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MEMORANDUM

SECRET
CABINET WAR COMMITTEE

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CONCERNING MILITARY SERVICE FOR CANADIANS OF ORIENTAL RACE.

1. A meeting was held on Wednesday, December 17th, to consider a general policy in regard to the military service of Canadians of Japanese, Chinese and East Indian race. It was attended by representatives of the following Departments:

National Defence
National Defence for Air
National War Services
Royal Canadian Mounted Police
External Affairs

2. The existing policy appeared to require review because:

- (a) The policy is not clear and is not understood either by the men concerned or by the general public.
- (b) A new situation arises from the war with Japan in which Chinese and Indians collaborate with Canada.
- (c) Numerous letters are received containing either offers of service by Japanese or protests against the return of Japanese fishermen to their civilian occupation.

3. The following general principles were recognized:

- (a) No service nor branch of a service nor rank in a service should in principle be closed to any Canadian on grounds of race or colour alone.
- (b) The practical difficulties of mixing races should receive full recognition; and neither fighting efficiency nor civilian morale should be sacrificed to the principle of racial equality.

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4. The reasons for recognizing these principles were:

- (a) Canada has associated in the war with nations which are not white (China and India).
- (b) The war with Japan is not on a colour line basis.
- (c) Canadian policy should not be less generous racially than United States policy.

(d) Any deviation from these principles that is necessary for military considerations is justifiable.

5. Consistently with the general principles set out in paragraph 3 two recommendations were made:

(a) Canadians of Chinese, East Indian, and Japanese race should be called on for military training and service at the same time as other Canadians in the same age groups.

(b) No unit should be obliged to accept a volunteer of any of these races if it is felt that this would not conduce to the efficiency of the service.

6. The reasons for these recommendations were:

(a) The desire to avoid creating a sense of racial discrimination among Canadians of Oriental race.

(b) The belief that the general public would feel safer if young men of Japanese race were under army discipline.

(c) The desire to avoid the charge of discriminating in favour of Japanese, Chinese and East Indians by relieving them of an obligation imposed on other Canadians.

7. It is recognized that the recommendations set out in paragraph 5 call for a reversal of the policy approved by the War Committee last January with respect to Canadians of Chinese and Japanese race who were not to be called up for

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7. It is recognized that the recommendations set out in paragraph 5 call for a reversal of the policy approved by the War Committee last January with respect to Canadians of Chinese and Japanese race who were not to be called up for service "at the present time". Dr. Keenleyside, who was a member of the committee which made this recommendation, considered that conditions had changed substantially in the interval.

8. It is also recognized that the recommendations made in paragraph 5 may run contrary to the wishes of the government of British Columbia in so far as they may be taken to constitute an argument for the enfranchisement either of the races concerned or of the individuals called on for military service.

9. It was recommended that if the principles set out in paragraph 3 and the recommendations set out in paragraph 5 are adopted they should be publicly announced.

10. To give effect to the recommendations two administrative steps would have to be taken which would not require publicity.

(a) A commanding officer who rejects a prospective recruit on grounds of race should be instructed to point out to him some line of service which is open to him and reasonably suitable in view of his physical and educational qualifications.

(b) The military authorities should make such arrangements as enable them to inform commanding officers of the lines of service to which Chinese, East Indians, and Japanese Canadians may be directed. The service indicated should be such as to carry no possible suggestion of stigma.

11. Details would be worked out by the Department of National Defence if the general policy is approved. That Department does not favour a special unit - nor does National War Services.

12. The reasons for these administrative measures are:

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out to him some line of service which is open to him and reasonably suitable in view of his physical and educational qualifications.

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12. The reasons for these administrative measures are:

(a) To avoid first inviting and then rejecting volunteers.

(b) To avoid giving volunteers a sense of frustration and grievance if they apply in the first instance to a service which is not prepared to accept them.