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And secondly, he did something illegal. He began collecting taxes on rum. Now there was no House of Assembly--so legally you weren't supposed to collect any taxes. But he wrote to the Colonial Office--actually, I think that this decision had been made before he came to Cape Breton. He came over and he's here about a year and he writes to Britain: I think we have to have a tax here for the improvement of the colony. I think the Executive Council and I should be empowered to pass this. The Colonial Office writes back telling him to go ahead, in so many words. So they'll tax liquor, for the morals of the people--that was the excuse they used to tax. The important thing here is that the letter from the Colonial Office, allowing him to collect the tax--never was signed. Signed by no one. Beautiful. I have seen the original letter. I know the clerk's hand who wrote it--but nobody signs it. So he starts collecting taxes. Immediately, money starts coming in. He starts collecting in 1802, and in 1802 the first big boatload of Scots come in. They arrive and it's late August--too late for crops. Despard uses the tax money to buy them supplies. He gets them settled around Sydney and Bras d'Or. Well, word of this shoots back across the Atlantic--there's a nice Governor there who'll give you supplies, good land is available, the place looks like Scotland--and on and on. They come in 1802 because there's a lull in the war between England and France--the Peace of Amiens is signed--then the war takes up again, and this keeps back a heavy influx. But ever after that, boatloads after boatloads are coming here. And by the 'teens an enormous inflow. They pour into Cape Breton. They don't go to Nova Scotia because all the good land has been taken up. They don't go to P. E. I. because that's owned by absentee landlords and they'd be no better off than in Scotland. And at this time, people are moving from Prince Edward Island to Cape Breton Island--because word is out. And they're getting leases. And with this huge influx of people, you see applications for grist mills, other local improvements. And money is available for these things, collected illegally, but regularly. Despard stayed till 1807. But afterward, taxes continue to be collected on rum. And later, a cent a ton on gypsum. Rum was your main thing. So they'd make 500, 600, 700, even 1200 pounds a year. They set up a market in Sydney, roads, a dog catcher, mail service begins to Antigonish, Governors build better homes, a better jail, pay a teacher better, the Anglican minister gets some extra money--so times are better. But this causes a political problem. Because you are collecting taxes illegally. And this becomes the basis for the new politics in Cape Breton, after 1800, where you get a man by the name of Richard Gibbons, Jr., who is a young lawyer whose father had been Chief Justice, calling for a House of Assembly because the taxes are being collected illegally. You get the basis for a party here. You may call Gibbons' position, the party of the left. Then you get another group, a lot of it made up of members of the old Executive Council, who say. No, there shouldn't be a House of Assembly--because we can't afford it, and we're doing all right without it. So you've got two parties--a left and a right. And if we weren't annexed to Nova Scotia, I would say this would have become the basis for political



parties in Cape Breton. (Whether we should be run by a small group, or should we have representative government.) That's right. In effect, Richard Gibbons is like Joseph Howe--in that he's battling for some form of representative democracy. Whereas the others don't think we're ready for it, or they're opposed to it, or have vested interests--or there was the belief that people who have property should run the colony--not these miners and fishermen, who were almost universally illiterate. I don't like to preach history, that these people who were opposed to a House of Assembly necessarily were wrong. This was what was going on in Britain-- Britain was being run by an intelligent class of people. And perhaps they were right, that these people weren't just ready for it yet. And this question is, in fact, the Cape Breton political history until 1820--a struggle between these two groups for control. It finally comes to the crunch--leaving out a lot of details--when Richard Gibbons, Jr., convinces Ranna Cossit, Jr., Deputy Collector of Customs, not to collect the duty on rum. And the Governor says. If you We Buy & We Sell and We're as Near as your Telephone Sid's Used Furniture 436 Charlotte St, Sydney . 564-6123 'Se seillean a'phosas daoine ri lusan Truro and Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia Town Dairy "The Biggest Little Store in Town!" Groceries Confectionaries Ice Ice Cream Soft Drinks Magazines Camping Supplies Souvenirs 1290 Main Street in the heart of Louisbourg Reservations: 564-6417 Featuring the ftiel efQcient Citation by General Motors. "Rates as low as or lower than our major competi? tors in this city! Where Canada's smart money rents its cars. Ow as. atlUMaia National Car Rental (39)