

By Safe Hand

Your No. 1087

Ottawa, Ontario,
August 5, 1942.

MOST SECRET and PERSONAL

Dear Mr. Stephenson:

Replying to your personal letter of the 9th ultimo enclosing a "Report on Japanese Activities in British Columbia" dated June, 1942, as I intimated to you during our conversation on this subject on the 3rd instant, I forwarded the report to the Officer Commanding this Force at Vancouver, and I now attach a reply submitted by Sergeant J. K. Barnes, in charge of our Intelligence Section there, who has, for a number of years past, been in very close touch with the Japanese situation in British Columbia.

I was naturally very much interested in what your agent had to say and I intend to have the information and suggestions outlined therein followed up. By this I do not mean we should take the action suggested by the agent in arresting these persons mentioned by him as suspects. As many of these people are Canadian citizens, we could not produce the evidence necessary to justify our actions, which, as you know, are subject to a board of review, and the police are compelled to support their action by evidence before such tribunal.

Much has been said regarding Etsuji Morii, who is a naturalized Canadian citizen, but we have found no evidence which would substantiate the various accusations made against him. On the other hand, this man has been most co-operative with the police and the British Columbia Security Commission in regard to the plans of evacuation, and had we had the same co-operation from the Nisei the difficulties which the Commission had to overcome would never have occurred. There are, as you know, political groups among the Japanese, and Morii, who was the leader of the older people, made many enemies because of his advice to the Japanese that in this emergency they should co-operate.

We have had no evidence of espionage or sabotage among the Japanese in British Columbia. The situation has changed considerably since the report was written, and most of these people are now in isolated areas outside the protected area, and those at present in Vancouver will be removed by the first of November next. These consist largely of women and children.

The work camps situated along the main lines of railway in British Columbia are to be closed down

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and no other camps will be erected adjacent to railways over which war material is transported. There was a false impression abroad in regard to the Japanese located in these camps, and criticism was made that they were not properly guarded. I should like to point out here that these Japanese were not under any disability under the law once they were removed from the protected area, and the guards were not placed at these camps over the Japanese, but for the purpose of protecting the right of way in their vicinity. Outside of the protected area these people are under certain discipline imposed by the Commission, and they are not allowed to remove themselves from place to place without the permission of the police or the representatives appointed by the Commission.

The riot referred to, which took place in the Immigration detention building at Vancouver, was due to the fact that these people were incarcerated in the building for too long a period before they were removed to proper detention camps. These individuals had not been arrested because they were looked upon as enemies of the state in the accepted sense of the term. They had, however, refused to obey the orders of the Security Commission to leave the protected area in protest against the policy then in force of breaking up Japanese families. This has now been changed and I expect that many of these men, who are now in detention, will be given their liberty on their undertaking to comply with the orders of the Security Commission from now on. In conclusion, I should like to make this point clear, i.e., we have surveyed the Japanese question in British Columbia from a realistic point of view for a long time past. A number of factors had to be taken into consideration in dealing with the problem. There is no need for me to go into them here, as Assistant Commissioner Mead covered some of that ground at the conference on Monday. The fact remains, however, that we have searched without let-up for evidence detrimental to the interests of the state and we feel that our coverage has been good, but to date no such evidence has been uncovered. The work will go on, and many of the suggestions made by you will be carried out.

Sincerely yours,

S. T. Wood.

Encl.
FJM/MB