

**The Church And The Japanese In Canada, 1941-1946:
Ambulance Wagon to Embattled Army?**

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here have proved to be law-abiding and industrious people, our regret that the exigency of war necessitate the complete disorganization of their way of living. We deprecate attempts made by anyone to exploit this unhappy situation for their own personal advantage...

[We] would strongly urge the authorities to make such a departure from our present policy, with respect to local Japanese volunteering for the armed forces, whereby those who wish might take their places in the ranks of our armed forces...

The danger of projecting racial cleavage into our Canadian life is a violation of christian principle, and we sincerely protest against a policy that would inevitably prejudice our national unity and burden us with an unfortunate heritage of feeling for generations to come.⁷⁴

This statement is taken by Adachi to be evidence that the United Church, and by implication all other denominations, was not in any way helpful or compassionate or otherwise fulfilling its proper duty toward others in need. He quotes the New Canadian's report of the Presbytery's statements, thus contradicting himself when he said the United Church, or any other denomination, was silent.⁷⁵ He then goes on with bitter tones to denounce the United Church for complicity in anti-Japanese activity in allowing the evacuation to take place without a murmur of dissent.

However, it is important to note that Adachi has neglected to report all the evidence available. On the same page of the New Canadian, from which Adachi took the report of the Presbytery's statement, in fact in the very next column, is an article which praised the reaction of the denomination's in general and the Presbytery's in particular. The editor, T. Shoyama, wrote:

...to the Vancouver Presbytery of the United Church goes a vote of thanks, and as vote of admiration too, for its courage in proposing the two resolutions...If we have been disappointed in some of those

who we thought we could rely on-the hospital and the University for instance-the christian church has stood by its principles even to the point of sticking out its neck!⁷⁶

By proposing the idea that Japanese-Canadians should be allowed to enter the Armed Services at this time the United Church Presbytery was stating that many of the Japanese-Canadians were loyal to Canada. It is all the more incredible that in the same statement the Presbytery accepted the evacuation, which implied acceptance of the idea that the Japanese community could not be trusted and were not seen as loyal to Canada.

The third church body that publicly spoke of its membership's acceptance of the evacuation as a military necessity was the Anglican Diocesan Synod of New Westminster, under Bishop Heathcote. In June 1942 this Synod drafted a resolution praising the British Columbia Security Commission (hereafter, Security Commission) for its humane approach to the task.

We would express and desire that the synod should record itself as expressing its appreciation of the good work done by the BCSC under Major Austin Taylor and his associates for the skill and care, and Christian courtesy with which they have dealt with the most difficult problems, and would assure the Commission of our desire to be of any assistance to them in their work.⁷⁷

The Synod also mentioned that the long-standing work which it had had among the Japanese was of real value at that time, that the missionaries had volunteered to go with the Japanese wherever they were sent, and that the Missionary Society of

the Church of England in Canada and the Women's Auxiliary had promised funding and other aid.⁷⁸

A second event during this Synod is also important to note. This was an exchange between Alderman H. D. Wilson and Canon Cooper of St. James. Concerning this exchange the official Synod report said only, "The Oriental situation was a very live issue but in view of the tension and run of feeling in wartime it was decided to pass no resolutions on the subject."⁷⁹ If it were not for newspaper reports of the exchange we would never have known what had happened.

Cooper took a forthright stand in the Synod objecting to the general feeling against the Japanese: "There has been and is now a discrimination against them that should not exist...I feel that Ald. Wilson, as a member of this synod should not continue in this anti-Japanese work."⁸⁰ Cooper also said, "the Japanese residents of Vancouver had proven themselves to be clean-living citizens...[Y]ou don't see the Japanese drunk on the street; neither do you see them in our penal institutions..."⁸¹ Other clergymen added, "The feeling against these people is of course very high...[and] we must emphasize the utmost co-operation in the work with all nationals, so that they may find their true lives on Canadian soil."⁸²

Wilson's heated⁸³ response was to read portions of his 1938 brief submitted to the federal government in which he says he advocated a settlement of the problem in, as he said, a spirit of goodwill.⁸⁴ Wilson said further that the matter ought to be left up to civil, not ecclesiastical, authority and that the Synod ought not to commend or condemn until the war and its effects on the populace were over.⁸⁵

74. Vancouver United Church Presbytery Meeting, Minutes (Vancouver 10 March 1942), p. 673, 676, UCA. See also appendix D(h,i). See further: "Vancouver Presbytery Urges Ottawa to Enlist Japanese," Province, 11 March 1942, p. 22; "Accept Nisei's In Army, U.C.-Report," New Canadian, 12 March 1942, p. 1.

It was also moved, "That we greatly deprecate the action of the Board of Vancouver General Hospital in dismissing the Japanese nurses in training, especially the one who was within three months of graduating. This is especially to be regretted in the light of the statements as made by St. Paul's Hospital that they are against such action as the General Hospital had taken, nor had any such request come from the authorities." See appendix D(g,h,i).

75. Adachi, The Enemy That Never was, p. 219, fn. 51.

76. "Accept Nisei in Army Urges U.C.-Voices Regret," New Canadian, 12 March 1942, p. 1. He said further, "And that is what it has done when it suggests that Niseis should be allowed to serve in the armed forces. We like to think that this is an accurate expression of a fair and courageous democracy-one that will not trample down its principles in a frenzy. When I read of the Presbytery's resolution, I thought that swapping a golf game on Sunday for a Sunday School class wasn't such a bad idea after all...". See also "Church Working to Provide Spiritual Balance For Evacuees," New Canadian, 9 May 1942, p. 3; "Church Must Provide Social Cohesion in Evacuation," New Canadian, 2 May 1942, p. 2.

In an interview on 16 January 1989 Shoyama informed me that his view of the Church during this period had not changed.

77. Synod of the Diocese of New Westminster, Proceedings of Forty-ninth Annual Meeting (Vancouver 3 June 1942), pp. 27, 28.

78. Synod of the Diocese of New Westminster, Proceedings of Forty-ninth Annual Meeting, (Vancouver 3 June 1942), pp. 43, 44.

79. Synod of the Diocese of New Westminster, Proceedings of Forty-ninth Annual Meeting, (Vancouver 3 June 1942), p. 372.

80. "Hits Discrimination," Province, 4 June 1942, p. 5.

81. "Church Advocates Christ-like Policy," Sun, 4 June 1942, p. 1.

82. "Treat Japs in Humane Manner," News Herald, 4 June 1942, p. 3.

83. "Church Advocates Christ-like Policy," Sun, 4 June 1942, p. 1.

Japan after the war. This opposition previews the reaction of the Church when the federal government attempted to make this repatriation scheme a reality. I shall discuss the Consultative Committee's action at this time and the action of the federal government on this issue more fully in chapter five.

15. R. N. Savary, "Japanese-Canadians," Canada and Christendom, February 1943, p. 5. Dobson Papers, B24 F15, UCA.

It must also be noted that the first public statement that the evacuation occurred because of racial prejudice and not strictly for military reasons was made in January 1943 by Mr. G. E. Trueman, a representative of the Security Commission in Ontario. See: "Jap Hysteria' Charge Stirs Vancouver," Sun, 6 January 1943, p. 1 (The editor of the Sun in this same issue on p. 4 complained about, as he called it, pro-Jap misinformation); "Hysteria Over Japs," Province, 6 January 1943, p. 7; "Trueman Charge Insult to B.C., Says Tom Reid," Sun, 7 January 1943, p. 13; "Board Of Trade Protests Trueman Jap Statements," Sun, 8 January 1943, p. 13; "Foolish Talk By Mr. Trueman," Times, 9 January 1943, p. 6; "Foolish Talk By Mr. Trueman," News Herald, 7 January 1943, p. 4. Concerning Mr. Trueman see also: "Letter to the Editor," New Canadian, 9 January 1943, p. 2.

Savary said in his article: "Most missionaries would agree that there is a great deal of truth in the recent remarks of Mr. Trueman which caused such a fuss," p. 6.

16. C. R. Feilding, Cover letter for R.N. Savary's, "Japanese-Canadians," in Canada And Christendom, February 1943, Dobson Papers, B24 F15, UCA. It is instructive to compare two statements of Anglicans from British Columbia, one from New Westminster, and one from the Kootenay district. W. H. Mathewson, of the Diocese of New Westminster reported to the General Synod in his capacity as secretary for the Provincial Board of Oriental Missions. He wrote: "We cannot help recording the faithful work of the mission staff who have had to endure a great deal of personal discomfort and carry on as best they could under most difficult and exasperating circumstances...it is only fair that these workers among the Japanese during this uprooting and transplanting period should receive credit for what they have done and are doing, and this also applies particularly to the Rev. W.H. Gale, our superintendent, who was most unstinted in his efforts to look after the Missionary workers and care for the distressed Japanese as well." General Synod of the Church of England in Canada, Proceedings of the Fifteenth Annual Meeting, (Toronto, 9-17 September 1943), p. 147. See also: "Confirmation of Interned Japanese," Canadian Churchman, 27 July 1944, p. 429. See appendix G(a).

Compare this statement with that of Archbishop Adams: "Those who are in touch with these our Oriental brothers and sisters are wholly convinced of their sincerity and pro-Canadian attachment. Local municipal authorities of places where they are resident without exception do not wish them to be moved elsewhere. It is those who have not been in contact with them or their home life who raise objections and

all say essentially the same thing as did Hoban's article and the responses.

g. Dr. N. F. Black, "Faith In The Canadian Public," New Canadian, 26 January 1942, p. 4.

"As an old teacher I have had some small share in shaping the outlook of a considerable number of Japanese Canadians, and this note is to tell you that many of your fellow Canadians of the majority race are proud of the way the Nisei as a class are bearing themselves in these sad and trying times. Some of their kin across the Pacific but long resident among us we know to be equally deserving of our confidence.

In times of fear and distress it is always easy for unscrupulous demagogues to arouse considerable numbers of very decent people to join in clamours that are foolish and cruel; that is being demonstrated in Vancouver at present.

However, your friends of Anglo-saxon origin hope that you will continue to keep your temper no matter what the provocation, to think twice before you speak, to remember that you have many friends who, in the bye and large, must be quite unknown to you, and, in general, to keep up the good work for which The Japanese Canadian stands."

h. Dr. N. F. Black, "Letter to Rev. G. Dorey, 10 November 1942, Rev. A. J. Maclachlan's Personal Papers in Toronto.

"As I think you have already been advised by our mutual friend, Dr. Hugh Dobson, the substance of your letter suggesting that the best way to reach Eastern public opinion might be through a representative committee with headquarters in Toronto was conveyed to the Consultative Council and met with unanimous approval.

I foresee no difficulty in the matter of co-operative review of the MS. We are all concerned for the same things and none of those things involves any special form of words of reference to any particular individual or group of individuals responsible for the pamphlet [This pamphlet was one of Black's own articles: perhaps his 'A Challenge to Patriotism and Statesmanship' or his 'The Japanese Canadian Problem: A Suggested Solution'. See chapter five, en. 34 for a more extensive list of other pamphlets].

However, the policy with regard to the distribution of the pamphlet is a matter of first importance.

It is the hope of the Consultative Committee that the document may reach the hands of formers of opinion everywhere. We want a copy to reach every member of parliament and of legislature in Canada; every editor of a Canadian journal; every clergyman in Canada, irrespective of denomination; members of the Fellowship for a Christian Social Order; all teachers in schools and universities; service clubs; and the alumni of the universities; and so forth. We realize that

systematic distribution to such a public involves serious difficulties and that those difficulties would be greater here than in the case of a committee with headquarters in the East.

We would have been very glad had we found it possible to make the MS shorter. We ultimately came to the conclusion that no important topic or section of the paper could well be omitted or much curtailed. This would have bothered us more had the pamphlet been intended for an unselected public. The few amendments suggested have been incorporated in the enclosed manuscript, except for a footnote in which it is proposed to summarize the latest facts regarding the whereabouts, and so forth, of Canadian residents of Japanese stock.

We feel strongly that the co-operative body sponsoring the pamphlet should include Catholics as well as Protestants of all stripes. Locally the Consultative Committee has had the cooperation of Archbishop Dukes [sic] and of Jewish leaders.

We feel very deeply that the pressing urgency of a national policy that will provide for the geographic and occupational dispersion of our residents of Japanese stock at the earliest moment. Unless they are happily and securely established in new and relatively permanent homes when the war is over, the situation here will be serious beyond exaggeration. We have referred to this in the MS but in guarded terms and with much restraint. However, in this letter I feel at liberty to speak more unreservedly: If 20,000 or 10,000 or even only 5,000 Japanese drift back to this city on the termination of hostilities jobless, homeless, hopeless and unwanted, there will be bloodshed on our streets.

British Columbia is ready enough to do her share in solving the problem but if it is so handled as to leave the chief responsibility on this province, with its relatively small population, the public will rebel. At present, despite the noisy extravagances of those voicing or exploiting the racial prejudices born of or exacerbated by the war, a substantial section of the community has kept its head.

As you may be aware, the Mayor of this city fathered a preposterous resolution calling upon the Dominion Government to take steps for the ultimate 'repatriation' (sic!) of all Japanese residents, irrespective of their wishes, citizenship, character or conduct and it was freely prophesied that this resolution would be carried unanimously. The Consultative Council's protests were so successful that the original resolution would have had no single supporter in the city council had the Mayor not left the chair to record his opposition to a substitute resolution that recognized Canadian obligations at all events to those people of Japanese origin who are Canadian citizens [see appendix B(bi) and chapter five, en. 22-24]. These results of second thought are very encouraging."

i. Dr. N. F. Black, "Letter to Rev. G. Dorey," 4 January 1943, Maclachlan's Personal Papers in Toronto.

"This is going to be a difficult letter to write because it is not my wish to wound

or annoy you or Dr. Muchmore, whereas I myself feel greatly annoyed and wounded by treatment that I and certain highly respected associates have experienced at the hands of officers at United Church headquarters. If it were not that the essence of courtesy or its opposite is a matter of intention and that I am not prepared to imagine discourteous intention on the part of you or Dr. Muchmore, I would be inclined to express myself with more emphasis; especially since we in Vancouver feel that the interests of our unfortunate fellow countrymen of Japanese origin are injuriously involved.

Perhaps this letter should be addressed to Dr. Muchmore. If so, I hope that he will treat the copy which I am forwarding to him as an independent communication.

As you are aware, the organization whose formal (and interminable!) title appears in the letter head consists of men and women of various religious affiliations who are profoundly concerned not only on behalf of Canadian residents of Japanese origin but on behalf of the honour and interests of Canada and of the Christian church, which we feel to be at stake. Indeed we are convinced, as I am sure you yourself are, that Canada's policy in relation to these people has a vital bearing upon the portentous racial animosities that threaten the world with future international alignments on the basis of colour. That which I can conceive of no other possible disaster of greater magnitude.

The great majority of aliens and Canadian citizens of Nipponese stock are still in British Columbia, chiefly in formerly abandoned or almost abandoned towns that provide no economic basis for permanence and self-support. Every day that elapses leaves the problem of re-allocation more difficult, and if we and you and other people of goodwill are to co-operate effectively in helping the governmental authorities attain a real solution of the difficulty, time, as has been pointed out in former communications, is of the essence of the matter.

Last October your office was advised by our mutual friend, Dr. Hugh Dobson, that our group was about to publish a pamphlet for distribution among moulders of public opinion in all parts of Canada. Perhaps I should add parenthetically that the drafting of the document (a copy of which is on your file) fell chiefly to me. When you suggested that such a pamphlet might exercise a greater and more beneficial influence in the East if it emanated from a representative Toronto committee the local Consultative Council very heartily and gratefully concurred. It may be that effective steps have long since been taken for the publication and very early distribution of our pamphlet, or a better one, but we have not been advised. A reminder sent through Dr. Dobson under date of Dec 1 has produced no response. As a United Church man I find myself in a humiliating position in relation to my colleagues representing other communions, who are becoming very restive over the long months of delay and silence.

If the proposed publication and dissemination from Toronto has turned out to be impracticable, please let us know forthwith. Those upon whom the burden would fall here in Vancouver are few in numbers and very limited in means, but, had the suggestion from your office not been so gratifying and alluring, our pamphlet could

have been published in the autumn and long before now we could have been doing what we could to see that copies were reaching every clergyman, every member of parliament or of any legislative assembly, every municipal potentate and all possible other people of influence throughout Canada.

We feel very strongly that our Japanese problem can be solved only by prompt and systematic geographic and occupational dispersion. There is greater indication recently than there was formerly that the federal authorities are bracing themselves for the task of re-allocation, but the practicability of such policy depends upon the recognition in the East that this is a Canadian rather than a British Columbian problem and upon a kind and degree of co-operation which to date has been conspicuously little in evidence. It is natural enough that we here at the coast should be more anxiously concerned than most Canadians in other parts of our Dominion; we foresee bloodshed on the streets of Vancouver if, at the termination of the war, twenty thousand or ten thousand or even five thousand homeless and workless Japanese and Canadians of Japanese ancestry suddenly crowd back into this locality when war passions are still surging. The reasons for such anxiety are too manifest to require explanation. And we feel that, unless in the meantime these people have established real homes and become absorbed into the general currents of Canadian economic and social life, an intrinsically hopeless situation will inevitably develop."

"(Postscript) I shall be more pleased if the headquarters officials of the United Church are able to take prompt and effective measures to ensure the desired appeal to Canadian conscience, because there is a feeling here that the efforts already made to secure such cooperation were unnecessarily futile. When I sent the following telegram [see appendix F(e)] it was with the hope that its obvious publicity value would be exploited to public advantage but it proved a poor investment."