

LESSON 4 SOURCE 4.11 PICKERSGILL MEMO

Near the end of the Second World War, while many Japanese Canadians were still living in internment camps, the federal government initiated a repatriation survey. In support of this process the Department of Labour sent Commissioner T. B. Pickersgill to visit the internment camps and settlements in British Columbia and address questions about relocation. The following is an abridged selection from the memo Pickersgill sent to the Deputy Minister of Labour, Arthur MacNamara summarizing his findings.

**Department of Labour
BRITISH COLUMBIA SECURITY COMMISSION**

Denver, B.C.,
March 28th, 1945.

Mr. A, MacNamara, Deputy Minister of Labour, Ottawa,

I have now completed my visit to all the Settlements in the Interior. We had our last meeting with the New Denver and Roseberry Committees this morning.

I thought you would be interested in the general re-action which I have observed, and a summary of the main questions which we have been asked by the Japanese people.

In listing the main questions which we have been asked, I am setting forth below each, the verbal answer which we have given. Some of the Committees have submitted their questions in writing and have requested written replies. Before acceding to this request, we think you should see the verbal answers we have given, and correct us on any points in which you think the answers are not wise. There are one or two questions which we admitted quite frankly we could not answer and promised to procure replies from Ottawa,

1. (a) Will relocatees to Eastern Canada receive treatment as full fledged Canadian citizens?

Answer:

We have replied quite frankly to this question that there are some details on which there is still some uncertainty. We suggested that it was not likely that this question would be fully decided in all its aspects until after the Loyalty Tribunal had been appointed and had completed its work. In the meantime, we were only asking people to relocate in other Provinces to fill specific Jobs for which employers had requested Japanese labour. We explained to them, that because of this insecurity and several other questions which were still in doubt about the future for Japanese people remaining in Canada, the Government was offering generous provisions for repatriation to those voluntarily applying, if they come to the conclusion that the outlook is not too bright for staying in Canada.

- (b) Will relocatees be given full rights to private enterprise, occupational freedom and a right to own and rent property, real and otherwise?

Answer:

We told them that a complete and satisfactory answer could not yet be given to this question; In the meantime, they were being asked to accept employment, and work for salaries or raises, until the question of acquiring their own property and going into business, was settled. We pointed out the present regulations which apply, concerning the renting of residential property. According to Mr. Brown, this whole question is now under advisement, and we are likely to have some further information shortly.

LESSON 4 SOURCE 4.11 PICKERSGILL MEMO

- (e) In the event of anti-racial violence and consequent damages sustained, will the Dominion Government hold themselves responsible for rectifications?

Answer:

The Japanese people will have the same rights to police protection as any other people residing in a particular Province or locality, and will have the same rights to resort to the Courts for claims against damage to property, but the Dominion Government could not commit itself to paying for damages sustained. One person asked us, if on relocating East, and he was accosted by several who might have reached an advance stage of inebriation, would he be protected from violent actions on their part. We replied that he would have the same police protection that anyone else would have under the same circumstances.

2. (c) Will the Elementary and High School education of relocatees be granted on an equal basis as all other residents of the Province?

Answer:

We pointed out that Education was the responsibility of the Provincial Government, and not the Dominion Government, and we could not say definitely what would apply.

3. (e) (4) Will a person having applied for repatriation be permitted to cancel his application and remain in Canada if he has acceptable reasons?

Answer:

We said that those who have already made application for repatriation could apply to the R.C.M.P, Ottawa, to have these

applications cancelled. We doubted, however, unless the circumstances are very exceptional, that favorable consideration will be given to cancellation later, of applications made on a new form, when the R.C.M.P. Detachment takes these applications. We explained that the signing of these applications was strictly voluntary, and decisions made now, should be considered final.

- (h) If a family wishes to remain in Canada, but due to certain circumstances must remain in the Project; will the authorities give specific families due consideration, and if permitted to stay, will they be given maintenance or suitable employment?

Answer:

I said that the Dominion Government would continue to assume its full responsibility for the welfare of the Japanese evacuees from the Protected Area. If they could not be moved from the Project, and maintenance was required, it would be provided.

Excerpts taken from Memorandum to Arthur MacNamara, 28 March 1945, file 104, pt. 2.1, Vol. 5761, RG 25, LAC.