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Labour, Dept. 7

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OTTAWA, May 10, 1943.

The Honourable John Hart,
Premier of British Columbia,
Legislative Buildings,
Victoria, B. C.

Dear Mr. Hart:

My air mail letter of April 12 referred to correspondence between the Right Honourable the Prime Minister and yourself in February on the subject of education of Japanese children in British Columbia, and suggested a conference between officials of your Department of Education and this Department on co-operation in this field.

I would appreciate a reply on this subject at your convenience, as various educational problems are arising which require decision in the near future, and in solving which your educational officials would be of the greatest assistance.

Yours sincerely,

"HUMPHREY MITCHELL"

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MINISTER OF LABOUR
CANADA

OTTAWA, April 12, 1943.

The Honourable John Hart,
Premier of British Columbia,
VICTORIA, B. C.

Dear Mr. Hart:

I would refer to telegram of February 11 and letter of February 12 sent to you by the Right Honourable the Prime Minister, concerning educational facilities for Japanese-Canadian children residing in British Columbia.

I have been concerned over recent reports of our Departmental officials charged with the welfare of the Japanese in British Columbia, who have explained the difficulty of giving these young Canadian subjects a proper British education without the advice and assistance of the experienced educational administrators in your Department of Education.

As a related problem, we have had representations from various Japanese residents on self-supporting projects in British Columbia who are required to pay school taxes on rented property but are denied the right to send their children to the community schools.

The correspondence addressed to you by the Right Honourable Mr. King suggested a conference between representatives of the Dominion and the Provincial Governments to work out a satisfactory solution of this important matter. If you concur, I shall be glad to have appropriate officers of this Department confer with officials of your Department of Education in the near future on the subject of training teachers and directing administration for the schools of the Japanese settlements in British Columbia.

I would appreciate your assurance of the co-operation and assistance of the Provincial Educational officials in this connection.

Yours sincerely,

"Humphrey Mitchell" (signed)

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CANADIAN PACIFIC TELEGRAM

VICTORIA, B. C., FEB. 16, 1943.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE W. L. MACKENZIE KING, M.P.,
PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA,
OTTAWA, CANADA.

RE JAPANESE CHILDREN (STOP) LARGE NUMBER OF JAPANESE CHILDREN HAVE BEEN
MOVED FROM THE LARGE CENTRES TO SCHOOL DISTRICTS (COMMA) WHERE THE COMMUNITIES
COULD NOT AFFORD TO BUILD SCHOOLS NOR EMPLOY NECESSARY TEACHERS (STOP) THE
ACT AT PRESENT READS AS FOLLOWS (QUOTE) IT SHALL BE THE DUTY OF THE BOARD
OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES TO PROVIDE SCHOOL ACCOMMODATION AND TUITION FREE OF CHARGE
TO ALL CHILDREN IN THE DISTRICT (UNQUOTE) (STOP) SCHOOL TRUSTEES HAVE
REQUESTED THAT THIS RESPONSIBILITY BE REMOVED FOR THE PERIOD OF THE WAR
AND THE FOLLOWING AMENDMENT HAS BEEN SUGGESTED (QUOTE) NOTWITHSTANDING
ANYTHING CONTAINED IN THIS ACT (COMMA) THE BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES OF ANY
SCHOOL DISTRICT SHALL NOT BE REQUIRED (COMMA) FOR THE DURATION OF THE WAR
(COMMA) TO PROVIDE SCHOOL ACCOMMODATION OR TUITION FOR ANY CHILDREN OF THE
JAPANESE RACE WHO HAVE TAKEN UP RESIDENCE IN THE DISTRICT SINCE THE SEVENTH
DAY OF DECEMBER, 1941 (UNQUOTE) (STOP) THIS AMENDMENT DOES NOT RAISE
THE QUESTION OF PROVINCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (STOP) IN VIEW OF YOUR STATEMENT
THAT FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS UNDERTAKING WILL NOT BE RAISED BY
YOUR GOVERNMENT AM PREPARED TO CANCEL PROPOSED AMENDMENT.

JOHN HART.

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Ottawa, February 12, 1943.

The Honourable John Hart,
Premier of British Columbia,
Victoria, B. C.

My dear Premier:

The Federal government has been seriously concerned to learn that the British Columbia government is considering the early introduction of legislation which would have the effect of barring Canadian Japanese children from the schools of the Province.

After discussing the matter with my colleagues in Council, I accordingly wired you, yesterday, as follows:

"My colleagues of the government and I trust that the government of British Columbia will not proceed with the introduction of legislation, reported as being under consideration, to affect the school rights of Japanese Canadian children resident in the Province. We do not, for the present, suggest any change in the existing situation. We do, however, urgently suggest that, having regard to the heavy responsibility which the Federal government is carrying at this time of war, the government of British Columbia should not endeavour to impose upon the Dominion, by legislative action, the whole burden of the education of this group. We would appreciate immediate reconsideration of this question by you and your colleagues. A letter follows setting out our view more fully.

"I should be glad to arrange for an immediate conference between one of my colleagues and yourself or some other representative of the Provincial government to work out an agreed and mutually satisfactory solution."

Any legislative action of the nature apparently in contemplation can only be interpreted as being designed to impose upon the Federal authorities the entire responsibility for the education of these Canadian-born children of Japanese origin resident in the Province, a constitutional responsibility which has heretofore been recognized as that of the Province, in conjunction with the local authorities.

In suggesting most urgently that the Provincial government do not proceed to alter the present situation, may I draw your attention, particularly, to the following important considerations:

A number of Japanese families having children of school age have been moved out of the Province.

Provision requires to be made, however, for the further education of the children of families still resident in the Province who, as a result of evacuation, have been deprived of access to local schools.

Schools, for which teachers of their own race have been engaged, have been erected in the Interior Housing settlements in British Columbia where a large majority of the evacuated Japanese, resident in the Province, are now located.

The Federal government does not, at the moment, intend to raise the matter of financial responsibility for this undertaking.

I am informed by my colleague, the Minister of Labour, that what is most required at this time in respect of these schools in the interior is the close co-operation and assistance of the Provincial educational authorities in the establishment of courses, the direction of work, and in the training of teachers.

My colleagues of the government and I trust that the government of British Columbia will give early and earnest reconsideration to this whole question and not proceed further with steps which would add to the heavy responsibilities which the Federal government is already carrying at this time of war, until there has been opportunity for the fullest re-examination of the problems involved.

As I said in my telegram of yesterday, I should be glad to arrange for an immediate conference between one of my colleagues and yourself, or some other representative of the Provincial government, to work out together an agreed and mutually satisfactory solution.

With kind personal regards,

I am,

Yours sincerely,

"W.L. Mackenzie King".

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CANADIAN NATIONAL TELEGRAM

1943 FEB 11

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HON JOHN HART
PREMIER OF BRITISH COLUMBIA VICTORIA B.C.

MY COLLEAGUES OF THE GOVERNMENT AND I TRUST THAT THE GOVERNMENT
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA WILL NOT PROCEED WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF
LEGISLATION REPORTED AS BEING UNDER CONSIDERATION TO AFFECT THE
SCHOOL RIGHTS OF JAPANESE CANADIAN CHILDREN RESIDENT IN THE PROVINCE
WE DO NOT FOR THE PRESENT SUGGEST ANY CHANGE IN THE EXISTING
SITUATION WE DO HOWEVER URGENTLY SUGGEST THAT HAVING REGARD TO THE
HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY WHICH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS CARRYING AT
THIS TIME OF WAR THE GOVERNMENT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA SHOULD NOT
ENDEAVOUR TO IMPOSE UPON THE DOMINION BY LEGISLATIVE ACTION THE
WHOLE BURDEN OF THE EDUCATION OF THIS GROUP WE WOULD APPRECIATE
IMMEDIATE RECONSIDERATION OF THIS QUESTION BY YOU AND YOUR COLLEAGUES
A LETTER FOLLOWS SETTING OUT OUR VIEWS MORE FULLY I SHOULD BE
GLAD TO ARRANGE FOR AN IMMEDIATE CONFERENCE BETWEEN ONE OF MY
COLLEAGUES AND YOURSELF OR SOME OTHER REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PROVIN-
CIAL GOVERNMENT TO WORK OUT AN AGREED AND MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY
SOLUTION.

W L MACKENZIE KING.