominently in all this questioning and cross-questioning—for every interrogatory made to bring out something in favor of the crown, two questions appear to be asked in favor of the Company. Then, to give the witness an opportunity of relating some charge which was supposed to exist against him, the question is asked if he acted in a certain dishonest manner while in the exercise of his official duties, to which the witness indignantly makes a negative response; which is of course entirely satisfactory, since no person who would be guilty of so gross a breach of duty would ever think of denying it.

Nothing could really be more absurd than this irresponsible manner of carrying on an examination. Here we have Mr. Homfray making statements one day which Mr. Pemberton denies on another. Both gentlemen cannot be right, but who is in the wrong? Is the whole bundle of evidence, in fact, which has been drawn from such conflicting sources, worth the paper on which it is written? There are doubtless many of these statements which would be valuable if we could only rely upon their correctness; but, unfortunately, from the contradictory character of the witnesses' answers we are denied this assurance. We believe this was the opinion of the majority of the Committee yesterday, who evidently felt that in continuing the examination a single day longer, they were simply lending themselves to the performance of a burlesque. The Chairman wished to have a report made at once, and the matter referred to the House, with a recommendation to His Excellency for the appointment of a Commission, and two gentlemen were chosen—Messrs. DeCosmos and Duncan—to draw up the report. So far, we think, everything is arranged for the best, and we only hope that no further time will be lost in closing up an institution whose labors have been great, but whose results, from the want of proper powers in the hands of the Committee, we must confess, have been small. It will be a matter of interest, however, in the future to see how closely testimony on oath will coincide with statements on the ordinary good faith of men's words.

Boise.—From the letters of a merchant in the Boise country to a gentleman in this city we learn that the rush to the mines has nearly ceased, and a reaction violent in proportion is soon expected. The excitement has been very similar so far, to that of 1862 in this country, and the writer says the great majority of the miners will very shortly go back much quicker than they came up. Very little dust has yet been taken out of the mines, the principal portion of circulating medium being coin. The letters describe the country as being greatly inferior to British Columbia as an agricultural or stock-growing region, as a great part of it is nothing but sand and rock. It is expected that a large number of the Boise miners will soon find their way across to the more promising gold-fields of Cariboo and Shuswap.

COMMITTEE ON CROWN LANDS.

THURSDAY, April 28th,

Committee met at 11 a. m. Members present—The Chairman, and Messrs. DeCosmos, Tolmie, Duncan, Powell, and Dennes.

Surveyor General Pemberton in attendance.

The Chairman asked if the Committee were willing to pay Mr. Arnous's demand for $200 for services as clerk to the Committee. The demand was agreed to.

Mr. Pemberton made the following statement:—The question as to allowances for rock and swamp had been explained by him at last meeting, as to the instructions under which he acted and the manner in which he informed the company he was carrying out those instructions. With regard to certain charges that had been made against witness individually, he would not take up the time of the committee by vague statements, but go at once to matters of fact. He would first touch on the lands held by the Mill Co. at Albert Head, in which he was a shareholder. There were 20 shares in all. These lands consisted of he thought 9 sections, and he made an allowance of rock and swamp, or waste, to the Mill Co. which would have made their lands cost them in round numbers, 10s per acre; did so advisedly and had been over every part of that land. He formed a most unfavorable opinion of it as utterly valueless for agricultural purposes, and the timber of very inferior quality. He would now prove that in selling the lands to the company at 10s. per acre if any injustice was done it was not to the colony but to the mill owners. The mill got into difficulties in 1861, and declined to pay up their instalments, and the land was forfeited and sold by auction; and he saw by referring to the book that one section fetched $1 per acre at public auction, another $1 25, another $1, another $1, and a considerable portion would not sell at all at $1 per acre, and any gentleman who thinks it of any value now may have it by pre-emption at the Land Office. This auction was about 3 years after the first transaction, and in the evidence witness was charged with sacrificing the public interests by selling lands at 10s. per acre, which 3 years after brings $1 at auction. He would not occupy their time any more by statements about this matter, but would proceed to his own property.

By the Chair—How is it that Mr. Homfray made up the instalment paper on behalf of the proprietors of the mill company, and that this is the only instance where Mr. Homfray made up an instalment paper? Ans—Mr. Homfray made up the instalment paper at my dictation, and he is not responsible for any of the figures; I am solely answerable, if he did not do so in other cases it is purely accidental. Ques—Did Mr. Homfray refuse at first to make a certain allowance for rock and swamp on that claim? Ans—Certainly not; Mr. Homfray had nothing whatever to do with that allowance. Ques—How many acres do these 9 sections of the mill company contain? Ans—755 82-100ths acres. Ques—How many acres allowed for rock and swamp? Ans—396 acres, deducting roads and lagoon. Ques—Do you believe 396 acres to be a truthful allowance? Ans—I do. Ques—Mr. Homfray says in his evidence that there were only 60 or 70 acres of rock; did you have any dispute with Mr. Homfray on this matter? Ans—I solemnly assert I never had any dispute with him on the subject; I have no doubt I questioned him closely on the matter. Ques—Did you ask Mr. Homfray to add 300 or 400 acres in addition to the 70 acres of rock? Ans—I dictated the figures in the instalment paper to Mr. Homfray.

By Mr. DeCosmos—Had you any interest in the Albert Head saw mill property, at the time when the instalment paper under consideration was given to Mr. R. Finlayson? Ans—I believe I was at that time still a shareholder. Ques—What object had you in view in making these allowances, for rock? Ans—To facilitate as much as possible settlers in commencing, and obey orders in doing so. Ques—Is it usual in new countries to make allowances of rock and swamp to the purchasers of public lands? Ans—I am not aware; I am not informed on that point.

By Dr. Tolmie—Had you not to some extent to meet the views of intending purchasers in regard to rock and swamp to be allowed? Ans—Yes, for at that time we had some difficulty in getting any one to buy land at all. Ques—Did not the land officials find it necessary to spend much time in going over land with intending purchasers, in the early times of 1858? Ans—Yes.

By Mr. Duncan—When was Albert Head property surveyed? Ans—Between the autumn of 1858 and the spring of 1859. Ques—By whom? Ans—Mr. Homfray. Ques—Have you Mr. Homfray's field notes? Ans—No. Ques—What was the amount of rock and swamp marked on Mr. Homfray's field notes? Ans—Mr. Homfray refused to give his field notes to be filed in the Land office as is usual, asserting that his field notes were sacred, so I cannot tell what is in them. Ques—How do you arrive at the quantity of land in the Mill Company's claim? Ans—From the map. Ques—Is the quantity of rock marked on that map? [The map was here sent for to the Land office.] Ans—The rock is not marked on the map. Ques—Did Mr. Homfray tell you that 60 or 70 acres would cover the entire rock on these lands? Ans—He may have said so, but I do not recollect it. Ques—Did you ever see Mr. Homfray's field notes where the amount of rock was set down as 60 or 70 acres? Ans—Never to my recollection. Ques—Did you ever tell Mr. Homfray to make the allowances between 300 or 400 acres instead of 60 or 70 acres? Ans—I dictated the figures to Mr. Homfray in the instalment papers. Ques—Do you mean yes by that? Ans—I know nothing about the 60 or 70 acres; I received from him the gross amount and also I have no doubt of his opinion on the amount of rock, but the allowance was made by me and not by Mr. Homfray. Ques—Had you the power to make any amount of allowance for rock or swamp in any portion of the lands you have been selling, without any reference to the actual nature or character of the land? Ans—No. Ques—Was it simply by your own judgment or by actual survey that you based your allowance for rock and swamp in the Albert Head property? Ans.—In that case I made the allowance by a simple exercise of my own judgment, having previously personally examined the ground thoroughly. Ques—Were you a director of the Mill Co. at that time? Ans—I never took any part in the direction of the Company. Ques—Who were the directors? Ans—I am not aware; I don't recollect at this moment whether my name appeared as a director on the prospectus of the Mill Co. or not.

By Dr. Tolmie—Why did Mr. Dallas give up the land at or near Metchosin alluded to in Mr. Homfray's evidence, regarding which, on complaint of Mr. Langford to the Duke of Newcastle, a lengthened investigation has taken place? Ans—Before the survey Mr. Dallas applied to purchase the land to question, and as was customary up to 1856, I rode out with him, accompanied by Mr. McKenzie, to ascertain the lands he wanted; after the subsequent survey Mr. Dallas asserted that I had sold to other parties some of the land which he had pointed out to me, and I believe to a small extent the assertion was unavoidably correct; this led to Mr. Dallas declining to take the land.

By Mr. Duncan—Are you aware that Mr. Dallas ever gave Mr. Lowenberg orders to sell that land? Ans—I heard that he did so previous to being furnished with the instalment paper. Ques—At what date did he receive the instalment paper; please turn to the instalment book and give the date? Ans—The instalment paper is dated January, 1859; I cannot tell when he was furnished with the paper, because, owing at that time, in '58-'59, to press of business, instalment papers frequently remained uncut and unremoved from the book for a considerable period after they were made out. Ques—Can you refer to your instalment book and show the duplicate of the paper furnished to Mr. Dallas? Ans—I have referred to it; the date is January, 1859. Ques—How much money did Mr. Dallas pay you for that instalment paper? Ans—He did not pay any. Ques—This instalment paper was made out in January, 1859; there is a sum of $1072 46 in the paper as having been paid and receipted for by you in January, 1859; will you turn to your cash book and find the entry in January, 1859? Ans—In the first place it is not in the cash book, because it was never received; and the entry to which Mr. Duncan alludes is merely an undated bill, not paid, and therefore cancelled. Ques—Will you be kind enough to read the first few lines and the last three of the instalment paper?

Mr. DeCosmos objected to the time of the committee being taken up in this way.

The Chairman and Dr. Powell upheld Mr. Duncan.

Witness (reading)—"Vancouver Island, No. 70 ——— Received this ——— day of January, 1859, from Alexander Grant Dallas, the sum of $1072 46

(Signed) Joseph D. Pemberton."

Ques—Was this instalment paper ever in the hands of Mr. Dallas? Ans—Not to my knowledge. Ques—Do you receive the cash before you make out a receipt? Ans—Generally. Ques—Did you make out this instalment paper? Ans—Mr. Pearse made it out under my direction. Ques—Do you generally sign these instalment papers before you receive the money? Ans—No, but in this case I did; but the fact of the instalment paper remaining in the book cancelled shows that I did not part with the paper before I got the money. Ques—Would it not have been a better way not to have signed the paper till you got the money? Ans—It certainly would have been much better. I have not done it since.

By the Chair—Does Mr. Dallas name appear in your books as a pre-emptor? Ans—I am not aware that it does.

(Maj. Foster here entered the room.)

Ques—What was the usual course in regard to pre-emptors at that time? Ans—I usually made an entry in an office diary of the names and the lands, and then made an appointment to look at the lands.

By Dr. Powell—Did you ever direct persons to go and look at land, and afterwards tell them that it was sold, and that they could not have it? Ans—It is quite possible, with this explanation; the rule of the office was that the first person who paid for a piece of land was the owner, so a man might ask in the office if a piece of land was sold and be told "no," and on his return from looking at it, might find the land sold. Ques—Did you ever order lands to be marked "sold" on the map, when the sale was not completed? Ans.—Never, except on *bona fide* sales.

By Mr. DeCosmos—Did you ever mark any lands "sold" for your own particular advantage? (referring to Mr. Homfray's evidence to that effect) Ans.—No; and I further wish to state, that in the land surveyed by Mr. Homfray, or in any other country lands, except my own farm, and in one instance in Lake district in which I purchased two sections of land to oblige a friend, at a distance, and the Mill Company's lands; I never owned any property directly or indirectly in the Crown lands of the colony; I have never been in the habit of trading in any of the Crown lands of the colony, or employing anyone to trade for me.

By Dr. Tolmie—Did Mr. Dallas ever meddle or interfere with your management of colonial lands? Ans.—No. Ques.—Have you read the evidence given Mr. by Homfray, insinuating that Mr. Dallas so interfered? Ans.—Yes. Ques.—Interim the committee if you contradict or corroborate that evidence. Ans.—I contradict it as a matter of course (laughter.)

The Chairman—And as a matter of fact? Ans.—Yes. (laughter.) With regard to assertions about my own land in Victoria district, in my former evidence I mentioned that liberal allowance was made for waste at the period I purchased my farm, which was formerly a dairy farm, and afterwards a sheep ranch, for the Hudson Bay Company. I did so with the knowledge and concurrence of the company, paying them the value of their improvements; the purchase was duly reported in the annual report of land sales to the company and the Crown; wet willow land was then allowed as waste; of late, at heavy expense, I have cleared about 150 acres; the ratio of waste allowed in my purchase was 53 per cent.; in the adjoining section on the right, which was not mine, waste allowed was 60 per cent; in the section on the left, also not mine, the waste allowed was 58 per cent.; in the section immediately south of mine, the waste was 22 per cent.; if now measured on the principle then adopted, I am sure the waste then allowed on my land and on Mr. Pearse's, for which I am responsible, will be found accurate and wholly within the mark. A recent observer might be mistaken on this point, as an outlay of some thousands of pounds makes a great difference in the aspect of such a place; I can produce an old settler who has shot ducks from a canoe opposite my own door; the upper ground, except a small portion cleared by the Company, was covered with oak scrub. The aspect of the place is now quite changed. I should also state that in 1859, or early in 1860, I sold about five acres of the upper land adjoining my house; the purchaser subsequently applied to purchase about forty acres of the low land adjoining, principally willow, and the price put on the latter was one-third of the price of the former, being an allowance in that case made by myself of 66 per cent, and showing my views on this point. This last mentioned land is now far more valuable for farming purposes than that before mentioned.

By Mr. Duncan—When was the land you have now been describing surveyed? Ans.—I took possession about 1854. Ques.—Will you name the sections? (Sections pointed out on the map.) Ques.—Who surveyed the land? Ans.—I made the first survey of the whole district, but Mr. Pearse and others afterwards surveyed it. Ques.—Did you then mark on your map the rock and swamp to be allowed? Ans.—No, that was in 1861 and there was no allowance made then. Ques.—Were the lands you now hold ever wholly or in part Government reserves, at any time? Ans.—In part at one time a Government reserve; section 74 and 68 were part of a reserve. Ques.—What other portions of land formed a part of the reserve? Witness said he would produce all the correspondence in regard to this Governor's reserve at next meeting.

The Chairman here said he had some remarks to make, and the room was accordingly cleared. After half an hour's deliberation the committee adjourned till to-morrow.

Messrs. DeCosmos and Duncan were appointed to draw up a report to be presented to the House on Monday next, and the committee will, we understand, recommend the appointment of a commission to investigate the whole question of the Crown Lands.

THE EXPLORATION MEETING.

The meeting of Messrs. Franklin's office Thursday to discuss the best mode for raising funds and dispatching parties for the exploration of the Island, was very well attended. Salim Franklin, Esq., was called upon to preside, and R. Plummer, Esq., was requested to act as Secretary.

Mr. McCree considered that we had already found more mines than we had money to work, and therefore considered it unadvisable to prospect any further at present.

Mr. C. B. Young followed in the same strain and said that Sir Jas. Douglas had recently told him that he considered the Island had already been too much prospected.

Dr. Dickson moved the appointment of a committee to call a public meeting on the subject of the Exploration of the Island, and submit resolutions to the meeting. Not seconded.

Major Downie spoke at great length in favor of exploration; he commented on the want of attention hitherto to the all-important interest, and the failure of private enterprise to open up the vast resources of the country. He considered the present meeting sufficient for the selection of competent men to carry the matter through. The Major advocated the despatch of two or three parties but warned the meeting not to send raw gentlemen on these expeditions who would not have the hardy habits and quiet derry with them they may need, indeed, and so forth, but men should be picked who would go straight through the country with nothing to pack but their blankets and bacon, and beans. He considered also that they should be accompanied by men of practical experience and should not be away too long without reporting what they had seen and found. Commander Verney he said had promised to send them any where they pleased. For his own part, though he was going to Cariboo he should subscribe as much as he was able, and do all he could to further the object. In conclusion he moved that a committee be appointed to obtain subscriptions, which he thought might be limited to $1 per month, and no difficulty would be experienced in getting 500 subscribers this, with the amount promised by His Excellency the Governor, would be ample for the purpose.

Mr. Backus agreed that the subscription should be made as small as possible. He was quite willing himself to contribute $5 a month, for $500 a month subscribed and the $1,000 added by the Governor would be adequate to prospect the Island.

Mr. Fell considered that it would not be advisable to explore without sending to England for scientific men to accompany the expeditions. He moved the adjournment of the meeting for twelve months. This was not seconded.

Mr. Pidwell spoke in favor of the movement. He enlarged upon the ignorance which prevailed as to the interior formation of the island, and in his opinion the country would pay one shilling to the revenue, and be the island, and, in conclusion, he alluded to the offer of the Governor to double what ever was subscribed by the inhabitants and said His Excellency evidently had paid attention to the mottoes on the arches, and intended to "develop our resources" (whether spelt with or without an "e.") He also responded to the family motto which appeared on the bridge. He (Mr. P.) was in favor of limiting the subscription though he should himself give more than $1 per month.

Dr. Evans supported Major Downie's views, and did not see the necessity of sending to England, for competent men when we had them at hand.

The chairman was in favor of a thorough exploration of the Island; he considered it disgraceful that we should know so little of the land we live in. Even in a geographical point of view the expeditions were desirable.

Dr. Dickson withdrew his motion and seconded that of Major Downie.

Mr. Backus said before the motion was put he would move that the subscription be limited to $5.

There was no seconder to the amendment, and the resolution was then put and carried.

The Chairman was requested to appoint a committee of fifteen. He named His Worship the Mayor, Dr. Evans, Major Downie, Comdr. Verney, R. N., the Chairman, Messrs. Fisher, C. B. Young, Dr. Dickson, Pidwell, Backus, Cruickshank, Bell, Trounce, Dr. Helmcken.

Mr. Durham moved, Mr. Young seconded, that a subscription list be now opened.

A number of gentlemen thereupon put down their names for various sums, and the meeting adjourned.

Lists for signature are lying at Messrs. Franklin's office, and at each of the banks.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.

In the report of the proceedings of this body furnished by the *Columbian* of Saturday we find the following resolution, on motion of the Hon. C. Brew, seconded by Hon. W. Orr, with reference to the appointment of Mr. Trutch to the office of Surveyor-General of British Columbia, carried unanimously:

That this Council disapproves of Mr. Trutch holding a public office of great importance while holding interests in speculations not unconnected with the department entrusted to him in the Colony.

The following motion, by Hon. H. M. Ball, seconded by Hon. Collector of Customs, was also carried:

That, as Mr. Trutch has been appointed Surveyor-General, a select Committee be formed to arrange the price he is to be paid for the Alexandra Bridge and other interests he held in the colony, said committee to consist of the Hons. Attorney-General, Collector of Customs, C. Brew, H. Holbrook, J. Orr, and E. P. Smith.

In reply to W. S. Black the Hon. Colonial Secretary stated that instructions would be given to the Magistrates at Cariboo to inquire into the conduct of certain officials and report immediately.

Mr. Holbrook's motion to enable a resolution to be brought in to admit the Press and the public, by ticket, to hear the debates of the Council was lost. Yeas: Homer, Holbrook, Black and Orr; Nays: Colonial Secretary, Attorney General, O'Reilly, Ball and Smith.

Moved by Hon. J. Orr, seconded by Hon. W. S. Black, and carried, that His Excellency the Governor be respectfully requested to appoint a competent person to make the necessary survey and estimate the cost of a wagon road from Mouth of Quesnelle to Camerontown, Williams Creek.

SAN FRANCISCO MECHANICS INSTITUTE.

The Mechanics Institute of San Francisco will hold a grand Industrial Exhibition in that city, commencing Aug. 20th next. The object is to gather together the resources of the Pacific Coast, and it invites the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia to contribute. It proposes to set apart a department for these colonies, and thinks that with the recent discoveries of minerals, coupled with those already worked—the immense fur and timber interests, and incident on the colonies—the people will be exhibiting thus the resources of the country, contribute much to its development. Articles of curiosity will also tend to draw attention to the colonies, and will find a ready place for exhibition.

The Executive Committee of the Institute therefore cordially invite the colonies to be represented in the forthcoming exhibition, arrangements will be made for free transportation, and in due time a committee will be appointed in the colonies to take charge of all matters connected with the Exhibition, of which notice will be given.

A. S. HALLIDIE, Vice President.
Mechanics Institute.

ALIVE WITH GOLD.—The following lively description of the Boise country, which we take from the Dalles *Mountaineer*, will no doubt amuse our readers:

"Maurice Fitzgerald, Esq., has just returned from Boise, and like all others who have been to the modern Ophir, is enthusiastic as to the future of that country. According to Mr. F. the whole country is literally *alive with gold* and all that is necessary to get it out by the *sluice box* is a full supply of water. So thoroughly is the country impregnated with gold, that riding along you read it can be *discovered with the naked eye*. When the project of turning the waters of the Payette River into the mines is consummated the world will be astonished at the quantity of gold that will be turned out. As it is the supply of water promised to be fair, and for months to come we may look for a steady stream of Boise dust to flow this way.

Mr. Fitzgerald must have studied Baron Munchausen in his travels and been prompted on his return to test the credulous swallow of the gullible *Mountaineer*.