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Archives
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ONLY TRUTH CAN SAVE US!

Only truth can make the coast of British Columbia safe from successful Japanese attack —if Japanese invasion comes, as it came to Singapore, and other places, places the wisest military minds said were absolutely "safe"!

Never was the old adage 'the truth shall set you free' more vital than it is today to the people of British Columbia. Here thoughts dwell upon Java, downed in two weeks, the whole south Pacific under Japanese control in two months. Planes pounding Australia. While this article was written a military mission of Canadian high authorities completed a tour of the British Columbia coast. What that mission found, quite a few British Columbia people know was terrible. What will be done as the result of it? Will sufficient be done, and the people told so as to allay the awful feeling of uneasiness, doubtings, perplexities, fear and dread rampant among the residents of B.C? It is to be hoped that not mere reassuring words will come; but men of action, materials, ships, guns. For throughout British Columbia there is question and bitter criticism on the awfulness of the possibilities of an existing status

quo now after two and a half years of war, now when war has been declared upon Japan for ~~six~~ months. In British Columbia the arising cry has not been "Too little and too late" but "nothing and never!" What then will be done about the pitiful inadequateness of the defenses of the British Columbia coast, in answer to the ever growing louder wails of the citizenry.

British Columbia's appallingly vast coast line!!! For every mile of distance upon it there is twelve miles of shore to defend. Yes, SEVEN THOUSAND MILES of tortuous rocky, tree-clad sparsely inhabited shoreline. When will it be sufficiently defended to refute the bald statements, statements your correspondent heard repeated a score of times during a recent five week tour: "that five thousand Jap highly trained troops could capture the whole Pacific coast!"

If this still be the case at this writing is knowing the truth going to help quickly save us? It seems likely. Only the truth will make us free; only truth is the bomb by which we must stir our own laggard politicians and military to look to our own defenses. From some results obtained in local quarters by unfurling the truth, it is evident this is the way. Proper defenses of men, material, ships and machines may yet be assembled in time to change the parlous present which the bulk of B.C. citizens now know exists. Rest assured this and only this is the aim of this article; rest assured nothing voiced here by your correspondent will provide anything helpful to the enemy; nothing is set forth here that the military and naval authorities in Tokyo don't know. Indeed, those men know a hundred times more about how things stand on our Canadian Pacific coast, ~~as to the~~ today., than do many a B.C. citizen. For, until ~~that time~~ ^{APRIL}, due to the most incredible

complacent inertia of the Dominion and Provincial Governments a total of twenty-five thousand Japanese were left at large all over British Columbia. Hundreds of them dwelt within sights and sound of naval stations. Hundreds of them lived along power lines upon which the comfort, the industry of half a million Canadians depended. Yet only after Canada was at war with Japan two months was action begun to round them up.

Now that action has been taken, why mention this, some one protests. Well, for one thing, the whole world now knows the frightful efficiency of the Japs. During that two months when 25,000 Japs (COUNT 'EM) were blithely allowed the utmost freedom, how much information was short-waved to Tokyo? How much material cached to aid an invader? Does anyone in Canada imagine that a people who have proved themselves as frightfully capable as the Japs have done, does any Canadian imagine that this two months of utter freedom given them by a stupid Canadian Government has not been used to the last moment with utmost efficiency. There yet may be hidden out amid the infinite vastness of the Pacific coast many Japanese serving the Emperor with short-wave information upon our moral and preparedness; today radio makes a great many things possible. And remember, the Japs for thirty years have been planning the conquest of British Columbia!

Yet, the dreadful dolce far niente of the Ottawa Government, that paralyzing policy of manana in requiring two months to even make a start in rounding up the Japanese in B.C., this actually ——— strange as it sounds ——— was a blessing in disguise. It roused the British Columbia public to as near a state of revolution we seem to be capable of in a democracy even when faced with things striking at our very lives.

Gatherings took place of Veterans' organizations, Service Club^b, Business Men's Associations, and, the women, bless 'em, the best fighters of all. This combination set so much hell stirring that, at dreadfully belated last, the Government really roused itself to move the Japs. Yet, ironically, here again good came out of the folly of far-away politicians: the activity roused in many people in B.C. through the Jap situation turned them to a further fierce searching of just how British Columbia defenses stood. For thousands of them argued, if there has been Government slackness, indifference, inertia to such an extent in meeting one threat to the safety of B.C. as evidenced by the handling of the Japanese, then maybe our defenses, our military strength on this Pacific coast needs looking into. And they began looking into it, and looking damned closely. Backing this seeking for knowledge the citizens received the support of the Vancouver Daily Sun newspaper. The revelations were shocking. And no more desperate outspoken warning of a country's danger was perhaps every shouted in the daily press of a Canadian city than the series of articles published by the Sun ^{recently.} ~~during the months of~~ ~~the~~ "Our Derelict Defense" thundered the Sun. In tumultuous, printed assault, two-column-wide it told the truth, voiced B.C.'s imperative immediate need.

By an odd coincidence, three weeks before this gathering storm of startled citizens' meetings in Vancouver and Victoria, before the newspaper outcry began of B.C.'s plight, your correspondent started a five weeks' tour. Riding on various steamers along the coast he talked with every one possible; and nowhere in the world does one have such ample opportunity to hear the voice of John Public as in the time-laden atmosphere

on coasting steamers. And people when startled, when faced suddenly with danger they believed ~~has~~ been taken care of, talk the most freely. Perhaps the strangest example of this was a little group fanatically anti-capitalistic. This type of people, and many of them are the salt of the earth, when listened to by your correspondent hitherto have always been unanimous in damning any war as ~~a~~ "capitalistic-made!" On this boat for the first time in my life I heard this group unanimously exclaim: "Hitler made this war. He and his allies must be beaten. No matter how many and large the short comings in our own country, it's still the best one on earth."

Following four steamer voyages, your correspondent spent two weeks in each of B.C.'s largest seaports. From that five weeks of experience, talking to men and women in all walks of life, but rather more from listening everywhere, your correspondent was vividly impressed with the astounding change of the mood of the people. Everywhere it had become NOT 'remember Pearl harbor, remember Singapore, remember Hong Kong, where Canadians died for a useless gesture'—— it had become : "THINK OF BRITISH COLUMBIA! Think of the immediate moment —— here in B.C. For B.C. is Canada's bulwark in the greatest hour of nearest peril the Dominion has ever known. Tomorrow, the YELLOW SWARM may be upon B.C.'s 7,000-mile long coast. And that coast, by its very setting of much indented mountains, is ~~at~~ once the easiest and the hardest to defend. A bulwark EAST to defend if PROPERLY PROTECTED IN TIME. LET US SEE THAT IT IS DEFENDED SO THAT HONG KONG, SINGAPORE AND JAVA BE NOT REPEATED IN B.C.!

The voicings of dread concern, outcome of consciousness of military shortcomings to a terrible degree were a part

of a strangely variegated pattern which danger creates in a democratic country when for the first time in its history the possibility of invasion is at the door. Fantastic rumors, odd things believed, rumors accepted as reality, or as fore-runners of soon-coming reality; queer tales of happenings bearing all the appearance of truth; but, above all, a great concerted rhythm profound in its unanimousness of bitterness against the Government to an extraordinary extent — suspicion and belief of graft and incompetence and slow downs to assist profits, particularly in cost plus industries, where slow downs make for greater profits. These were the things in the air everywhere; there was a sense of discontent heavily pervading the atmosphere.

Now that the B.C. Japanese have been put away; now that newspaper articles have been published that in Axis countries would have brought the editors to the firing squad, now that public and newspapers have voiced statements so stinging in their revelations of defense shortcomings as to truly prove Canada is indeed a democratic land of the right kind; now that a military mission of weight has visited B.C. it seemed to your correspondent that the readers of Maclean's throughout the Dominion, many of them living far from the threatened Pacific bulwark so vital to their safety, might like to have a fairly complete picture of the scene as it was until the merry month of May, as it may remain unless much truth is made known to the people of B.C. the truth that shall set them free of doubts and fears. Before giving this general word-painting, here are a few of the conclusions in people's mind to that date. The command of B.C. should be solely vested in one man. The defense should not be divided between Army, Navy and Air. The unfortunate lack of unity existing between political, military

and civilian leaders, where jealousies, lack of defined boundaries of authority make for inefficiency and delay. And local interests given supremacy over the common necessity for quick, orderly, unified going forward action. But divided responsibility between politicians and military leaders pales into insignificance before the facts that there are not anything like enough trained soldiers to successfully combat the attack of experienced Jap troops if such an attack comes, Jap troops of the type which laid low Malaya, Java and Burma in such short order.

A minor, but very painful illustration: a squad of soldiers on one of the many islands dotting the B.C. coast were ordered to round up some Japanese. But the unfortunate soldiers had no guns. And even for ordinary dignity before Japs they just couldn't bring themselves to make the round up unarmed. So they borrowed enough guns from the Provincial Police.

To me, at me, again and again men actually shouted: "Five thousand Japs could take the whole B.C. coast." This was said so very often, and with such vehemence and bitterness it began to get me down. Because it was not said by idle talkers in the street kind of fellow, but men really of importance, men in high places, men in touch with things. A fearful belief was growing that all this correspondent's written warnings of the state of the coast written in previous years hadn't changed a bit though for two and a half years we ~~had~~ had been at war; for four months at war with Japan. Then, ~~after weeks of hearing~~ ~~weeks after I had heard~~ ~~heard~~ so often repeated "Five thousand Jap soldiers could take the whole B.C. coast." I began to feel like all the other citizens: I WANTED TO HOLLER SO AS TO GET SOMETHING DONE ABOUT IT BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE. Then when I had started in to prepare this article, the Sun Newspaper of Vancouver, published these blistering words:

"OUR PRESENT DEFENSE IS BASED UPON THE ASSUMPTION THAT WE MUST SURRENDER, AND MIGHT AS WELL DO IT FIRST RATHER THAN LAST. IT IS A SINGAPORE-STENGAAH-OLD-SCHOOL-TIE DEFENSE ARRANGED IN THE BEST SPORTSMANLIKE MANNER."

This genuinely shook me up, because the intimation in this and other statements backed up all I had been hearing wherever I went. For example: In a leading store I talked with the proprietor, a quiet, grave man. I'd known him a long time. Almost the first thing he said was: "We're not going to defend the coast; not try to hold it if the Japs come. The Government is going to evacuate everybody behind the Rockies." When I laughed in his face, he protested: "I got it straight from a member of parliament."

An idle, dangerous rumor, unquestionably. Yet sound business men were believing it. That was not the worst of it; here was one accepting it. That made your correspondent more than ever want to get out and holler loud to do somethin' an' do it quick! A few days later in another important coastal town, a group at the club were entertained with this one: A Canadian plane patrolling the sea off Vancouver Island spotted an enemy submarine. The plane could have dropped bombs upon it. But the plane had'nt any bombs\$!

Unbelievable as it sounds here is a regulation that stood at the end of February, may be yet, as far as the writer knows; should a Canadian patrol plane spot an enemy approaching a British Columbia town, the pilot of the plane must request the senior officer at its base to notify the attorney general's department to inform the chief of police in the town and request the mayor to order the air raid alarm sounded. Alice-in-Wonderland never equalled that. That's cricket, old boy. When will we wake up and fight an all out war as the Axis do it?

But here is a more startling admission, appearing in the Vancouver Sun: "SINCE FEW TROOPS CAN BE SPARED FOR DEFENSE HERE"(i.e. the B.C. coast)

How ghastly when Canada has sent outside of Canada one hundred and fifty thousand men, according to a Department of Information Pamphlet, dated January 1st. 1942. More than 150,000 troops in Canada have enlisted for service anywhere. A total of 387,000 men enrolled.

But WE CANNOT SPARE MEN FOR DEFENSE HERE. One hundred and fifty thousand men sent away. Yet enough could not be spared to defend their own soil. The Japanese may make merely a nuisance raid, destructive and for loot. British Columbia women may be raped, children slaughtered, beautiful towns and cities set afire, because there were not enough Canadian men left to defend their own soil. They must be sent far away!

Can you wonder in face of such a situation that there quickly flamed up a revolutionary feeling, a growing bitterness against a Government and a military system which would allow so dreadful a possibility!

Yet fear is often a good organizer. After vainly appealing for months to Ottawa for funds to provide proper ARP protection, the good burghers of Vancouver at last got busy. Business men's associations, service clubs and the woman combined to raise \$225,000. At last a democratic people are regaining backbone, softened, almost lost from too long relying on a paternal Federal Government too long put upon, even though placidly asleep at Ottawa.

For thirty years your correspondent has been up and down the British Columbia coast. Thirty years ago the hint of Japanese aggression was already in the air. Canadian seamen and fishermen

observed Japanese fishermen too active with charts and soundings. These Japs weren't fishermen, but naval experts. Needless now to labor this point. It's just to say that every inch of the B.C. coast is as well known, perhaps better, to Jap naval men than to any but the most well informed B.C. seamen. During the last ten years your correspondent repeatedly sent articles to Canadian newspapers and magazines, warning of the Japanese attack on the B.C. coast and the necessity for a ^{sound} ~~xxxxxx~~ defense ^{programme} ~~initium~~ to be carried out /carefully over the years in readiness. Nothing was ever done. As for the articles a good many of them were contemptuously returned as ravings. As late as six months before Canada ^{but} declared war on Japan, /when Japan was already an openly avowed member of the Axis, the editor of a leading semi-monthly Canadian magazine sent back one of these articles warning against the Japs, with a scathing letter, telling the writer he was seeing Japs under the bed. Well, now the Japs are out from under the bed with bombs they may soon drop upon our still sleeping heads, it may be well to relate here a strange story of Japanese activities upon this coast in preparation for the invasion to come. A story heard in recent weeks.

Please remember, in all that follows in this article readers are asked always to bear in mind that in setting forth these various things, the writer is merely presenting a word picture of the British Columbia scene in the weeks up to the month of April 1942, as it was presented to his eyes and ears. Of nothing related here, can it be claimed to be absolute truth, as truth is considered upon evidence required in a court of law. But it might also be remembered that there are many truths, which still could not be proven in a court of law, which in no way makes them any the less truth.

In a casual wandering such as the one in which this story was gathered, it is not possible to trace down for accuracy even the most reasonably sounding tale. All are merely set forth, as has just been said, to show what goes on among a democratic people when for the first time the shadow of war falls upon their own shores, shores never before even nearly approached before, and now threatened by a terribly efficient enemy, whose prowess proved by the tumbled prestige of Hong Kong, Singapore, Java, and most of the south Pacific. Little yellow bastards, if you will, and in all truth, but so efficient you can't stop them with pamphlets from Ottawa. One point about these stories can be emphasized. They were related by men known to the writer. They came about in chance conversations. They were not told by men given to light talk. There was no reason why they should tell them to me. They did not know I was seeking information for an article. It was just that they seethed with indignation at the ways things were going on this coast, a situation which they felt their stories illuminated.

On board a coastal steamer was a carpenter, a good, solid citizen, a Canadian born. He had come recently from working upon a completed military encampment. In the past he had been a small contractor. He told of the crowds of job-eager men swarming to this new work, many of them whose only claim to be carpenters their noisy assertion. But all were put to work. The barracks' location was in the worst possible situation. He estimated from his knowledge of construction costs the contracting company had made ten times the cost of the work. From ship workers came stories of wasted material, of slow downs of rivetting and other crews in order the contractors could reap bigger profits on the cost plus arrangement. In an imposing club I heard an accountant tell of a \$20,000 bribe to a politician

for contracts to go the right way. There was a hard-bitted old contractor in a Pacific seaport who could get no contracts because he refused to be shaken down by those who had the handing out. There were stories of the careless handling of the seized Japanese fleet, boats that sunk needlessly, engines deteriorated because of neglect; wholesale thefts of parts and even entire engines, all of which will have to be paid for by Canadian taxpayers money, if these Jap owners are to be repaid; and that has always been the way of a democratic Government. These boats are up for purchase by Canadian citizens. But when fishermen and others seeking boats go to inspect possible purchases, they are met with endless red tape, costly delay many cannot afford. These boats could only be inspected on certain shipways. The same old story of muddle which has marked so much of democratic activities.

To a correspondent it was all very exciting this at looking/and hearing about the inside workings of the shifting scene where rapacity more than patriotism was rampant. With before their eyes the conquered Pacific, with their own ~~coast~~ ^{coast} ~~coast~~ at the moment not fitted to meet any real attack, men seemed uncaringly eager for spoils. Of course, some will say to this: all idle talk. If so, there certainly was an awful lot of it; an awful lot of things for people to be able to think up without any foundation to start them thinking.

In a Vancouver cafe as a guest of a friend I witnessed perhaps the most perfect summing up of the rising wrath and scorn of a people. When he gave the girl a tip, he apologized for its smallness. He said: "I'm sorry, but what with war taxes and extra expenses I haven't much money these days."

She answered: "That's all right, mister. Maybe money wont matter here soon. We let the Japs clean up the whole Pacific in six weeks;" Her eyes blazed in keeping with her searing words.

That little dark waitress epitomized the mood of the people;: disillusion. But, thank heaven, her fighting spirit was unspoiled. That too epitomizes the spirit of the people of British Columbia. They are willing, anxious to fight, but they want to be in shape so they will be no pushover. That is why the home defense movement is at last really taking hold. It's a grand movement, and very much worth while; but men of any kind must have arms; they must have a little training. At best they can only be something to back up the professional soldiers, the boys in brown who have so bravely marched away.

Though not until the war with Japan was two months old did the Ottawa Government begin rounding up the Japs, it is singular that no comparable internment of alien German~~se~~ and Italians has taken place. Yet a German or an It-
enemy
alian/agent can short wave information to Tokyo as well as Berlin, just as competently as any Jap. They are ~~doing it~~ immobilizing
enemy aliens
much better in the United States. Germans and Italians are placed safely away on the American side of the Pacific coast with the same care that is being given to the Japanese.

And it should be told again how amazingly thorough is the Jap and German spy work in Mexico and the South American countries. Wholesale cleanups of Nazis agents is bringing some startling evidences to light of the foreign agents' work. That Axis spies throughout Canada are just as well organized, just as thorough is unquestionable, which brings us back to the ~~xxx~~ booklets and pamphlets issued by the Department of Information at Ottawa — those heaven-sent

gifts from our Canadian publicity experts to Axis spies scattered throughout Canada. Yes, indeed, heaven sent gifts to Axis agents at the expense of the Canadian taxpayer! The Department of Information has published tens of thousands of these booklets and pamphlets and leaflets. They have set forth in minute detail the most precious information on a hundred subjects of all Canada is doing. They tell how many troops raised, where the soldiers stationed, how many sent abroad. They tell with most exhaustive and accurate statistics our foreign trade, listing carefully each country. All this precious material is compiled by experts and trained writers.

From personal observation, all your correspondent has ever seen the average Canadian do with any he or she gets is to drop them unread in the waste basket. But all over Canada there are people eagerly on the look out for these publications. These Axis spies scan every word. And why should they not? Here without the slightest work upon their part is the information that secret agents in other countries could only obtain by months of hardest work, at the risk even of life, or at least liberty. But in Canada the spy has no trouble like that. The Canadian Information Department prints it all out in detail. All the Axis spies have to do is to get it mailed on to Tokyo, Rome and Berlin. It's not very easy now. But before the United States entered the war, all the spies had to do was to mail each booklet put out by the Canadian Department of Information to his confederate in the United States, and they went on their way to Berlin. Not a bit of work for him to do. No typing, no nothing. How these spies must appreciate Canada. And how Mr. Goebbels must chuckle as he reads at leisure all the tremendously important things Canada is doing to beat him. Here, indeed, is propaganda of the

most gentlemanly sort; in the best Old-School-Tie traditions. What's more these booklets authorized by the Government Department Information are just the thing that could go uncensored to the United States. What censor would ever dream of holding up information which has cost thousands of dollars to obtain and print. Censor free, pithy, perfect information — heavens gift to the Axis spies.

This blind assistance to the enemy is along the same line of psychological action, or rather lack of action, which finds the British Columbia coast today in need of a desperately hasty fortifying. So much in need that it required a near revolution on the part of B.C.'s citizens to even get recognized the coast's pitiful inadequacy of defense.

In a certain B.C. port when I was there, a big British warship had come in, followed a few days later by a famous British transport, and, a little later, an American destroyer. Everyone in town knew of these arrivals. And at that time there were thousands of Japanese going about freely, though Canada was already at war for two and half months with Japan. Of course, these nice Japanese would never convey to Tokyo the exceedingly important information about these ships' whereabouts.

At about the same time, in what may be said to have been an ultimatum from important persons in B.C. to the Ottawa Government, anti-aircraft guns were rushed to the Pacific coast. Of course, the number cannot be given here. That would be betraying a military secret. But rest assured some of the thousands of Japanese going about freely where the guns were going into position, some of these Japs would get to know.

To add to the Alice-in-Wonderland ridiculousness of a democracy these anti-aircraft guns lacked personell to man them.

To hark back to the subject of Japanese intentions with regard to the B.C. coast. Here is the most disturbing of all stories heard in my idle wanderings of asking for nothing and getting more than I have space here to tell.

In 1937, six Jap freighters, loaded to the Plimsol lines, put in at Prince Rupert. Their next port of call was Vancouver. When they arrived at Vancouver these six Japanese freighters were empty. Yet between Prince Rupert and Vancouver is no place where they unloaded. There are few places where they even could put in.

This queer mystery was related to me by a naval man. He is a quiet, reserved chap. He had no reason to imagine such a tale, least of all tell it me. Later on I heard the same story from a cannery operator.

Where did the cargo of these six freighters go? Does the gasoline and other storéss they carried wait cunningly hidden on some lonely isles or mailand cache for the day when Japanese invaders will need them; and KNOW EXACTLY WHERE TO GO TO GET THEM?³ Don't scoff, my friends. There's 7,000 miles of B.C. coastline, wild coast~~ly~~ line. Always remember that. Remember too what Axis powers have done in planting things elsewhere.

Another man in the cannery business told me of finding a mysterious cache of gasoline. He reported it to the Provincial Police.

Wild stories, crazy pipes dreams. That's what some people will say. The same kind of people scoffed at the fall of France, and the rest. Today most of Europe lies under the Nazis heel. Sometimes it is better to believe, and prepare in advance against.

Reading the revelations of what Axis nations have done in South America, there seems fairly good grounds for believing there is something in the stories set forth here.

It is one of the glories of democracy that press and people can proclaim their dissatisfaction with their elected representatives, and demand proper action when the occasion arises. That need arose in British Cōlumbia in regard to the inadequacy of its coastal defenses. Out on the Pacific coast people and press have yelled and are still yelling. So far this voice of the public has brought arunnin' a military mission of importance. Here with Maclean's correspondent has told the story of what has taken place in the past four months. But that is not enough. The truth shall set us free, shall set the people of the British Columbi coast at ease, and keep them free, only if action follows words.

Only action based on recent findings will make the British Cōlumbia coast impregnable. Honest, indignant men, deeply concerned at the inertia in high places, have voiced the truth in the newspapers in the great cities of the Pacific coast; honest indignant men editing small weekly papers have cried aloud; just as your corespondent. The Jap is a cunning, merciless foe; incredibly powerful.

Here is the story to the moment. It is up to the Government by quick action to let the people know that this telling of the truth has made us free.
