

January 26, 1942

Dear Mr. Mackenzie:

I understand that some of the British Columbia Members of Parliament, reflecting one element of opinion in certain parts of the Province, are urging the Government to apply compulsion to effect the removal of the Canadian nationals as well as the Japanese nationals from the Protected Areas. This as you will recall was considered and unanimously dropped by those who conferred on this subject over a fortnight ago. I have prepared a brief memorandum on this matter and enclose a copy for your information and for such use as you may wish to make of it. I am sending copies also to the Prime Minister and Mr. Heeney and you may wish to give others to the Honourable Mr. Gardiner, and the Honourable Mr. Mitchell. You will see from this memorandum

The Honourable Ian Mackenzie,
Minister of Pensions and National Health,
O t t a w a.

that the Japanese Government has already heard of the proposed Canadian action and is making official enquiries about it through the protecting power, Spain!

It has occurred to me to wonder whether it might not be helpful to ask the British Columbia Members to meet for a thorough discussion of this problem. It might, perhaps, help them if they could have a full statement of the background against which the Government's policy should be considered. Subject to Mr. Robertson's agreement Mr. Read, Mr. Angus and I would be glad to participate in such a discussion.

Have you noticed that not one of the British Columbia papers published the full statement as issued by the Government on January 14th? I think that this is to be regretted as the statement on a whole would, in my opinion, have a beneficial effect.

Yours sincerely,

(SGD.) H. L. KEENLEYSIDE

Assistant Under Secretary of
State for External Affairs.

THE JAPANESE PROBLEM

Throughout the Ottawa Conference on the Japanese Problem a clear distinction was maintained at all times between the principles to be applied in the treatment of the Japanese nationals and those to be followed in the case of the Canadian nationals and British subjects of Japanese race. It was agreed that compulsory evacuation should be enforced in regard to the Japanese nationals but no one at any time suggested - not even Colonel Macgregor Macintosh - that compulsion should be used in the case of the Canadian nationals.

In the memorandum which Mr. John Read, Legal Adviser to the Department of External Affairs, presented to Council on January 15th this distinction was further emphasized. Mr. Read wrote:

"Upon the assumption that there is going to be an evacuation I should like, most strongly, to urge that it should take the following form:

- (a) That there should be no compulsory evacuation or movement of British subjects irrespective of their racial origin."

Council appreciated and accepted the argument endorsed by the Conference and by Mr. Read and the distinction between the two groups of Japanese race was always maintained in the statement of Government policy which was issued on January 14th. In paragraph 10 it was stated that

"It is intended to organize a Civilian Corps of Canadian Japanese .i.e. in order to utilize the services of the various groups of Canadian Japanese who have indicated their desire to serve."

In paragraph 12 the Government declared that

"A separate organization will be created to provide opportunities for the employment of adult male enemy aliens outside the Protected Areas"

In paragraph 11 it was stated that

"Subsequent to a date to be announced all enemy aliens (of whatever origin), except those who possess permits from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, will require to have moved from such Protected Areas in the Pacific Coast as may be defined."

In spite of the clear intentions of the Government there seems to have developed, since the arrival of the British Columbia members of Parliament in Ottawa, a belief that all persons of Japanese racial origin are to be treated alike; that Canadian nationals and British subjects as well as Japanese nationals are to be forced to move out of the Protected Areas unless they obtain Police permits to remain. This is greatly to be regretted as it may give rise to pressure on the Government to carry out a policy which the Government has already considered and, for reasons of the first importance, decided against.

Mr. Read has pointed out the serious implications of the adoption of any proposal to apply compulsion to the movement of Canadian nationals and British subjects. Recent and immediately prospective developments in the Orient have underlined certain aspects of this argument. The Japanese now hold in their power over two thousand Canadian prisoners of war and others. In addition they hold many thousand other British subjects and this number may be increased materially in the near future if present trends continue. Yet in spite of this situation certain persons are pressing the Canadian Government to compel certain Canadian nationals and British subjects to give up their homes and businesses and move hundreds of miles away from their established places of residence and labour simply because they are of Japanese racial origin. No

such proposals are suggested for other enemy aliens although persons of German and Italian descent are much more difficult to distinguish and watch. Any action of this kind based on purely racial grounds would immediately become known to the Japanese. Inquiries have already been made by the Japanese Government - through the protesting power, Spain - as to the meaning of recent Government decisions relating to the treatment of Japanese in Canada. Compulsory deportation of Canadian nationals, based on the colour of their skins, would be used for propaganda purposes throughout Asia, and would certainly be reflected in the treatment accorded Canadian and British prisoners in Japanese hands.

Moreover, such a programme is unnecessary. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police who know more about the situation on the Pacific Coast than anyone else are not alarmed by the terms of the Government's announced policy; on the contrary, they support it strongly. Everyone who participated in the Ottawa Conference is also on record as having approved that policy. If the Civilian Corps is properly handled and enlistment in it made reasonably attractive to the Canadian Japanese it will draw off a very substantial part of the able bodied adult males in this category. Yet to satisfy a few complainants who, though knowing less about the subject than do those who advised the Government in regard to the accepted policy, demand stronger action against the Canadian - Japanese community, it is proposed that the Government should rescind its decision and, to satisfy a relatively small proportion of the people of British Columbia, adopt another policy which, in addition to being inherently unjust, would place our fellow citizens who are now in Japanese hands in the greatest danger. In order to appease extreme opinion in British Columbia the Government is asked to place some two thousand residents of Winnipeg and Quebec in jeopardy.

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