

*Written for Tom Ito's diary and read to the
P.N.E. Board of Directors, July 2, 1987*

In 1942 wartime politics culminated in increased discrimination, against 21,000 innocent people of Japanese Ancestry on this coast, 75% of whom were Canadian citizens.

On February 26, 1942, Prime Minister Mackenzie King announced that all persons of Japanese Racial origin would be evacuated from the coast. There was little public outcry protesting his denial of our basic civil rights.

The temporary use of horse and cattle stalls in the Livestock buildings, only hastily improved for human habitation in Hastings Park - now known as the Pacific National Exhibition Grounds, " was perhaps symbolic of the entire evacuation movement ".

The R.C.M.P. with the assistance of the army, transported the first groups of evacuated coastal Japanese to Hastings Park, beginning March 16, 1942.

On April 21, 1942 at the age of 22, I was ordered to leave our home with my family, together with 400 other Japanese Canadians being evacuated from their homes in the Cowichan Valley on Vancouver Island, where most of us were born. All we were allowed to take with us, were only one clothes bag and one small suitcase for each adult. All the rest of our belongings, our family heirlooms, photo albums, furniture and vehicle. We were forced to leave behind in the care of the Custodian of Enemy Alien Property, never to be seen again.

On arrival at Hastings Park we were registered, searched and issued two army blankets apiece for bedding. Husbands and wives were segregated by sex in dormitories and mess halls. Women and children and the sick people were housed in the smelly Livestock building, where the heavy stench of cattle hung in the air. They slept in double decker bunk beds on lumpy straw filled mattresses under extremely crowded and very unsanitary conditions.

Men and boys aged 18 and older were bunked in an overcrowded dormitory in the Pure Foods Building.