

PROCEEDINGS OF THE COLONIAL COUNCIL FOR ST. CROIX.

(Continued from Saturday's Avis.)

Item 1.

Colonial Council Bill No. 12, Third Council, Second Session.

Continuation of 2nd Discussion on Colonial Council Bill No. 12, draft of an ordinance, introduced by Government, providing for the assessment, levy and collection of taxes for the Municipality of St. Croix.

4th Appointed Member (*Blackwood*) in introducing the Committee Report said.—Mr. Vice-Chairman. I have been appointed speaker on this Committee Report much against my wishes, however I will try to introduce it to the best of my ability. I presume that every member has a copy of the Report, so I do not think it necessary for me to read it. At the last meeting of the Council His Excellency the Governor remarked that two years and two months is a long time for an ordinance to be before this Council without either accepting or rejecting it, and I endorse his remarks, but in justification of the time spent on this matter I wish to make a few general remarks. Our Governor and other officials who are here for a few years cannot see conditions as we who are living our life's interest here see them. I think I can say with a great deal of truth behind it that this is one of the hardest problems the Colonial Council of St. Croix has been called upon to solve. According to report received from the Clerk to the Council the Committee of the whole Council, between December 22, 1921 and July 19, 1922, held 7 meetings in which this ordinance was discussed without any practical result. And from July 27, 1922 to December 11, 1922 the Sub Committee of the Committee of the whole Council held 8 meetings upon it and as a result you have the amendments which are now being introduced. The Sub-Committee worked hard and conscientiously on this ordinance, and have exhibited its willingness to work in harmony with Government.

While comparisons are odious I think now is the proper time to review the ancient history of the island. According to the census taken on the 9th of October, 1890 the population was 19,783 and the land in sugar cultivation was 16,478 acres. There were wholesale houses in each town importing and exporting produce, each supporting a house stevedore that gave employment to twenty-five or thirty men. There was keen competition between these houses in purchasing sugar, molasses and rum, there was money in circulation and the purchasing power of the island was very good. In

those prosperous years we had dry weather just the same as we are having now, but we were able to pull through because we had then good laborers and good drivers. On a holiday the country was very lively with masqueraders and all sorts of amusements. None of this is to be seen today. While conditions are worse than I have ever seen them since the year 1885, yet we have an expenditure of nearly three hundred thousand dollars. According to census taken at the outset of the present administration the population of this island was 15,000 people, but that number is rapidly increasing as a result of the people constantly leaving the island. One can readily see by the work done by the Sub-Committee on this tax ordinance that we are endeavoring to work together with Government for the welfare of this island and its inhabitants.

The Chairman of the Sub Committee, a medical man, and a man who has much to do, called meetings of the Committee as often as it was possible for members to attend and gave much of his time and attention to the matter. With these remarks I recommend to the favorable consideration of the Council the Committee Report which was adopted by the Committee of the whole Council on August 23, 1923.

Government Secretary (*Zane*) remarked: Mr. Vice-Chairman. The Sub Committee Report on this ordinance reached his Excellency the Governor only yesterday; the Despatching Secretary brought over a copy with him. From a casual view it appears to be almost identical with the committee report issued some time ago. Government has had no opportunity of giving it the careful study it undoubtedly deserves. It does appear however that there still remains the fundamental difference between the attitude of the former Governor and the Colonial Council with respect to the personal tax feature; and it would appear that to get anywhere it would be necessary to effect a compromise, if not satisfactory to both sides, at least sufficiently satisfactory, so that we can get some where with it. I therefore suggest that I be given an opportunity of addressing the Committee of the whole Council before the Council proceeds with the adoption or rejection of the amendments.

The Vice-Chairman remarked: Honorable Members you have heard what the Government Secretary has said. I conclude that it would be fair to give him a chance to place his views before us. The Government Secretary is a new man and he should be given the opportunity of acquainting himself with conditions. The matter therefore will go over until after the recess.

4th Appointed Member (*Blackwood*) remarked: Mr. Vice-Chairman. I just want to say that since 1912 over three thousand acres of good cane land have been turned out of cultivation and that has made a great difference in our

revenues. The population of this island is decreasing daily and production is far below what it used to be in past years, and as a result we are having very hard problems to solve. Every taxpayer in the United States is complaining. I have properties in the State of Maine for I paid \$20.00 and without making any improvements on them I paid \$70.00 last year. Before talking about increasing taxation on this island we should try and increase our production. We certainly cannot tax ourselves out of house and home. As far as personal tax goes, if we can find money to pay real property tax, I think we would be doing well. We are not in a position to stand any more taxation just now.

Further discussion on this matter was deferred until after recess.

(To be continued.)

LOCAL

Tonight movie admirers are offered an exceptional opportunity of a fine evening's entertainment at the Christiansted Theatre where the 6-reel French photoplay "The Broken Idol" will be screened as the main feature of the programme which concludes with a sidesplitting comedy entitled "Guilt without approbrium". A rare treat is in store for lovers of good high class pictures.

The Romanita with mails, passengers and cargo, arrived at this port on Saturday afternoon, sailed for Frederiksted some time later and returned to San Juan yesterday afternoon.

The s. s. *Surinam* from New York is scheduled to arrive here tomorrow, 11th, and the *Paria* homeward bound on the 14th. The s. s. *Bolivar* from New York is also due at this port on or about Friday this week, and it is requested brought to mind that the mails for the Leeward Islands and other ports by that boat will be closed prior to arrival of the steamer in this harbor, and not after she has discharged the mail from the States as used to be the rule found not practical.

Our much esteemed and affable Postmaster B. R. Larsen left here on the "Romanita" yesterday for Porto Rico in the interest of his health which has not been up to the mark for some time. He expects to return on Saturday and it is our earnest hope that his trip may have the desired effect and he will return to us feeling well and strong again.

Deputy Collector of Customs of this port, Mr. A. Lang, was also a passenger to San Juan, P. R. where he will undergo an operation for cataract. Our best wishes accompany him.

The election returns of Saturday last were F. M. Cortina 11 votes, W. H.