

VOLUME 1/16: H.D. WILSON, RE: JAPANESE LANGUAGE
SCHOOLS.

16/1

January 16, 1941.

His Worship,
Mayor J. W. Cornett,
City Hall,
Vancouver, B. C.

Dear Sir:

It is with deep regret that we have read press reports of the discussion last Monday in the City Council upon the question of Japanese language schools. If we may judge from the press articles, there would seem to be a very great deal of misunderstanding and misinformation in regard to these institutions, their nature and their work. It is with the hope of correcting the more evident misconceptions and thus clarifying the situation that we address this letter to you.

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First and foremost, is the allegation that Japanese language schools are maintained by the educational department of the Japanese government. There is no connection whatsoever between the two. The schools definitely are not subsidized by the Japanese government. Operating expenses are met by the tuition fees paid by the parents of the pupils and contributions from local citizens interested in the welfare of the schools. In fact, the Japanese Language School at 475 Alexander Street of this city over which I have charge was registered at Victoria under the "Benevolent Societies Act" in 1912. Every year, moreover, a financial statement of the school as well as the names of the members of the Board of Trustees are sent to the provincial government.

course
course of study

Secondly, the schools are purely optional.
No child is compelled to attend classes.

what % of Comm
do not attend

VOLUME 1/16: H.D. WILSON, RE: JAPANESE LANGUAGE
SCHOOLS.

16/1

Thirdly, although we employ the text books which are in current use in Japan, our curriculum is quite different and apart from the one taught in Japan, Manchuria, Formosa or Korea. Our schools were founded in the first place to impart merely the rudiments of the language to the Japanese Canadian children, namely reading, writing, oral work and composition. In spite of this limited objective, our experience has shown that only one hour--from four to five in the afternoon after regular Public School hours, five days a week--is often not sufficient for pupils to acquire a firm grasp of the language.

*Why learn
the language
Cause trouble*

Furthermore, we are utilizing text books printed in Japan for want of something more suitable. The publication of text books in Japanese here is out of the question for the simple reason that no facilities are available. Local Japanese printing firms are at present unable to undertake the task, because costs of necessary equipment are wholly prohibitive.

I repeat. The Japanese language schools are primarily supplementary in nature. In main, Japanese is taught to facilitate intercourse between the Canadian-born Japanese and their elders who in most cases have found it as difficult to learn English as it would be for an Occidental to learn Japanese. Secondly, a knowledge of the Japanese language is a practical asset in securing employment in the community that one cannot overlook.

*Why not
teach Parents*

Lastly, I wish to stress above everything else that our institutions are NOT Japanese in spirit. The aim of our schools is and has been since the inception of the first school in 1906 to inculcate fine and true Canadian citizenship among our pupils. It has been our fundamental belief that since the Nisei, that is to say Canadians of Japanese parentage, are born in Canada, have made this country their own home and will seek their future here, the primary aim of their education should be to assist them as good citizens in contributing to the development of Canada.

VOLUME 1/16: H.D. WILSON, RE: JAPANESE LANGUAGE
SCHOOLS.

16/1

I am enclosing a pamphlet on this very question, which I wrote in 1926. The intervening period of fourteen years has only served to deepen my conviction that the cardinal principle underlying the education of Canadian-born Japanese must be a growth in their understanding and appreciation of Canadian citizenship. I am happy to state that all during that time our teachers have given me their fullest co-operation and have done remarkably well in imparting to their pupils a knowledge that has helped the realization of that principle. You may find it of interest to compare the pamphlet with the one released last year by the B. C. Japanese Language School Association, a copy of which I am also enclosing.

*Standards
Labour.
business.*

At all events, we are quite desirous of co-operating with the City Council in any and every way, as we have been doing in the past with Public School authorities, to remove all possible sources of friction or misunderstanding. We would also welcome a visit from any and every member of the Council to see our schools for themselves.

I sincerely do hope that our future relationships may go on from here on the basis of friendship, mutual understanding and co-operation, befitting the new year and worthy of the democratic tradition of this Dominion of ours.

Yours respectfully,

Tsutar Sato

Secretary,
B. C. Japanese Language School
Association.
Principal,
Vancouver Japanese Language
School.

TS/YH
Encl. 2.

16/2

RE JAPANESE LANGUAGE SCHOOLS

Your Special Committee appointed by His Worship the Mayor on January 17th last has held several meetings, some of which were attended by representative members of the Japanese Community in this City, and your Committee has obtained from these representatives, by oral submissions and by written communications, a considerable amount of information relevant to problems incidental to the Japanese people resident in Vancouver.

The circumstances in connection with the appointment of your Committee are that the question of registration of Japanese in the Province was mentioned by Alderman Wilson at the meeting of Council held on January 13th last, and he suggested that a Special Committee be appointed to draft a resolution expressing the views of the Council in connection with the appointment by the Federal Government of a Commission to undertake the registration of Japanese in British Columbia; for report to Council.

At the initial meeting of your Committee held on January 21st, consideration was given to a communication from Mr. T. Sato, Secretary, B.C. Japanese Language School Association, and Principal, Vancouver Japanese Language School, from which the following is an abstract:

"It is with deep regret that we have read press reports of the discussion last Monday in the City Council upon the question of Japanese language schools. If we may judge from the press articles, there would seem to be a very great deal of misunderstanding and misinformation in regard to these institutions, their nature and their work. It is with the hope of correcting the more evident misconceptions and thus clarifying the situation that we address this letter to you."

As a result of this communication, the scope of the Committee has been broadened to include the matters which Mr. Sato had introduced, and as the Government had referred the question of the registration of Japanese in the Province to a Commission under the Chairmanship of Mayor Hume of New Westminster, your Committee proceeded to obtain all the information available with respect to Japanese Language Schools, as their operation presents certain angles which your Committee feels it was warranted to investigate.

On January 24th last the Japanese representatives were subjected to very close interrogation, and a transcript of the questions asked by your Committee and the answers given thereto is on file for reference. Mr. Sato was requested to forward a certified copy of the Declaration which was filed by him when making application for incorporation of the Japanese Language School under the Act, and also certified copy of the By-laws.

Your Committee took exception to certain portions of the text and illustrations contained in the books used in the Japanese Language Classes on the ground that undue stress was laid on matters relating to Japanese imperialism and militarism, and begs to report that, as a result of its representations, the passages complained of have been either removed or obliterated.

The question of the effect upon health which attendance in the Japanese Language Schools might have upon the pupils was referred to Dr. Harold White, Director of School Health Services, and his report on this subject points out that a regular day's work at school combined with the usual amount of homework, is all that most children can accomplish without detriment to their health, and that consequently the Japanese children who are required to spend another session in a Japanese Language School after attending the customary daily classes in a public school are subject to a strain which will undoubtedly in some cases prejudicially affect their health.

Sp. Com. re Japanese Language Schools 2

The Japanese spokesmen maintain that the benefits to parents and students alike which accrue from the teaching of the Japanese language in the schools more than outweigh any disadvantages which may arise from following this course of study.

In response to requests made by your Committee, Mr. Sato has furnished a certified copy of each of the following documents:

1. The registration of the "Vancouver Nippon Kyoritsu Go Gakko (Japanese School of Languages) Maintenance Association" at Victoria under the "Benevolent Societies Act" in December, 1912.
2. The change of the name of the Association to its present one in 1920.
3. The By-laws of the Association as at March 7th, 1941.

Mr. Sato has also furnished the following written undertaking:

"In accordance with our understanding of last Friday's meeting of your committee, permit me to submit this written statement of the undertakings made verbally by myself as Secretary of the B.C. Japanese Language Schools Association.

Firstly, in regard to text books, the last convention of our Association unanimously adopted a resolution favouring the use only of the text books which were approved of by your committee, and copies of which were submitted to you. Actually these are the only books in use now; and I am sure that they will continue to be the only ones used. I feel confident, moreover, that local booksellers will conform to our wishes in public sales of the books.

Secondly, in regard to the health of pupils, I shall place a recommendation before the Association urging the establishment of some system of medical and dental inspection. I should like to point out that the Alexander School, of which I am principal, had at one time established such a service, which unfortunately had to be discontinued because of a lack of finances. I hope we may be able to secure the help of school health authorities and the Civic Health Department in any plan we undertake.

Permit me, in closing, to express to the committee our sincere thanks for the courteous and fair hearing we were accorded at last Friday's meeting. I trust that a like degree of co-operation may attend any discussions which we may have to enter into at any future date."

Your Committee feels that it is appropriate to mention in this report certain matters submitted by the Japanese representatives, particularly as it has been suggested in some quarters that Japanese Language Schools should be abolished:

1. Japanese Language Schools consciously have tried to avoid the teaching of anything that might tend to make Canadian-born Japanese pupils feel less Canadian than they should.
2. A knowledge of the Japanese language is practically indispensable to the average Canadian-born Japanese boy or girl:
 - (a) It assists in the relationship between Japanese parents and their children with respect to the training of the children, the moulding of their character and the happiness of the home. These relationships determine in no small degree whether a man is to be an asset or a liability to society, what happiness he will attain as a man, what contribution he will make

VOLUME 1/16: H.D. WILSON, RE: JAPANESE LANGUAGE
SCHOOLS.

16/2

Sp. Com. re Japanese Language Schools 3

(Continued)

as a citizen to the state. These normal relations are of an abnormal importance in an immigrant family in which there is the constant conflict between an elder generation clinging to old customs, habits and beliefs, and a younger generation growing up in a new environment.

It is stated that the rate of juvenile delinquency for the Japanese section of the City is very low indeed.

(b) It materially enhances the prospect of obtaining employment.

3. No financial assistance whatever is received from the Japanese Government, either directly or indirectly, so far as the Japanese Language Schools are concerned.

Your Committee begs to submit the following recommendations:

1. That approval be given to a suggestion by the Japanese representatives that the Vancouver School Board be requested to consider the appointment of one of the School Trustees or of some person selected by the School Board to collaborate with the Japanese Language Schools Association in educational matters.
2. That the Provincial Department of Health be requested to investigate the question of the influence of attendance at Japanese Language Schools upon the Health of the pupils, as reported in the communication from Dr. Harold White, Director of Vancouver School Health Services.
3. That the Provincial Department of Education be requested to consider the advisability of passing regulations to provide that all text books used in Japanese Language Schools be subject to the approval of that Department; and in this connection it is suggested that the subject matter of the text books should be of general interest to all Canadians.
4. That the textbooks at present in use in which deletions or obliterations have been made be considered as temporary only, and that a further issue of textbooks be prepared as early as possible.
5. That the Provincial Department of Education be requested to consider the question of making arrangements whereby second-generation naturalised Japanese citizens be appointed as Teachers in all Japanese Language Schools, as such persons possess a Canadian background, instead of teachers brought from Japan who naturally possess a Japanese background.

Respectfully submitted,

(Sgd.) "J. W. Cornett"
Mayor

(Sgd.) "Chas. Jones" Alderman
Chairman

(Sgd.) "Geo. Buscombe"
Alderman

(Sgd.) "Halford D. Wilson"
Alderman