

Canadian Civil Liberties Union

I don't remember whether I sent you a copy of this or not. It was sent a short time ago. An identical letter, addressed to the Prime Minister, was distributed in Ottawa.

CANADIAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION

VANCOUVER BRANCH

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Professor Hunter Lewis, Chairman

Dr. W. L. MacDonald, Vice-Chairman
Garfield A. King, Counsel

Dr. S. A. Jennings, Vice-Chairman
Robert Christie, Treasurer

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The Honourable John Hart,
Premier,
Parliament Buildings,
VICTORIA, B. C.

Sir:

I have the honour to present herewith a resolution passed by the Vancouver Branch, Canadian Civil Liberties Union, in support of the belief that in all Canadian elections racial discrimination in regard to the franchise should be eliminated at once.

RESOLUTION

This meeting of the Canadian Civil Liberties Union of Vancouver,

having in mind the solemn obligations assumed by the people of Canada by adhering to the Charter of the United Nations,

wherein they declared their determination to reaffirm their faith in fundamental human rights and to realize, by action, fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion; and

having in mind the provisions of the new Canadian Citizenship Act which imply an equality of status for all Canadian Citizens, whether natural-born or naturalized and without regard to sex, race, language or religion,

HEREBY DECLARES that full effect should be given immediately to the aforesaid principles by the Dominion Parliament and the Provincial Legislature, and in particular

that all disabilities in respect of the franchise that are based upon grounds of racial origin be eliminated forthwith from the Dominion Elections Act, the Provincial Elections Act, and the Municipal Elections Act, and

that a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Rt. Hon. the Prime Minister of Canada, and the Premier of British Columbia, and the federal members of Parliament and the members of Senate, and the members of the Provincial Legislature and the Press.

Yours respectfully,

HUNTER LEWIS,
Chairman.

Canadian Civil Liberties Union

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13 February, 1947

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The Southern Alberta Youth Council
Mr. M. Tokada, Secretary
c/o Y.M.C.A.
Lethbridge, Alta.

Dear Sir:

The Vancouver Civil Liberties Union has felt for some time that for several reasons it should get in touch with some of the Japanese groups in the west of Canada. I have, in consequence, secured the name and address of your organization and of one or two others from the Reverend Mr. MacLachlan, of the Vancouver Consultative Council.

As you undoubtedly know, the Consultative Council has opposed energetically the discrimination shown against the Japanese; and it will help to introduce our Union to you if I tell you that its efforts have been of the same sort and have been made in the same direction. Some people belong to both organizations.

I am writing you now for two reasons. First, I hope it will be of some comfort to you to be assured that our Union as well as other Civil Liberties Associations across Canada, are doing their utmost to correct the injustice done to Japanese-Canadians. Specifically, we are attempting to secure for them, as soon as possible:

1. Full citizenship rights
2. Freedom to travel and live where they like
3. Compensation for losses sustained through evacuation and seizure of their property.
4. Re-instatement of citizenship rights for any who have lost them through deportation.

We are attempting to accomplish these ends in various ways, but mainly by publicizing as widely as possible the injustice of the present situation and by sending protests and resolutions to the Federal and Provincial Governments, and to members of both legislatures. When the new Provincial Elections Act comes before the Provincial House, we hope to be able both to send a representative to argue the case for the Japanese and other minorities, and to buy some newspaper space to publicize our opinions.

Canadian Civil Liberties Union

I am going into this detail in part, as I have said, in the hope of reassuring you somewhat, and in addition because we would appreciate it very much if you would send us any information that you think might be useful and which you can fully authenticate. I have no idea how fully your Council has investigated the existing situation; but there are many things we would like to know. And if you cannot tell us, perhaps you can either get the information for us or tell us where we can get it. I understand that surveys of the sort we are interested in have been made. Some of the questions that we would like to have answered are:

1. If Japanese-Canadians are given the right to vote in the Provincial and Dominion elections, do they anticipate that they will still be discriminated against in municipal elections, and in trades and professions, etc.? If so, how, where and to what extent?
2. In what proportions of their original numbers do you expect Japanese will return to the Pacific coast, and how will they likely be distributed industrially, professionally, and so on?
3. How extensive are claims for loss through evacuation and seizure of property likely to be?
4. What numbers of deported Japanese had Canadian citizenship by birth or naturalization, and to what proportion of them will the loss of citizenship appear to be serious? That is, how many will want to return to Canada? And if they will want to return, what were the circumstances that caused them to leave?
5. In addition, we would like to get fairly detailed accounts of fully authenticated individual cases of injustice or hardship resulting from the government's treatment of the Japanese. These will be useful, however, only if you accompany them with proofs.

I know that many of the things I have asked may be difficult to answer -- impossible unless you have been provided with information from some official center or organization. However, send what information you can. The more facts we have, the stronger our hands will be.

If you could arrange to have an answer of some sort reach me before February 21, I should be obliged. We plan to have a meeting on that date.

Yours truly,

Hunter Lewis

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1771 West 64th Avenue
February 22, 1947

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Mr. M. Takada, President
Southern Alberta Youth Council
Lethbridge, Alberta

Dear Mr. Takada:

Thank you for your very clear and informative letter of February 20th, and for the promptness of your reply. It reached me on the day of the meeting I had mentioned. Your Council seems to be very alert and well informed; and I think that it is most important for the welfare of the Japanese that it should continue to be so. It is of the greatest use to those who are anxious to see justice done to the Japanese in Canada, to have reliable information at their disposal.

You spoke in your letter about a petition that is being currently circulated by the Youth Council, for submission to the Prime Minister. Will you kindly send me a copy of this as quickly as possible, by Airmail and to the address typed at the head of this letter. ^{and Victoria} We are on the point of making representations to Ottawa, and I would like to see your petition first. (For general correspondence it would, perhaps, be better to continue using the address of the Corresponding Secretary.) By the way, you might send the petition without waiting to write a letter. But please note on it (a) how widely it is being circulated; namely, whether it is local or national; (b) whether it is being circulated exclusively amongst Japanese or not; (c) whether it has approximately unanimous support amongst the Japanese; and if it has not, who are opposed to it, and why are they opposed?

In regard to your Answer 1 - You say that municipal discrimination is disappearing. Officially, in British Columbia at least, there is no Trade Union discrimination, I believe. But, in such professional societies as those of law and pharmacy (again, in this Province) though no law excludes Japanese, I believe no Japanese has been accepted to membership. Have you any indications of, or information about a change in this respect?

I hope that you will feel free to forward any information at any time - that is any information that we might be able to use. You need not wait to be asked for it.

Yours truly,

Hunter Lewis
Hunter Lewis

Although this is, in itself, irrelevant to your problem, it is a part of the greater problem that confronts us, (and which includes yours) - that of eliminating discrimination in all fields. I thought it might interest you.

CANADIAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION

H.L.

VANCOUVER BRANCH

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The Rt.-Honourable W. L. Mackenzie King,
Prime Minister of Canada,
The Parliament Buildings,
Ottawa, Ont.

Dear Sir:

I beg to present herewith the text of a resolution passed yesterday by the Vancouver Branch of the Canadian Civil Liberties Union; and to request that it be very seriously considered.

Resolved:

1. That this Union approves the repeal of the "Chinese Immigration Act, 1923";
2. That it strongly disapproves of any clause attached to the repealing Act, or any amendment to, or any order-in-Council that alters, the "Immigration Act", in such a way as to discriminate against either Canadian citizens of Chinese origin, or Chinese residents in Canada, in any manner; or which places them on a basis that is different from that of any other national or racial group; and it disapproves especially of any legislation that prevents Canadian residents of Chinese origin from bringing their wives and families to Canada.
3. That, with respect to such persons, it urges Parliament to conform faithfully to our national obligations under the Charter of the United Nations to avoid all racial or religious discrimination;
4. That it send a copy of this Resolution to the Prime Minister of Canada and send copies to the members of the Cabinet, the leader of the Opposition, Mr. Bracken, the leader of the Canadian Commonwealth Federation, Mr. Coldwell, and the leader of the Social Credit Party, Mr. Solon Low; and to the members of the House representing British Columbia Constituencies, and the Senators from this Province; and to the local Press, the Canadian Press Association and all Canadian Civil Liberties organizations.

Yours truly,

Eric P. Nicol
Secretary

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1771 West 64th Avenue
March 30, 1947

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Mr. M. Takada
Secretary
Southern Alberta Youth Council
c/o Y. M. C. A.
Lethbridge, Alberta

Dear Mr. Takada:

You will, doubtless, by this time, have received the copies of our letter to the Prime Minister that I sent you. I sent the extra ones - six, in all, as I remember - in the hope that you would be able to distribute them in some useful way. Quite apart from their immediate and specific applicability to legislation, now pending, they have - or at least they were written with the intention of having - some general educational value. And since it is, I should say, certain that all of the things asked for will not be granted at present, they should continue to serve some purpose even after May 15th (the new date for the termination of the Emergency Transitional Powers Act).

As you will have seen, I used some of the data you sent me, and took the liberty of quoting from your letters which were very useful. I appreciate very much the promptness and exactness with which you answered my enquiries.

We have distributed approximately a thousand copies of the letter to the Prime Minister. In addition to the ones sent to the M.P.'s and Senators, we have sent copies to all the members of the B. C. Legislature; to all the prominent papers as far East as Montreal; to all columnists and free-lance writers who have shown interest in this subject, and whose names we could secure. In addition we have sent bundles of five to all Co-operative Committees on Japanese Canadians whose addresses we could secure; to all Japanese Canadian groups that we could discover; and to all Civil Liberties Associations in Canada. And, in addition to these, we have mailed out a large number to individuals, especially in British Columbia.

I was not able to get a very large list of Japanese societies and groups. I wrote to The New Canadian and was referred by the editor, to a Toronto society from which I have not yet received a reply; and I already knew about one group in Greenwood and one in Winnipeg. If you know of any others will you please send me their addresses.

Thank you for the clippings that you enclosed in your letter of March 17th. They are very interesting and some of them may prove useful later. I am returning them in the hope that you may be able to add to them the names of the papers in which they appeared, and the dates. Even though you cannot, however, I should be glad if you would return them.

If it turns out to be possible, I hope, later on, to write something for the B. C. government, along the same general lines as the letter to the Prime Minister. At present, however, our funds have run very low, and I am going to be completely occupied for a while with university examinations.

I shall welcome any suggestions you may make about distributing the limited number of copies of the letter to Mr. King that I still have.

Yours truly,

Hunter C. Lewis

Hunter C. Lewis

P. S.:

The following are the Alberta papers to which I sent copies:

Calgary	- The Albertan
	- The Herald
Lethbridge	- Herald
Medicine Hat	- News
Edmonton	- Bulletin
	- Journal