

SECRET

CABINET WAR COMMITTEE

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE CABINET WAR COMMITTEE:

Re: Japanese labour on Blue River Highway

The R.C.M. Police reports as follows:

15 Japanese work camps are situated adjacent to the main C.N.R. line between Jasper, Alberta, and Blue River, B.C., employing approximately 1,500 Japanese.

6 camps are located on the main line of the C.P.R. between Sicamous and Revelstoke, B.C.

The situation in the camps along the C.N.R. line is much the more serious. The 15 camps are located in close proximity to the railroad. The C.N.R. maintain special railway guards stationed at all of the larger steel bridges. In addition, the R.C.M. Police have stationed 4 special constables at each camp, to patrol the track in the vicinity of the Japanese working parties, with particular attention to trestles, bridges, rock cuts and curves. A twenty-four hour guard is maintained by these special constables who do not, however, interfere with the Japanese except in the line of duty. Discipline in the camps is a direct responsibility of the white foremen employed by the Department of Mines and Resources.

Definite dissatisfaction and resentment exists among the Japanese in these camps. Work on the highway is progressing unsatisfactorily. While there has not been definite sabotage, there have been numerous sit-down strikes on little provocation, and progress has been very half-hearted. Food and accommodation in the camps are good and the Japanese are not bullied or ill treated. A pass system is used in respect to their numerous requests to visit from camp to camp.

The fundamental causes of discontent are attributed to separation from families, dissatisfaction over the nature of their employment and agitation by certain pro-Japanese elements in the camps. Removal of agitators has, in some cases, provided at least temporary relief but there are no signs of general improvement in the conditions of unrest and dissatisfaction. It is reported that due to the difficulties of exercising strict disciplinary control over the Japanese, they are secretly meeting Japanese from other camps, at night after working hours. It is judged also that a concerted secret attempt, they might

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In summary, it is pointed out that the R.C.M. Police lack legal authority to place armed guards over the Japanese in these camps, or to employ force to compel obedience with regulations issued by the British Columbia Security Commission, or camp authorities. The present strength of the force of special constables is not great enough to remove all danger of sabotage. Since other measures have failed to quell discontent in the camps, and since there remains considerable public criticism, it is recommended that the Japanese be removed from all camps in the vicinity of C.N.R. main lines.

-2-

This recommendation would not apply to camps along the C.P.R. lines where there is a much happier position and where actual progress is being made by the Japanese labourers. On the other hand, if the Japanese were removed from the Blue River camps and settled in some community with their families, the Japanese in the C.P.R. line camps might well become dissatisfied. There is therefore an argument for equal treatment of all.

It is pointed out that the situation in these camps will, undoubtedly, be the subject of adverse comment by the Consul General for Spain when he visits these camps in the near future. This, in turn, may have an effect on the treatment of Canadian citizens in Japan.

A. D. P. Heeney.

July 8th, 1942.