

## Conference on Japanese problems in B.C., January 8–9, 1942

*Minutes, External Affairs Files 733 - B - 40 - C.*

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### III. Introductory Statements.

1. At the first meeting the Chairman made an opening statement on the purpose of the Conference. He said that the Government had received numerous representations concerning the problem of persons of Japanese racial origin in British Columbia. One particularly important question was whether fishing licenses should be issued to persons of Japanese racial origin. The chief purpose of the meeting was to allay apprehension in British Columbia. This must, however, be done in such a way as to minimize the possibility of retaliation by the Japanese against Canadian prisoners of war and against the coast of British Columbia. The Chairman paid a tribute to the work done by the various committees appointed in the past few years and to the work of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.
2. Mr. Angus outlined in the sense of Section 1B of the Agenda the peculiar position of the Japanese population in Canada which is unlike that of the German and Italian population in several ways.

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5. Mayor Hume then reported on the activities of the Standing Committee which had been appointed almost exactly a year ago. He said that the Japanese had been re-registered and that while re-registration was being made a considerable number had left Canada. When war broke out with Japan the Committee recommended:
  - (5) That Japanese newspapers be closed down. As a result of this recommendation the Royal Canadian Mounted Police suggested to the Japanese that this be done and the Japanese agreed.
  - (6) That Japanese language schools be closed. *(This also was done*

*by agreement.)*

- (7) That the Royal Canadian Mounted Police pick up disloyal Japanese.
- (8) That the Japanese fishing fleet be laid up.

The three last recommendations had been made effective. Mayor Hume concluded by saying that the public in British Columbia was demanding that the Japanese be removed from the coastal area.

6. Assistant Commissioner F.J. Mead of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police made a report in the existing situation. He said that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police had received excellent cooperation from the leaders of the Japanese population. These leaders had cooperated in the registration and since the outbreak of the war with Japan had pointed out to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Japanese who should be interned as dangerous. As evidence of the excellent attitude of the Japanese population he read three paragraphs from an operative's report of a secret meeting of Japanese fishermen in Vancouver which had taken place recently. The fishermen at the meeting had stated that they realized that the seizure of the Japanese fishing fleet was inevitable under war conditions. Since the outbreak of the war it had been necessary to intern only one Japanese because of disloyal remarks.

#### **IV. Discussion on general principles set out in Item 3 of the Agenda and discussions of the application of these general principles to specific problems as outlined in the agenda.**

5. The members of the Conference who had just arrived from British Columbia found it difficult to accept the assurances of the representatives of the Armed Services and of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police that the measures which had already been taken in British Columbia of which were recommended by a majority of the members in the Conference would be sufficient to meet the requirements of national defence and security. Most of them stated that they did not trust persons of Japanese racial origin and that they considered the continued presence of these persons in British Columbia a menace to their public safety. They emphasized particularly their fear that virtually all of these residents would commit positive acts of disloyalty if Japan should land forces in British Columbia. Even, however, if the assurances of the Armed Forces and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police were accepted a serious situation would still continue to exist in British Columbia since it would be impossible to persuade the majority of the people of British Columbia that the Japanese did not constitute a menace.

### LESSON 3 SOURCE 3.18 CONFERENCE ON JAPANESE PROBLEMS

The people of British Columbia were definitely alarmed by the Japanese menace. There is grave danger that anti-Japanese riots may break out and that it will be necessary to call out the troops to defend Japanese residents from attack by other Canadians. The Assistant Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police agreed that there was a distinct possibility of anti-Japanese riots in Vancouver and General Pope stated that General Alexander had reported to Defence Headquarters that public security may be endangered by the feeling of the white population against the Japanese.

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7. This difference of opinion over the urgency of the manpower problem in Canada was in part the reason for the difference of opinion between members of the Conference over whether it would be useful and desirable to impress on employers and labour alike throughout Canada the importance, from the point of view of the national war effort, of not discharging or refusing to hire or refusing to work with persons of Japanese origin. Members from British Columbia stated that the public in British Columbia was so convinced that the Japanese were untrustworthy and constituted a menace that white workmen would refuse to work with workmen of Japanese racial origin in spite of any appeal which the Government might make.

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12. While the proposal to remove all persons of Japanese racial origin from the Pacific coast was dropped by general agreement the British Columbia representatives demanded that able bodied Japanese male nationals should be removed. They appeared to be willing to make such an exception for those whose applications for naturalization under section 8 of the Naturalization Act were outstanding. In making this demand they emphasized that in their opinion it was the minimum necessary to satisfy the people of British Columbia and prevent riots and it was pointed out that the assurances of the Armed Forces and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police did not extend to denying the dangers of anti-Japanese rioting.

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Minutes, LAC, RG 25, File 733-B-40-C