

AIR MAIL

9-35-3

A. MacNamara

Regional Superintendent (Pacific)

Japanese

425 Howe St.,
Vancouver, B. C.
January 28, 1942.

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

I have your letter of January 26th in which you clarify the situation with reference to Japanese and alien enemies generally.

The contents worry me greatly. In this Province the Japanese are being discharged in many industries, hotels, and domestic service. In many industries enemy aliens of other racial origins are also being removed.

We have in the Coast area large numbers of our own people who are out of work and for whom no employment can be found, as illustrated by the attached clipping showing two letters on the subject in the "letters" column of one issue of the Vancouver Province of January 24th.

For the Commission's officers to ask employers in this Province to employ alien enemies, and particularly Japanese, when there are so many of our own people still without work, will create a situation that no amount of explanation will meet. To give these aliens employment means that some of our own people will have to be discharged, as none of the industries are being retarded in their work by lack of labour. The labour situation insofar as British Columbia is concerned is analyzed by a writer in the Vancouver Sun on January 20th from figures published by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. I am enclosing a copy of the clipping for your perusal.

The only suggestion that I have seen or heard of with reference to the employment of Japanese on any other than road work comes from the Board of Trade of Vernon which now as always forecasts the shortage of labour which is going to result in the loss of the crops--a situation which in my somewhat extended experience has never occurred. This organization is

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of the opinion that Japanese should be moved in to work on the land, but only on a conscript or peonage basis, and on the distinct understanding that as soon as their labour is no longer required they will be removed. These same people have previously employed Chinese, with the result that the whole northern end of the Okanagan Valley is now controlled by Chinese growers. In the lower end of the same Valley, in and around Penticton, the organizations are most vehement in their opposition to the introduction of Japanese labour in any form or under any conditions.

Our roads in this Province are nothing to write home about, except possibly to advise people to stay away from them. This is no criticism of the Provincial Government which has, as a result of settlement schemes, been forced to build road mileage that is not justified by the density of population. There is consequently a wide-spread demand that alien enemies be used in the improvement and maintenance work of existing roads and the construction of such roads as the Hope-Princeton highway which has been more or less a political football for the past twenty five years. The construction of a road eastward from Prince Rupert has also been mentioned, not forgetting the Alaska highway which has been a hardy perennial for a number of years.

It is my personal view, fortified by the opinions of my senior officers, some of them with long residence and wide experience, that having regard for the existing unemployment among our own people, the only work insofar as this Region is concerned that could be made available for Japanese or other alien enemies, is road work.

The Unemployment Insurance Commission has begun its work under most auspicious circumstances, but once it is discovered that the organization is being used for the purpose of securing employment for alien enemies when many of our own people are unemployed, we will receive a black eye among the working people of this country which will require many years to return to its normal colour.

See also
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Before the arrival of your letter in connection with the shipment of Japanese to Chapleau, I had already decided, subject to the approval of the Officer Commanding, R.C.M.P., to handle these people at the Police Barracks where they normally report for registration and periodical check, these barracks being about 2½ or 3 miles from the centre of the city. It was the view of the senior officers that if we attempted to handle these people in the offices of the Commission, we would immediately be besieged by newspaper photographers and the publication of stories regarding the movement of the Japanese.

Whatever instructions are received will be carried out to the best of our ability, but as a senior officer, long resident of this area, with a comprehensive knowledge of its geography and its people, it seems to be my duty to point out the dangers of the policy which has been at least tentatively adopted.

When I first discussed this question with Colonel Hill, the Officer Commanding of the Mounted Police, he immediately announced with considerable glee to his senior officers that the Unemployment Insurance Commission was to take over the work of looking after the Japanese. The handling of alien enemies is primarily the work of the police and the military authorities, supplemented by such experience and assistance as an organization like ours can lend.

Jas. H. McVety
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REGIONAL SUPERINTENDENT
PACIFIC REGION