

*NOTE FOR THE UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE  
FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS*

*British Columbia Security Commission*

1. I am attaching a copy of a draft report to Council, prepared by the Department of Justice, dealing with the establishment of this Commission and its duties.
2. I have looked over the draft in a casual way, and I am not questioning the general treatment, and I have not had time to go into it in detail.
3. There is, however, one point that seems to me to be a shocking thing.
4. Earlier in the year, when we were dealing with the question of fishing boats, care was taken to establish a benevolent trusteeship in British Columbia, to protect the interests of British subjects whose fishing vessels were taken.
5. In the present instance, all property of any sort in the protected areas is being taken away from the Japanese and handed over to the Custodian.
6. This point was not dealt with in the instructions given to me when I prepared the first draft for an Order in Council. It is possible that the policy may be approved by the Ministers and, if so, it is none of my business.
7. On the other hand, it seems to me that the Ministers should fully realize what they are doing. They are abandoning completely the principle of treating the position of the British subjects of Japanese race as one which would justify fairness in so far as it is possible to be fair, taking into account questions of security. As a matter of fact, it will very greatly hamper the carrying out of the scheme of evacuation.

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9. This provision, with regard to property, will greatly hamper the absorption of any Japanese in ordinary business activities. It strips them of every cent they may have made in their pockets or in the banks; it takes the clothes off their backs and removes the tools of their trade: fountain pens from their pockets, books from their libraries, and hands them all over to the tender mercies of the Custodian. There is no element of trusteeship recognized, and no attempt to set up machinery that would enable the property of these British subjects to be sold so as to preserve and protect their interests.

John Erskine Read, Note for Undersecretary of State for External Affairs, 2 March 1942, file 3464-q-40, Vol. 3005, RG 25, LAC.