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Evacuation - Paul Murphy Report

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Japanese Canadian Research Coll.

RE: JAPANESE EVACUATION

Vancouver, B.C.
May 13th, 1942

REPORT OF PAUL D. MURPHY ON OTTAWA TRIP

Well, I was, as you probably know in Ottawa for about two weeks and tried to persuade the Government to adopt this mass evacuation scheme. Now I saw various people about it.

The first person I saw was the Prime Minister's Secretary, Mr. Turnbull. As I understood my instructions, if possible, I was to see the Prime Minister about it, and I saw the Prime Minister's Secretary and explained the situation to him, and later on I gave him a memorandum of the situation, and he seemed to be very much in favour of the mass evacuation scheme personally, but, of course, he could not commit the Government to it. He said he had always been very much in favour of it. He advised me very strongly to see Mr. Norman Robertson, who is the Deputy Minister of External Affairs. He is directly under the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister is the Minister of External Affairs.

I spent about an hour with Mr. Robertson, and I didn't get anywhere with him at all. He did not think that the Security Commission should be interfered with in any way, and he said they would have to be practically taken over by the Government, because if the Government was going to select places where the Japanese would go, the Commission would have to be told to ship the Japanese to these particular places. However, he said that he would be glad to receive a memorandum about it, and that it would be considered, and he said that it would come very much better from the Security Commission itself. If they asked the Government to select places for them, that it would be very seriously considered. Well, I then airmailed a letter to Denis telling him that, and asking him to get the Commission's reaction, and continued to see people.

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I saw Mr. Turgeon, the member from the Cariboo, and went back to Mr. Turnbull, and finally I got Denis' reply, which was, I think probably you know, that the Commission would not tell us what their reaction was, but that they had sent a copy of Denis' letter on to the Deputy Minister of Labour.

Finally, I had two interviews with the Minister of Labour, Mr. Mitchell. In the first one, he almost turned me down right then and there, but I handed him the memorandum, and he was very busy at the time, and he said he would read it over. I saw him again after he had read it over and he then turned me down verbally. He was very busy, he had to go to some meeting. He turned me down verbally and then he sent me a letter turning me down in writing. I mentioned to him in my conversation with him that this copy of Denis' letter had been sent down to him, and he said he had never seen it.

I then reported it to Mr. Turnbull, and he said he would take it up himself and find out what the Commission's attitude was and didn't suggest that because Mr. Mitchell had turned me down that the door was closed. In fact, he rather suggested the opposite. On Friday I got hold of him again, and asked to see him, and he said there was no necessity for me seeing him. He had been in touch with Mr. MacNamara, he is not the Deputy Minister of Labour, but he is the man in the Minister's Office who is in direct touch with the Commission about the Japanese situation. Mr. Turnbull said that 5,000 Japanese were going to be put in the sugar beet fields of Alberta, and that that represented about one-third of the families, and that the balance, the other two thirds, were not going to be sent away as family groups, and that there was no point to my seeing him. It was quite obvious to me

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that he had changed his mind about the situation since the last time I had spoken to him. As a matter of fact, all the way through up to that conversation he had told me his personal idea had always been, before the Commission was instituted and when it was instituted, that the Japanese population should be moved out in family groups, but his last conversation indicated quite clearly that he had changed his mind absolutely. Why he did so, I have not any idea. I had given him the memorandum, and it had been placed before the Prime Minister and Turnbull had discussed it with him, as a matter of fact, on two occasions. The first time I saw him was on Friday, the day I arrived. He had a preliminary discussion with the Prime Minister then about it, and after he got my memorandum he had another discussion with him.

My impression is that the mass evacuation scheme is absolutely out at this time. Mr. Mitchell streesed to me that he was not going to interfere with the Commission at this time. Mr. Turnbull said in his last conversation that the entire Japanese Community would be moved out within the next two months. I was convinced after the last conversation that it would be futile to remin in Ottawa any longer.

Mr. Shimoda: Mr. MacNamara had turned you down after he got in touch with the Security Commission.

Mr. Paul Murphy: Mr. MacNamara did not get in touch with the Security Commission. I wrote airmail to Denis and Denis got in touch with the Security Commission. Turnbull turned me down after he had seen MacNamara. He may have seen other people, but he didn't discuss it with me. I saw Mitchell for the last time on Monday, the 4th. I got Mitchell's letter on Tuesday, the 5th, and I didn't get in touch with Turnbull

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until Friday morning. In the meantime, I sent him the memorandum. I delivered it myself on Monday to him. I had this case on during Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, and I thought it was best to keep away from him, as I presumed he would be investigating the matter. He didn't indicate that was the end of the matter when Mitchell turned me down. He did, in fact, indicate the reverse. I left it with him for three days, so that he would have time to investigate it, and on Friday the door was absolutely closed.

Mr. Denis Murphy: You had no idea at all why he had that change of opinion.

Mr. Paul Murphy: I have no idea at all.

Mr. Denis Murphy: I take it he must have received information from somewhere, or they got in touch with Taylor direct.

Mr. Paul Murphy: I have not any idea what he did. I don't know, but I don't think he sat in judgment on the thing himself.

Mr. Tanaka: Do you think this mass evacuation problem went to the Cabinet meeting to be discussed, or just Turnbull and the Prime Minister?

Mr. Paul Murphy: I think it was on Monday that I told Mr. Turnbull that Mr. Mitchell had turned me down, and I think it was then that he thought the matter would be discussed by the Cabinet. He asked me why Mr. Mitchell turned me down, and I told him I could not tell him why because Mr. Mitchell didn't tell me, and then Turnbull said that Mr. Mitchell could be persuaded, and made the suggestion that it would probably be brought up in the Cabinet.

Mr. Tanaka: When you had the first meeting with Mitchell, his attitude was it fair?

Mr. Paul Murphy: I think it is fair, certainly. I am not passing judgment on him. On Saturday, he indicated that he would turn me down flat. He said it was unfortunate I was

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not staying in Ottawa longer, and I told him, fortunately, that I was staying longer, and he arranged to see me at 9:00 o'clock on Monday, after he had time to digest the memorandum, and I know he conferred with MacNamara about it.

I saw other people about the matter. I was advised in confidence about people it would be a good idea to see, especially people who came into direct contact with the Prime Minister, and I saw those people and discussed it with them, and put it as clearly as I could to them, so that the situation itself was known to quite a few people. The Minister of Finance was approached also, and it was explained to him in a very favourable light.

Mr. Tanaka: This plan of moving the Japanese is laid down in Ottawa or here?

Mr. Paul Murphy: My impression is that they have a hands off attitude to the Security Commission. They do not dictate anything to them. They have left it entirely to them. I presume they know what is going on. I used figures of how many Japanese had left the protected area of Vancouver, and I even put them in the memorandum, and I never had those figures contradicted even by Mr. Mitchell, whose job it is to know. The Security Commission, undoubtedly, report to him. My impression is that is where his interest ends, feeling as he does that the situation is being satisfactorily handled by the Commission.

Mr. Tanaka: The way it looks the Security Commission makes the plan for moving the Japanese, and not Ottawa.

Mr. Paul Murphy: It is not in Ottawa at the moment. The question of where the Japanese are going is at the moment left to the Security Commission. They must find places by persuasion, they have no power to order people, and the Government is not disposed to order anybody to receive

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Japanese, and is not disposed to select isolated places in Canada, which was my plea to them, and tell the Commission that they could send the Japanese there. At one of my conversations with Turnbull on Monday, after I had seen Mitchell, he suggested I go to various departments to find out how much material would be required, where the localities would be, the Natural Resources Department would know, and then find out, for instance, how many tents would be required and how long it would be required to build places for an approximate number of people, and generally, it was his idea that we should have a concrete basis to work on if the plan was adopted. I pointed out to him that we should first have the plan adopted in principle before I started on that, that the Departments would probably just tell me that I had better get a decision made as to who was going to put them there, and Mr. Turnbull agreed that perhaps it was better to have the plan adopted in principle first.

Mr. Tanaka: The only thing that is left for the mass evacuation group is to persuade the B.C. Security Commission to see the mass evacuation way of moving the Japanese.

Mr. Paul Murphy: If the request came from the Security Commission I should imagine the Government would consider it very much more seriously. I may say, that I talked to them, not only as a representative of the Community, but as a person from Vancouver, as is indicated in the memorandum. The one thing Mr. Mitchell did say when I told him this scheme was largely the kind of scheme that was adopted in the United States, he said it was too costly. I then said that I thought the Japanese who had money would be willing to pool their resources and assist those not so fortunate, to put a minimum amount of cost on the Government. He did not comment on that at all. He did say two or three

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times during both interviews that he wanted to be fair to the Japanese Community, and he did not want to put a man who had money in a more favourable position than one who did not. I told him I was not talking for a class of wealthy Japanese, and he said he merely wished to make that observation.

Mr. Shimoda: That is the way the plan is working today. Wealthy groups can move as to Lillooet or Grand Forks. The Commission ignored the last three Committees that represented the Japanese. They put in the Nisei paper that anybody who could support themselves and take some money for the duration of the war, they could take their families. They have leased a summer hotel in Grand Forks, costing them $110,000.00. They leased it for the duration of the War. A number of groups are leaving for Minto, Bridgeriver, and Cascade. You have to make $15---- and deposit it into that district. It is being encouraged.

Mr. Paul Murphy: If those facts are correct, it certainly contradicts what Mr. Mitchell told me. I could not understand why he was continually telling me he did not wish to take sides between a wealthy Japanese and a poor one.

Mr. Tanaka: Mr. Mitchell is supposed to have a wide knowledge of world affairs. I thought he had socialistic ideas. The rich can move with their families. Four or five hundred have moved already. What is your opinion, is there any chance of mass evacuation? Through Ottawa you think it is hopeless, the only thing is to persuade the B.C. Security Commission to see our point.

Mr. Paul Murphy: If the Security Commission was persuaded that the scheme should be instituted, and they made a strong recommendation to Mr. Mitchell, I personally think he would implement the scheme right away, because

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the Government's idea is that the Commission is in full charge. I think if the Commission asked the Government to do anything, I am sure the Government would do it.

Mr. Shimoda: It was Mr. Mitchell who said the plan carried out in the United States is too costly. I believe when the Naturalized group interviewed Taylor about the mass evacuation scheme, Mr. Taylor said they could put out the money, but there was no land. He said he could spare $2,000,000.00. I interviewed Mr. Taylor, the Security Commission, as a representative of the mass evacuation group, and on that day too he said there was no place to put the Japanese as a family unit, but that if they could find a place they could put out the money to do that.

Mr. Paul Murphy: Mr. Turnbull and I agreed in our discussion that Canada was a very large country, and it would be funny if the Government could not find some place that was isolated.

Mr. Shimoda: If we could only find out what it was that made Turnbull change his mind.

Mr. Paul Murphy: I don't see any possibility of doing that.

Mr. Tanaka: I understand the B.C. Security Commission has only power to spend any money under $15,000.00. They have to get the okay from Mr. Mitchell to spend anything more than that, so Mr. Mitchell ought to know that he has not enough money.

Mr. Paul Murphy: If the scheme was adopted and he required money, there is no doubt the Government could find the money, because that would be the first thing they would think of.

Mr. Shimoda: I understand there was an Appropriation Bill for $10,000,000.00 for the Japanese. The Japanese will be out of here in two months?

Mr. Paul Murphy: That is what Turnbull told me.

Mr. Shimoda: They are keeping on bucking so far, I guess they can last another two months.

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Mr. Tanaka: So the only thing left is to see the Security Commission, going to Ottawa is a waste of money.

Mr. Paul Murphy: I think it was a good idea I went and discovered what the situation was, because right up to the last moment I was prepared to stay a week or so more, if there was a possibility of the thing going through, which I thought there was, but after Mr. Turnbull's last conversation I didn't think there was any point. I am now in a position to be able to continue the discussion with the people I saw in Ottawa, by letter. There is a certain advantage in having met these people personally and having discussed it with them, but I certainly think the best idea is to try to persuade the Security Commission, if that is possible.

I didn't go up to see Mr. Schwartz. I gathered from dealing with the other problem that everything was in control of Ottawa, and I saw Mr. Norman Robertson, of the Department of External Affairs, and he said that they were not interning the families of the men who were interned, and I gathered that they were going to look after the families, but the detail as to how it was being done had not been worked out.

Mr. Tanaka: The Consul before he left appointed me, and McWilliam and the Spanish Consul to look after the families of the internees.

Mr. Paul Murphy: It seemed futile to me to go down to Montreal and talk it over with the man when it is the Department of External Affairs that has absolute control directly. There is no intermediary body. They have not worked out the plan for the families of the internees yet. They are going to do it.

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Mr. Tanaka: In case they are going to look after the families of Japanese would this be in separate ways as Nationals, etc.

Mr. Paul Murphy: I don't think any distinction is going to be made. It is not a separate policy. The policy will be set by the Canadian Government.

Mr. Shimoda: The Committee of three will be there to see that the plans of the Government will be carried out.

Mr. Paul D. Murphy: Yes, they are just an administrative body.

Mr. Tanaka: Did Mitchell know that the Canadian born were detained there.

Mr. Paul Murphy: I told them, after receiving Denis' letter, that some of them had given themselves up to be interned, and he didn't seem to know it.

Mr. Tanaka: Are second generation going under the Construction Corps. They did make a distinction between the three groups. (Shows By-Laws.)

Mr. Paul Murphy: Talk it over with your people. I have certain contacts if you have any suggestions to make.

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