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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Mar. Union 1899 Really Unusual

By NEIL A. MATHESON

TALK OF Maritime political union is not new, but not until a few days ago did I hear of a proposal of more than 70 years ago that Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick should be joined to Nova Scotia, with Halifax the capital.

But the really interesting part is the reason for the suggestion. The Prince Edward Island Agriculturist of June 10, 1899 reported that a man named Publicela (?) had proposed to the Montreal witness that Jamaica and the British Honduras should be joined to Nova Scotia, such as Cape Breton was. The joining on of the additional areas of P.E.I. and N.S. was "to prevent the white element being swamped by the black". The whole idea sounds so impractical as it was unacceptable to the people of that time.

SOME INTERESTING flashbacks are available from the pages of a collection of Guardians, Patriots and Examiners dating to the turn of the century.

The Boer War is featured strongly in most of them and the news dispatches from Africa, as well as from London, are blatantly one-sided in many cases.

War reporting, apparently, was ever thus. I recall in World War Two, for example the way news dispatches and news photographs treated the Japanese people and their forces. They were our enemies and were treated as such.

I remember them particularly because I do not recall having seen a picture of a Japanese man that did not represent him as a sneaky, repellent looking villain. Contrast that with the stories and pictures of peacetime and the contrast is complete.

Ladysmith Relieved

HERE IS a front page streamer from The Morning Guard of Friday, March 2, 1900(?): "Ladysmith Relieved – after Four Months" and a sub-heading: "After battle of Pieter's Hill the Boers silently and swiftly steal away."

And again "Boers everywhere retreating – Great Joy in England"

In the same story the story was told of the "pitiable plight" of the garrison (British) at Ladysmith.

Alfred Riggs' Letter

A REAL personal touch is seen in a published letter from Alfred Riggs to his father, William Riggs.

Alfred Riggs and Roland Taylor, both Charlottetown boys were the two who were killed in that war from P.E.I. They died in the battle of Paardeburg.

Riggs' letter told, among other things, that he conducted a prayer meeting among the Island soldiers and spoke to the men twice a week.

Mr. Fullerton – apparently Rev. T.F. Fullerton of Charlottetown and a Dr. Barrie conducted the prayer meetings on the other nights.

Riggs complained at one point of his letter:

“Very few of our boys got any promotion. Lorne Stewart is a lance corporal in No. 3 section and I think he is the only one that has a stripe from the Island.

“Men from the different schools in Toronto and Quebec have been given all the offices, which I do not think was at all fair in our company.”

Mr. Riggs said in one paragraph that the Islanders are getting along just the same and are not starving, then added in the next sentence:

“But if there is another contingent coming out from Canada, I think that Canada had better supply the food.”

ANOTHER PARAGRAPH says “Col. Otter has refused to allow any more liquor . . . whiskey or beer – some of the men do not like it but I think that that is just where he is right.”

Back to a lighter subject, Prowse Brothers were holding a sale of men’s and boy’s clothing.

Men’s trousers were going for from 75 cents to as high as \$5.00. Boy’s trousers were selling as low as 25 cents a pair and as high as \$1.25.

Those were the good old days, or were they?

ONE ADVERTISEMENT advises “Those who wish to be cured of the craving for alcohol, morphine, tobacco and cigarettes go to the Keeley Institute of Portland, Maine.”

I’ve been told that Mark Wright made furniture in his shop in Charlottetown. The Patriot of October 23, 1899 has a Mark Wright advertisement saying in part:

“Do not patronize us if you are looking for cheap furniture, but if you want good furniture cheap, you’ll buy here.”

S.A. MacDonald was advertising Tweed Caps for only 50 cents each. “Our 50 cent caps are so well known we think it is unnecessary to say anything more about them.”

His silk-lined caps sold at 65 cents.

Parlor Suite For \$24.00

JOHN NEWSON was advertising a parlor suite for \$24.00. It was of solid walnut, five pieces. Five percent discount was obtainable for cash.

Beer and Goffs were advertising Brahmin Tea for 25 cents a pound.

The “New Prince of Wales College and Normal School was opened officially on March 2, 1900” said a notice in The Guardian of that morning.

The same newspaper edition said beef was selling in the Charlottetown Market for five to eight cents a pound, by the quarter. Small beef pieces sold for eight to ten cents a pound. Fresh butter was 20 to 22 cents a pound, tub butter sold for 21 cents.

Fowl 50 Cents A Pair

EGGS WERE 14 to 15 cents a dozen, cabbage was five cents a head. Flour was \$1.90 to \$2.60 a hundred pounds. Fowl sold at 50 to 60 cents a pair.

Geese sold for 75 to 80 cents each. A pair of ducks sold for 75 to 80 cents. Pork sold for five and one-quarter to five and one-half cents a pound.

Carcass mutton sold at five and one-half to six cents a pound.

An old copy of the Family Herald advertised Studebaker automobiles at \$1,575 for a seven-passenger Six. That was March, 1914.

The Daily Patriot of February 2, 1900 had John P. Jay advertising a "Hard Times Sale". Port and Sherry wines that sold regularly for 90 cents a bottle, were selling for 45 cents.

"All other goods at Hard Times prices. Give me a call when you want anything in my line and I'll endeavor to please you" said Mr. Jay who termed himself "The Oyster King".

The Horse Will Survive

"THE HORSE will survive after the automobiles are dead as a nit. The horseless machines run through the streets and are disliked by everyone. The horse is a mark for admiration for everyone with blood in his veins while the automobile excites disgust."

The quotation is taken from the P.E.I. Agriculturalist of June 10, 1899.

The same paper had a statement from another man, a mechanical engineer:

"I do not think that there is the slightest danger of the automobile crowding out the horse. A horse is sometimes a delicate thing, but not generally, and, after all, if a horse is in good condition he can bear a great many hardships in good and bad weather. If he gets his feed and grooming he does a large amount of work, he oils his joints himself, has no stuffing boxes to get leaky, no journals to run hot, and rarely does any part of his body get broken.

Cars Delicate, Complicated

"THE AUTOMOBILES are delicate and complicated things that have to be looked after constantly; numerous oil holes have to be filled and kept clean, stuffing boxes have to be kept clean; numberless screws and belts have to be kept tight; stuffing boxes require filling; valves and numerous other things have to be cared for, and so a really competent mechanic has to be with the machine all the time and such a man costs more than a first-class coachman.

"I believe it can be proven that a horse and carriage is much cheaper than the cheapest and best automobile per day."

In the Agriculturalist of that date 72 years ago, I found an advertisement for Carter's Prize, HAZARDS IMPROVED turnip seed. It was 25 cents a pound.

Still in the 1899 Agriculturalist, R.C. MacLeod, Water Street, Summerside was advertising "A beautiful display of wheeled vehicles including (?) , double and single-seated buggies, Bareaches, Concords and all other popular styles."

Mr. MacLeod was also selling read-carts, lumber, wagons, trucks, farm carts, etc.