

MINUTES

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January 24, 1941

RE JAPANESE REGISTRATION

Pursuant to the recommendation of the Committee of January 21st last, the Committee met with representatives of the Japanese Community in order to obtain information on various matters with respect to the Japanese residents of the City.

Present: Alderman Jones (Chairman), His Worship Mayor J.W. Cornett, Alderman Buscombe and Wilson.  
Representing the Japanese Community:  
Messrs. Tautae Sato, Yoshimitsu Higashi (on the staff of "New Canadian", and secretary of the Japanese Language School Association), K. Shimizu, and Sadyoshi Heki; and Dr. M. Ishiware.

A letter, dated January 16th, 1941, from Mr. T. Sato, Principal of the Japanese School at 475 Alexander Street, addressed to His Worship the Mayor, was read, and copies were circulated, and the questions which follow in this report were based largely on the statements made in the letter.

The various members of the Committee addressed a number of questions to the Japanese representatives, whose principal spokesman was Mr. Higashi, whose knowledge of the English language enabled him to reply not only to questions addressed direct to him, but also to many questions directed to Mr. Sato, as that gentleman is not a very fluent English speaker.

Attached hereto is tabulation of the questions asked and the replies given by the Japanese representatives.

RESOLVED that the Medical Health Officer be instructed to investigate the question of the effect which the attendance at the classes in the Japanese Language School may have upon the children; for the information of the Committee.

RESOLVED that Mr. T. Sato be 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.

The Committee then adjourned to meet again at the call of the Chair.

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RE JAPANESE REGISTRATION.

Report with respect to a meeting held on January 24th, 1941, of the Special Committee re Japanese Registration and Japanese residents of the City of Vancouver, containing the questions asked by various members of the Special Committee, and the replies and comments made by the representatives of the Japanese Community. The bulk of the replies were made by Mr. Yoshimitsu Higashi, who was the general spokesman for the Delegation.

City Clerk's Office,  
January 24th, 1941.

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- Q. What is the scale of tuition fees at Mr. Sato's School?
- A. \$1.50 per month for one child and 50¢ for each additional child from the same family. The fee is paid by the parents and is compulsory for every child attending.
- Q. How many teachers at Mr. Sato's school?
- A. Thirteen teachers, including Mr. Sato. There are 960 pupils. Total taxes are \$360.00 per annum, which is with respect to the old building and the new one. The pupils buy their own textbooks. They cost about 15¢ each and there are two books for each grade. There are 12 grades: viz. 8 primary and 4 higher grades. Upon completing 8 years and receiving their diploma, most students stop taking the courses. Pupils enter school at the age of 7. About 80 graduate each year, and about 40 attend secondary courses. About 12 to 15 finish the high school standard. The textbooks used in the schools are printed in Japan as there are no facilities for printing them here. We use the same books as are used in schools in Japan. We do not cover all the ground in the books as school time is limited to one hour per day, from four to five p.m. Certain parts are left out because they are not applicable to Canada, or because they are too difficult. The Japanese Language Association are preparing books more suitable for use among the Japanese here that will fit in with Canadian institutions. The children want books that have a Canadian environment.
- Q. Is any financial assistance given to the schools from Japan? How can the large families in the lower income brackets afford to pay the tuition fees, and how can the schools be maintained from the small tuition fees which they receive?
- A. The school funds receive voluntary donations, besides which each school has a Maintenance Association. Most of the teachers have other occupations and only devote one hour per day to school work.
- Q. Is it fair that this situation has developed? These children attend City schools at an average cost of about \$80.00 each. In a Japanese rooming house which was burnt two or three years ago, the taxes paid to the City were less than \$50.00, yet in that dwelling were 14 children attending school.
- A. The teaching of the Japanese language is an asset (1) in the relations between the older Japanese and the younger people; (2) an economic asset, as Japanese find it very difficult to obtain employment with English-speaking employers and therefore find it necessary to speak Japanese fluently.
- Q. Is it not far better to teach the parents English than teach Japanese to the children?
- A. English is a difficult language for the older Japanese to learn. It would be equally difficult for an adult Occidental to learn Japanese.
- Q. In British Columbia a difficulty relative to assimilation of Canadian born Japanese arises in such situations as the following: Half-way through a conversation between Japanese and White fishermen, the Japanese break off to talk among themselves in the Japanese tongue and the White people do not know what is going on. Why should that be necessary?
- A. We cannot pass an opinion on that.
- Q. At a joint meeting of Japanese and Occidentals, the larger part of the meeting is held in Japanese, which is the greatest drawback!

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A. That is because many of the people there are the older Japanese who do not understand English properly and therefore express themselves in Japanese; but at meetings of Church groups and Japanese-Canadian citizen groups the meetings are invariably conducted in English.

Q. Among Japanese in Haney and Maple Ridge districts they suddenly start talking in Japanese and white people cannot follow them. What do you say as to that?

A. The English language is becoming more and more the medium for speaking and writing.

Mr. Higashi, who answered this question, said that he regretted he had not learnt more of the Japanese language because he had a difficulty in conversing with the older people.

Q. A year or two ago some Japanese fishermen moved their craft into the restricted area of the Seaplane Harbour, Vancouver Airport. When remonstrated with, they apparently did not understand what was said.

A. According to a press report in the "Province", there was engine trouble and the boat stalled.

Q. Can you assure the Committee that no assistance in any way, directly or indirectly, is received from the Japanese Government so far as schools are concerned?

A. No assistance whatever. As a matter of fact the letter (from Mr. Sato) shows that each year a financial statement is submitted to Victoria.

Q. Are you or are you not receiving any assistance either directly or indirectly from the Japanese Government or any source connected with the Japanese Government?

A. Absolutely no.

Q. Is the attendance at Japanese schools purely optional?

A. Some parents do not send their children to Japanese schools. Sixty to seventy percent of Japanese children of school age do attend Japanese schools. The other thirty to forty per cent pick up some Japanese. A larger percentage cannot write Japanese or read the Japanese newspaper. They read English news in the daily press and those parts of the Japanese newspapers which are printed in English.

Q. What about the appointment of school trustees?

A. Trustees are appointed by the Japanese Language School Maintenance Association, composed of children's parents, at the annual general meeting. Only members of the Association have voting power.

Q. Does any body in Japan receive any reports re the activities of the school in any way?

A. No; and we make none to the consul.

Q. Questions were asked regarding a number of text books printed in the Japanese language, which were produced by Mr. Sato.

In reply to questions by the Committee, the following information was given:  
Regarding the page containing the Rising Sun on the one side and the Japanese flag on the other; the reply was that these names are crossed out in the text book as it

is a lesson which is not taught.

On being shown a picture of Admiral Togo, the reply was that the teachers pass that over.

In reply to a suggestion that the submarine, aircraft carrier, etc., shown in the text-books would build up a feeling of pride in Japanese achievements, the reply was -- "Mr. Sato teaches Canadian ideals."

Q. There is a thread of militarism running through all the text-books.

A. That fear is absolutely groundless.

Q. Are you prepared to admit that the text-book as now used is not the most suitable textbook to be used in Canada for the teaching of children whom you hope will eventually make good Canadians? Are you quite agreed on that?

A. Yes.

Q. Has any recent effort been made to change the method of teaching or the policy of the school in any way to make it more in keeping with Canadian idealism?

A. Yes. It is incorporated in the principles of the teaching of the Canadian Japanese Language School Association.

Q. (To Mr. Sato) When you took over the school, were not certain recommendations made by your predecessor for a change in the curriculum of the school? Did Mr. Kaburagi not suggest that steps be taken to pay more attention to Canadian idealism than to Japanese national idealism? Did you get any such request or was any such suggestion made to the Board of Trustees at that time to change the whole set-up of the cultural side of school instruction?

A. (By Mr. Higashi, on behalf of Mr. Sato) There was no particular recommendation made to him to change the policy. There was nothing to be changed from the standard policy, which has been to foster Canadianism. Mr. Sato has been endeavouring to inculcate that for 25 years.

Q. About 20 years ago some steps were taken by your board to have new textbooks?

A. That was in 1924.

Q. In 1924 you were going to take steps to change things and these changes were not made.

A. There were insufficient Japanese at that time and not enough schools in the province and the financing of this matter could not be met and the attempt fell through; but now there are larger schools and it is felt that it can be done this time but it will take quite a while for the revision to be completed.

Q. Did Mr. Kaburagi make any direct recommendations at that time to the board governing the Japanese schools here for any change in the Japanese school set-up?

A. (Mr. Sato) Twenty-five years ago when I came here I insisted on the teaching of Canadianism. We do teach Canadian ideals. No, I did not meet Mr. Kaburagi.

(At this point Dr. Ishiwara remarked that Mr. Kaburagi, who was his brother-in-law, went to Japan after working in the Vancouver Japanese School for about 35 years, and died about fifteen years ago.)

Q. Mr. Kaburagi founded the school system?

A. Yes.

Q. The Chairman remarked that he knew Mr. Kaburagi very well indeed and was aware what transpired with regard to these matters.

A. It should be written in the old school records.

Q. Is there a paper in the Japanese language published here?

A. Yes, but the type is different. They can handle small printing jobs. There are three Japanese newspapers published here.

Q. Is the same system of education used in Japanese schools in other parts of the province?

A. These other schools do not come under Mr. Sato's control. For the most part the text books are the same. The main curriculum is reading, writing, etc.

Q. In textbooks a large percentage of Japanese militarism is involved and Japanese imperialism. When the Prince from Japan came here on his way to the Coronation, many people commented on the manner in which Japanese children took part in that ceremony. There was a parade and they evidenced unusual respect for the Prince.

A. I did not witness that spectacle. I think that any respect shown was natural as the Prince came from the country of their parents.

Q. I believe that many of the children got down on their knees in the Japanese fashion. Our own children would have stood on the side and would have watched and probably cheered too.

A. If Roosevelt came here we would give him a hearty welcome. Equally so, the prince was famous in Japan and was welcomed in the Japanese way. When King George came here we gave him a hearty welcome.

Q. Evidently the children are getting those ideas of Japanese loyalty from somewhere.

A. That was just the Japanese way of showing respect for the prince. I was more interested in the visit of King George and Queen Elizabeth. I look on them as my king and queen. When Their Majesties came here the loyalty and true devotion shown by the young Japanese people was more than that shown to the Prince.

Q. The main object of the schools is to teach the Japanese language. In the Japanese language textbooks it would be possible to have pictures of British warships.

A. In the proposed new textbook Canadian scenes would be depicted. The prime purpose of these textbooks is to teach the mechanics of the language.

Q. Can you give the Committee an assurance that the textbooks, as revised, would be compiled from a language standpoint, and that they would not have any national inferential influence in any way?

A. We would be pleased to show a copy of the new textbook to you.



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Q. (to Dr. Ishiwara, who is Chairman of the Whole Board) From the health standpoint, what is the effect of this school attendance five days a week on the children? I believe that they have some additional tuition in the summer.

A. In reply, Dr. Ishiwara produced some graphs showing the height and weight of local Japanese children of various ages compared with Japanese children in Japan of similar ages, indicating a comparison favourable to the children domiciled in Vancouver.

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Mr. Sato was requested to forward a copy of the Articles of Registration of the Japanese Language School under the "Benevolent Societies Act", and he promised that this would be done.

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With reference to the passage in Mr. Sato's letter reading, "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," the Chairman stated that he was satisfied from first hand knowledge that there may have been a great trend along these lines in the early days of the school in Vancouver, but that he was somewhat of the opinion during the past number of years that that tendency has not been as closely adhered to as in the early days of the school. That matter might possibly be overcome if the proposed new textbook were adapted and used, and if an assurance could be given to the Committee and others interested in the subject that the militaristic and nationalistic traits running through these school books was being definitely eliminated.

A. Yes.

Q. Reference was made to a conflict of opinion between the Canadian born Japanese as to the authoritative control of the older element of Japanese in this community, and it was stated that the control of thought and the trend of opinion among the local Japanese is still held by the older Japanese citizens; and it was suggested that if there is to be any hope of development towards the real Canadianism, and if that is to be brought about by the younger generation of Japanese, the national influence of the older Japanese who are in the background of the whole thing must be broken down somewhere.

A. I think that it is quite natural that the older group of any nation has a dominant control over the younger people, but now that the younger people are definitely here to stay they are taking their share in "running the community".

Q. It was stated that the greater proportion of the contents of the three Japanese papers circulated in the city is presented in the Japanese language, and the question was asked: Is there any reason why there should be as large a portion of these newspapers printed in the Japanese language as was the case thirty years ago? Should not the trend have been to print in the English language?

A. The biggest paper, the Continental Daily News, has an English section, and there is an all-English Japanese publication which has become more or less the recognised leader in Nisei circles. It is more and more the young people who are taking it over. The Canadianising of the Japanese becomes more noticeable as these young people grow up.

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RE INFORMATION REQUIRED BY THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE RE JAPANESE  
REGISTRATION

On April 2nd, Mr. Higashi called at the City Clerk's Office, and produced certain documents which he stated were copies certified by the Provincial authorities.

With regard to the text books which were submitted by the Japanese representatives at the meeting of the Committee held on January 24th last, Mr. Higashi stated that the parts in the text books to which exception had been taken by the Committee had been removed.

B.H.W. returned to Mr. Higashi documents referred to and requested him to see that a letter was sent to him addressed to the City Clerk, explaining what was necessary in connection with these documents, and also putting on record the information he had given with respect to the text books.

At this date, April 8th, no further word has been received.

City Clerk's Office,  
April 8th, 1941.