

# Japan's Reaction to the Vancouver Riot of 1907

MASAKO IINO

On 7 September 1907 a mob of about 1,000 attacked the Chinese quarter and the Japanese section in Vancouver, British Columbia. Originally a parade and a mass meeting were planned by the Asiatic Exclusion League<sup>1</sup> in order to draw the attention of the federal government to the seriousness of local sentiment against the continuous flow of Japanese immigration to the western ports of Canada. Part of the crowd that had gathered for the meeting turned into an uncontrollable mob, leading to a disturbance that has been generally known as the Vancouver Riot.<sup>2</sup> The riot itself was not of great scale and there was no burning or plundering or lynching. It was over in one night, leaving only two casualties. The incident, however, had important consequences not only for the federal government of Canada but also for the government of Japan.

After the riot, under the heavy pressure of anti-Japanese feelings in British Columbia, the Canadian government could not maintain its firm stand on Japanese immigration and decided to send a mission to Japan to negotiate restriction of Japanese immigrants. The Japanese government unwillingly accepted the proposal of the Canadian government.

The history of Japanese immigration into Canada<sup>3</sup> can be divided into

- <sup>1</sup> The Asiatic Exclusion League was an organization devoted to the exclusion of Asiatics in general from Canada and the United States. It was first organized in San Francisco in May 1905 as "the Japanese and Korean Exclusion League." The Asiatic Exclusion League in Vancouver was formed 12 August 1907.
- <sup>2</sup> Much research has been done on the causes of the Vancouver Riot. See, in particular, Howard H. Sugimoto, *Japanese Immigration, the Vancouver Riots and Canadian Diplomacy* (New York: Arno Press, 1978) and "The Vancouver Riot and Its International Significance," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 64(4) (1973): 163-74.
- <sup>3</sup> Major works on the history of Japanese immigrants in Canada are: Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1976); W. Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978); and Charles H. Young, *et al.*, *The Japanese Canadians* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1939). There are also works on this subject in Japanese such as: Mitsuru Shimpo, *Ishi o Mote Owaruru Gotoku* (As Though Driven Away with Stones) (Toronto: Tairiku-Jiho Sha, 1975); and Tairiku-Jiho Sha, *Canada Dōbō Hatten Shi* (A History of Fellow Countrymen in Canada) (Vancouver: Tairiku-Jiho Sha, 1909, 1917, 1924).

four periods. The first is from the time of the first Japanese immigrant arriving in British Columbia in 1877 to the Lemieux Agreement in 1908, with two great peaks in 1899-1900 and in 1906-1907. During this period, as the number of Japanese immigrants increased, an anti-Japanese movement arose and finally diplomatic agreements were reached with Japan to restrict the number of immigrants to Canada. During the second period, between the Lemieux Agreement and the outbreak of World War II, Japanese immigrants began to be assimilated into Canadian society; ironically, as a consequence of this fact, discrimination against them became more intense than before. The third period is that of evacuation, during and after the war (until 1949), which saw discrimination by the Canadian public reaching its peak. In the fourth period, from 1950 till the present time, Japanese-Canadians gained full rights as citizens of Canada.

In such a history of Japanese immigrants in Canada, the Vancouver Riot proved an incentive to change in both Canadian policy toward Japanese immigrants and in Japanese policy toward emigration to Canada. At the same time, this incident was important in the sense that it brought about the development of a new international relationship, showing the expectations of each country involved — not only Canada and Japan but also the United States and Great Britain.

This paper focuses on how the government and the public of Japan saw and reacted to the Vancouver Riot of 1907, and how the emigration policy of Japan changed after the riot.

## BACKGROUND

### *Japanese Emigration Policy Early in the Meiji Era*

After the Japanese government issued permission to travel abroad in 1866, a number of people emigrated overseas: 42 for Guam and 153 for Hawaii in 1868, and 40 for California in 1869.<sup>4</sup> Also some requests came from nations overseas asking the Japanese government to recruit and send emigrants to them; Holland needed soldiers and Russia wanted some craftsmen from Japan in 1871, and Australia wanted farmers in 1876.<sup>5</sup> The Japanese government, however, refused all these proposals.

<sup>4</sup> Toraji Iriye, *Hōjin Kaigai Hatten Shi* (A History of Japanese Expansion Overseas) (Tokyo: Hara Shobo, 1981 [1942]), pp. 1-53. Naomasa Oshimoto, "Imin Toriatsukai Kikan no Hensen" (Transition of Agencies Dealing with Emigrants), *Kaigai Ijū Jigyo Dan Jūnen Shi* (A Ten-Year History of Japan International Cooperation Agency) Tokyo: JICA, 1973), p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Oshimoto, *ibid.*

Thus, though there is no accurate record on emigrants until 1878, the number of emigrants would have been negligible.

One reason the government was not interested in sending people out to other nations arose from the fact that it was too occupied in dealing with all the internal problems after the Meiji Restoration (1868) to consider emigration seriously. The Meiji government concentrated its efforts on the colonization of Hokkaido, the northern island of Japan, encouraging the ex-Samurai class, who had lost their status at the Restoration of 1868, to migrate and bring the land under cultivation there. The government gave the migrants every kind of aid and protection. This policy was motivated by both political and economic necessities. Politically, settlement in Hokkaido had strategic importance in checking the southward thrust of Russian expansion. At the same time, it was considered to be an effective relief measure for the ruined ex-Samurai class. The economic motivation of the policy was that by sending any number of people, it was expected that Japan's increasing population pressure would be lessened, though the actual effect was not of great significance.

Another reason that the government was not interested in emigration in the early Meiji Era may have been that it was sensitive to the condition of immigrant labourers on Hawaii's sugar plantations. Those who emigrated to Hawaii in 1868, without being able to gain the permission of the new government, were treated like slaves, and the Japanese government had to send an official to protest to the Hawaii government.<sup>6</sup> The government was also informed about what was happening to Chinese labourers on Hawaii's sugar plantation.

In 1884 the Japanese government signed a convention with the Hawaii government whereby the sugar plantation owners in Hawaii were permitted to import Japanese labourers under contract between 1885 and 1894, and soon after that a law to permit general emigration of labourers was enacted. Thus overseas migration began with those 943 farmers as government-sponsored emigrants to Hawaii. The fact that they were chosen from among 28,000 applicants<sup>7</sup> shows that the impoverished conditions of rural communities pushed the farmers to hope for a better life abroad. They were the first of over 29,000 to enter Hawaii on three-year contracts between 1885 and 1894, and the first of a total of 178,927 who entered Hawaii before 1908. They were also the

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> "Nippon-Jinmin Hawaii-Koku e Dekasegi Ikken" (On Working Away from Home in Hawaii), *Documents of the Foreign Relations Archives*.

vanguard of emigration to the United States, Canada and South America, where 91,740 Japanese went before 1908. Also some of those who went to Hawaii eventually came to Canada, and the fact that their number increased particularly in 1906 and 1907 was to become one of the causes of the Vancouver Riot.

Even during the period of ten years when it sponsored the emigrants to Hawaii based on the convention it had agreed on with the government of Hawaii, the Japanese government did not have a policy to encourage emigration. What it did was to station some officials in Hawaii who helped the emigrant labourers in sending money back home. This shows again that, in spite of the fact that the general public was influenced by the views of people who advocated emigration based on expansionist theory,<sup>8</sup> the Meiji government was rather negative about emigration in general.<sup>9</sup> Consequently during the Meiji Era there was no specific policy regarding emigration. There was not even a section in the government to deal with those who desired to emigrate overseas, until Takeaki Enomoto, who had been an advocate of sending Japanese people to various parts of the world as a policy of overseas expansion, established an Emigration Section in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs while he was the Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1891 to 1892. But after he resigned from the post, the section was abolished before achieving much.<sup>10</sup>

During this period when the government had no specific policy on emigration, showing its passiveness toward emigration overseas, emigration companies mushroomed.<sup>11</sup> These companies worked as agencies in recruiting those who wanted to emigrate, in clearing the process of emi-

<sup>8</sup> For example: Takeaki Enomoto, *Nanyō-tū Baishū Ron* (On Purchasing the Islands of the South Seas) (1876); Yukichi Fukuzawa, *Hinpu Ron* (On Wealth and Poverty) (1884); and Shigetaka Shiga, *Nanyō Jiji* (Affairs on the South Sea Islands) (1887).

<sup>9</sup> Yasuo Wakatsuki, "Imin Seisaku Hyaku-nen Shi" (A Hundred-Year History of Emigration Policy), *Rekishī Koron* (Opinions on History), vol. 5, no. 1 (1979), pp. 48-49.

<sup>10</sup> After retiring from office, Enomoto contributed to the establishment of a Colonization Society, whose efforts were concentrated on encouraging overseas emigration and colonization.

<sup>11</sup> On emigration companies see Iriye, *Hōjin Kaigai Hatten Shi*, pp. 107-19; Takamitsu Ōkawahira, *Nihon Imin Ron* (On Japanese Emigration) (Tokyo: Bunbu-do, 1905), pp. 52-62; Tomonori Ishikawa, "Nihon Shutsu-Imin Shi ni okeru Imin-gaisha to Keiyaku-Imin" (Emigration Companies and Contract Laborers in the History of Japanese Emigration), *Ryūkyū Daigaku Kiyō* (Ryukyu University Bulletin 14 (1970): 19-46; Masaaki Kodama, "Shoki Imingaisha no Imin Boshū to Sono Jittai" (Recruiting of Emigrants by the Early Emigration Companies), and *Hiroshima Ken Shi Kenkyū* (Study of the History of Hiroshima Prefecture), vol. 3 (1978), pp. 20-41.

gration and in helping people prepare for emigration, thus contributing to the increase in the number of emigrants. As one of the strong motives for emigration arose from invitations sent by emigrant relatives or friends, there was a cycle; in the areas which produced emigrants in the early period many emigration companies were established, and through those companies' efforts the number of emigrants with the same destination as their predecessors increased. But many emigration companies were only profit-seeking without considering the emigrants themselves or the conditions of their countries of destination. In 1894 the Emigration Protection Ordinance, later to become the Emigration Protection Law in 1896, was issued. Its major aim was to regulate those exploitative emigration companies which sought profits at the sacrifice of the emigrants themselves. Still, the government offered no services necessary for emigration. Emigration companies played an important part in sending out emigrants, as seen in the fact that about 75 percent of all the emigrants leaving Japan by the end of the Meiji Era were sent through those companies.<sup>12</sup> It was not until after the anti-Japanese sentiments in the United States and Canada came to the notice of the Japanese government early in the twentieth century that the government paid attention to emigration or immigrant problems in the United States and Canada on the governmental level.

### *Emigration to Canada*

Emigration to Canada thus began in earnest during a period in which the Japanese government showed no formal interest in encouraging population outflow. It was simply part of the spontaneous increase in emigration overseas in general toward the end of the nineteenth century. Besides the influence of active expansionists and emigration companies, the reasons that this period saw an increase of emigrants can be found in the following facts. In the latter half of the 1880s and in the 1890s rural communities were in a serious depression, caused by the deflationary policy of the Matsukata government, the decline of rice prices, heavy land taxes and a harvest failure. Farmers sold their land to become tenant farmers, and some were finally forced to give up farming, desert their villages, and become employed by urban industries at low wages. It was the time when agricultural economy was turning into commercial economy and impoverishment of rural communities was inevitable. The flow of the labour force from rural to urban areas was accelerated by the

<sup>12</sup> *Statistics on Overseas Migration* (Tokyo: Department of Overseas Affairs, 1937).

modernization of the transportation system, but the industries in the cities were not yet sufficiently developed to absorb all the labour flow from rural areas. When those who had left their villages to work in the cities could not find jobs there either, they had no choice except to look farther afield.

A reason that Canada came to be included in the emigrants' destinations during this period can also be found in the fact that, as a result of the efforts by the government to spread education, the public at large became informed about Western nations such as Canada and the United States, though it seems most emigrants made no clear distinction between the two countries. At the time when "Civilization and Enlightenment" or "Westernization" were catch phrases set forth by the government, those who were brave enough to cross the Pacific Ocean to Canada must have been inspired by the idea of going to "Western countries" apart from their dreams of success.

As can be imagined, no subsidy or help was given to the emigrants to Canada. The Japanese government did not recruit or select the emigrants, or, needless to say, encourage emigration. The only thing that was done for emigrants at the governmental level was "protection of Japanese residents in Canada" by the Japanese consulate in Canada. The first Japanese consulate was established in Vancouver in 1889, with the first consul general going to Montreal in 1902. This latter official was moved to Ottawa in 1904. But it seems that what the consulate could do or actually did do for immigrants from Japan within its sphere of duties did not meet the immigrants' expectations. There are some documents in which the immigrants complained about the consul in Vancouver even in the Taisho Era, when conditions were better than in the Meiji.<sup>13</sup> At the same time the Japanese government was not completely satisfied with the conditions of the immigrants in Canada. A report of a consul in Vancouver sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Japan described, with some shame, the Japanese immigrants who had arrived at the ports of Canada looking grotesque, or those who had become poor labourers resigned to the lowest wages.<sup>14</sup>

For those immigrants who had moved into a society which was completely different from that which they had been accustomed to, the consular officials must have been the only people whom they could rely on,

<sup>13</sup> Rintaro Hayashi, *Kuroshio no Hate ni* (At the End of the Black Current) (Tokyo: Nichibo Shuppan-sha, 1974), pp. 42, 49.

<sup>14</sup> "Report of Colonization Society," no. 14 (1894), quoted in Iriye, *Hōjin Kaigai Hatten Shi*, p. 322.

in order to survive all the difficulties, including racial prejudice or discrimination, which they experienced. The consular officials, and even the Japanese government, however, considered that the Japanese government should not be involved with immigrant problems. For the government, the most important thing was to maintain good relationships between Canada and Japan, so it expected the immigrants not to cause trouble or attract attention in Canada. Certainly Japanese emigration was of a scale which would not be effective as a solution for the population problem in Japan,<sup>15</sup> and the amount of money the immigrants sent back home was not large enough to contribute to the national economy as those who advocated emigration overseas insisted it was.<sup>16</sup> It might be considered natural that the Japanese government was not enthusiastic about emigration. This attitude continued even in the early years of the twentieth century.

### *Signs of Friction*

The Japanese government must have been aware of the conditions in British Columbia, where most of the Japanese immigrants to Canada settled.<sup>17</sup> It must have known that they were seen as cheap labour, that they met the antagonism of the white labourers, and that they became a target of racial discrimination. The government was informed that a series of acts which prohibited the employment of Orientals on works authorized by the provincial government, beginning with the Alien Labour Act of 1897 — the most comprehensive piece of restrictive legis-

<sup>15</sup> Statistics (though they are not on Canada only) show that the total emigration of roughly one million during the eighty years till 1945 is 2.5 percent of the natural population increase during the period. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Emigration Section, *ed.*, "Warera ga Kokumin no Kaigain Hatten" (Expansion Overseas of Our People), Sources and Documents, p. 137.

<sup>16</sup> Minoru Tōgō, *Nihon Shokumin Ron* (On Japanese Colonization) (Tokyo: Bunbudo, 1906), p. 291.

<sup>17</sup> About 95 percent of the Japanese in Canada stayed in B.C. till 1942, though their population as a percentage of the total population of B.C. was always very small.

	<i>Japanese in Canada</i>	<i>Japanese in B.C.</i>	<i>B.C. Japanese as a percentage of Japanese in Canada</i>	<i>Japanese as a percentage of B.C. population</i>
1901	4,738	4,597	97.0	2.6
1911	9,021	8,587	95.2	2.2
1921	15,868	15,006	94.6	2.9
1931	23,342	22,205	95.1	3.2
1941	23,149	22,096	95.5	2.7

lation yet passed in the province<sup>18</sup> — had been passed. All these acts, as well as the Natal Acts authorizing a literacy test in the English language for persons entering the province, which had passed the provincial legislature, were nullified by the federal government as a violation of international treaty rights.

One of the reasons that the federal government disallowed these acts was the pressure applied by the Japanese government on the federal government via the British government. Considering that these acts created “discriminatory treatment against Japanese under racial or linguistic conditions,” the Japanese government instructed the Japanese minister in London “to approach the British government with the view of securing their good offices in inducing the Governor-General of Canada to veto the said acts.”<sup>19</sup> The Japanese government explained that it had no objection to the acts if applied to “all the immigrants in Canada, based on their education, moral standards, and level of living, without discriminating against Japanese immigrants.”<sup>20</sup> It was anxious only that the “honour” of Japan should not be lost.<sup>21</sup> The Consul General in Ottawa, Tatsugoro Nosse, thus sent a message of protest to the Governor General of Canada urging the British government to “take the earliest measure to have these acts disallowed, as their existence would lead to constant irritation and annoyance in the most friendly relations . . . existing between Japan and Canada.”<sup>22</sup> Japan had succeeded in concluding the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation with Britain in 1894, by which subjects of either power were granted “full liberty to enter, travel or reside in any part of the dominions and possessions of the other contracting party.” The Japanese government knew that the only effective means to stop the British Columbia government from legislating anti-Japanese acts was to influence the British government.<sup>23</sup> It also thought it had a good chance to do this, for it knew the British government opposed anything which might endanger that government’s policy of pursuing good relations with Japan.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup> W. Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever*, p. 55.

<sup>19</sup> Aoki to Hayashi, 15 September 1900, *Nihon Gaikō Bunsho* (Japanese Diplomatic Documents) (hereafter cited as *NGB*), vol. 33, no. 341.

<sup>20</sup> Aoki to Matsui (Japanese charge d'affaires to Britain), 28 May 1900, *NGB*, vol. 33, no. 333.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Nosse to Governor General of Canada, 26 February 1904, *Documents of the Foreign Relations Archives*, 3-8-2-20.

<sup>23</sup> Nosse to Komura, 14 March 1904, *NGB*, vol. 37-2, no. 931.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*



British Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain, upon the request of the Japanese government, urged the Canadian government to disallow the discriminatory legislation of the British Columbia government. His instruction was "the only excuse" that the federal government could depend on in disallowing British Columbia's discriminatory bill, the Japanese government knew.<sup>25</sup> It was confident that, as a member of the British Empire, the Canadian government could not find any merit in approving anti-Oriental legislation that might spoil the friendly relations between Britain and Japan. It was also perceived that, while hoping not to alienate west coast opinion, the Canadian government paid high regard to Japan as a future market for Canadian products.<sup>26</sup>

Thus in the early years of the twentieth century the Japanese government was finally involved with the problems of Japanese immigrants in Canada. However, it did not see any sign that those problems might develop into something as serious as the Vancouver Riot.

### *Change in Japan*

In the meantime some changes were recognized in Japan. After her victory in the Russo-Japanese War, a confident Japan began to direct her energy to expansion. Much of postwar Japan's expansion was directed toward the mainland of Asia, especially Manchuria, but it was by no means limited to that area. An influential journal at the time argued that "our expansive energy, now bursting out after a long period of polishing up and waiting, should not be channeled only in the direction of Asia, but should cover the whole of mankind."<sup>27</sup> Nor was Japan's expansion limited to the economic sphere. Scholarly books and articles on the subject of emigration and colonization, such as Takamitsu Okawahira's *Nihon Imin Ron* (On Japanese Emigration) (1905) and Minoru Togo's *Nihon Shokumin Ron* (On Japanese Colonization) (1906), advocated the necessity of Japanese expansion. Emigration and settlement overseas were clearly part of the postwar expansion envisioned by those writers. Apparently the government also began to show an interest in emigration, with the idea that it was just the right opportunity to promote settlement of Japanese overseas.

Influenced by this expansionist trend in postwar Japan and by Canada's involvement in the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Nosse to Hayashi, 29 March 1907, *NGB*, vol. 40-2, no. 1732.

<sup>27</sup> *Katsudō no Nihon* (Active Japan) 4(4) (October 1906):1-3.

Navigation in 1906, the Japanese government desired to relax the restriction of Japanese emigration to Canada, which they had set as a part of the restriction of emigration to North America since 1900. At the request of the Japanese government, which was careful to check the conditions in British Columbia as well as the intentions of the federal government before relaxing the restriction, Consul Kishiro Morikawa in Vancouver gave a long report to Minister of Foreign Affairs Tadasu Hayashi in late 1906.<sup>28</sup> In the report he explained that the anti-Japanese movement in California was "reaching its peak and the irrational arguments of anti-Japanese agitators [were] being reported in the newspapers in the morning and evening in Vancouver spurring on people with anti-Japanese sentiments there."<sup>29</sup> He suggested that when the restriction of Japanese emigration to Canada was relaxed after Canada signed the Anglo-Japanese Treaty, it would be necessary that "a clever trick should be employed so as not to attract the attention of anti-Japanese agitators."<sup>30</sup> By a clever trick, he meant that the Japanese government should be careful only to "permit a small number at a time" to emigrate to Canada. If, he predicted, too many Japanese labourers were allowed to emigrate, the anti-Japanese movement in Canada would gain strength. Consul-General Nosse in Ottawa also suggested that the Japanese government should not let emigrants leave for Canada *en masse*, because "the balance of supply and demand of labour would be lost by a sudden influx of Japanese immigrants, and as its result opposition against them would become vehement again."<sup>31</sup> Another report by the Japanese consul in Vancouver pointed out that, since there were many American labourers on the Pacific Coast of Canada, "a deep-rooted [tendency] to be sympathetic with the situation in the United States"<sup>32</sup> was found in that area.

A few days before the Vancouver Riot, newspapers in Japan reported the incident in Bellingham, Washington, fifty miles southwest of Vancouver, in which a group of East Indian labourers were beaten and expelled.<sup>33</sup> It is certain that the heightened anti-Japanese sentiments in British Columbia and their similarities to those found in California were recognized by the Japanese public as well as by the government before

<sup>28</sup> Morikawa to Hayashi, 28 November 1906, *NGB*, vol. 39-2, no. 1235.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Nosse to Saionji, 2 and 3 September 1906, *NGB*, vol. 39-2, nos. 1227, 1228.

<sup>32</sup> Morikawa to Hayashi, 19 April 1907, *NGB*, vol. 40-3, no. 1737.

<sup>33</sup> *The Yorozu Choho*, 8 September 1907; the *Tokyo Nichi Nichi*, 8 and 9 September 1907; the *Asahi*, 9 September 1907.

the Vancouver Riot, and it was before the Japanese government reached any conclusion on relaxing the restriction of Japanese emigration to Canada that the Vancouver Riot occurred.

#### JAPAN'S REACTION TO THE VANCOUVER RIOT

##### *The Government*

Considering the fact that the Japanese government had taken note of the anti-Japanese incident in San Francisco in 1906 and that it had received much information on conditions in British Columbia, it should have been possible for it to foresee that something serious like the Vancouver Riot might happen. Still, it did not feel anti-Japanese sentiment in British Columbia as an immediate concern before the riot. The fact that the new Immigration Law was approved in June 1906 and that Canada signed the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation later in the same year may have relieved the Japanese government, which had been alarmed by the anti-Japanese legislation in British Columbia and had sent messages of protest to the federal government not many years before. This shows how the Japanese government trusted the Canadian government, with friendly relations between Britain and Japan based on the Anglo-Japanese Alliance as a background. The feeling of confidence induced by these things in fact does much to explain how the Japanese government could take the Vancouver Riot as an "unprecedented incident" and "a thunderbolt from a clear sky."<sup>84</sup>

The reaction of the Canadian government to the Vancouver Riot was swift. Receiving the news of the riot, Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier made it clear that his government would spare no effort to prevent recurrences of such riots, and it quickly began work on compensation for damages caused by the riot. Laurier sent a message to the mayor of Vancouver to convey "the deepest regret" of the Governor General on learning of "the indignities and cruelties demonstrated toward the subjects of the Emperor of Japan, friend and ally of His Majesty the King."<sup>85</sup> He also cabled a message to the British Ambassador in Tokyo for transmission to the Emperor of Japan and his government expressing the regret of the Canadian government over the incident.<sup>86</sup> Apparently

<sup>84</sup> Morikawa to Hayashi, 24 September 1907, *NGB*, vol. 40-3, no. 1758.

<sup>85</sup> Laurier to mayor of Vancouver, 9 September 1907, *NGB*, vol. 40-3, no. 2749.

<sup>86</sup> British Ambassador in Japan to Hayashi, 13 October 1907, *NGB*, vol. 40-3, no. 1773.

the Canadian government was extremely careful not to hurt Japan, a nation closely tied with Britain.

Facing this swift response, the Japanese government did not express protest over the riot, but showed its intention to leave matters to the Canadian government, which the Japanese, following the opinion of the Commissioner of the Bureau of Commerce of Japan, Kikujiro Ishii, thought could be trusted to make good the loss without the formality of a demand by Japan. Ishii's idea was that, in view of the "constant and unflinching friendly attitude toward Japan" of the Canadian government, the incident should be settled "amicably" and "without resorting to formal diplomatic channels."<sup>37</sup> As for the damages and losses sustained by Japanese residents in Vancouver during the riot, the Japanese government instructed Consul-General Nosse to submit a request for compensation to the federal government of Canada, based on the opinion that the Japanese government was entitled to claim for the damages because the riot was "organized opposition and attack against a certain particular class of foreigners discriminated against separately from natives and all other foreigners," and was therefore different from "general civil disturbances."<sup>38</sup> According to Commissioner Ishii, even though the total damages was not great, the question was more "of principle and for the future than of actual material loss."<sup>39</sup>

In Canada a royal commission was quickly established to conduct an inquiry into the losses and to assess the damages, with deputy Minister of Labour William Lyon Mackenzie King as royal commissioner. Based on the report of King's investigation, a total of \$9,175 was awarded to the claimants.<sup>40</sup> Though the amount awarded was less than Consul-General Nosse had claimed (\$13,519.45), the Japanese government was satisfied with the swift and proper measures taken by the Canadian government. Consul Morikawa expressed "the deep satisfaction and appreciation" of his government to King and his commission and assured the Canadian government that faith in the government and people of Canada was certainly restored and would be strengthened by what King and his commission had done for the Japanese residents in Vancouver.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Ishii to Hayashi, 17 September 1907, *NGB*, vol. 40-3, no. 1752.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> "Report by W. L. Mackenzie King, C.M.G., Deputy Minister of Labour, Commissioner Appointed to Investigate into the Losses Sustained by the Japanese Population of Vancouver, B.C.," *Documents of Foreign Relations Archives*, 3-8-2-20.

<sup>41</sup> Morikawa to King, 19 November 1907, "Report by King," *ibid.*

### *The Public*

Newspapers in Japan reported the incident with sensational headlines, calling it “the most deplorable demonstration”<sup>42</sup> and “a tragic incident unprecedented in the history of western Canada,”<sup>43</sup> and claiming that the “humiliation accompanying the damage caused by it was beyond words.”<sup>44</sup> They also carried the polite messages of regret of Prime Minister Laurier,<sup>45</sup> which must have helped to calm the public. Most of the newspapers praised the prompt and proper measures the federal government and the authorities of Vancouver took in dealing with the incident, pointing out the great contrast these actions offered to those of the American government in dealing with the San Francisco incident.<sup>46</sup> They suggested, too, that the British government should be trusted, for it was “not powerless like the American government.”<sup>47</sup> “Since the good will and friendship of the government and the people of Great Britain toward the Empire of Japan are so deep, we expect with great hope that the fair and reliable attitudes of Great Britain will have much influence in settling the Vancouver Riot,”<sup>48</sup> one newspaper commented. The Japanese public trusted the Canadian government because they trusted the British government. The reason that the Japanese public as well as the government kept calm about the incident and were optimistic about its settlement was found here — in the close relations between Britain and Japan.

Because the Japanese government did not intend to let the incident develop into a cause of friction in relations between Canada and Japan and between Britain and Japan, it maintained its composure. For example, the *Asahi*, the newspaper with the largest circulation in Japan, urged that both the government and the people of Japan as well as the Japanese residents in Canada should behave themselves so as not to be criticized by others. Explaining that the Japanese residents in Vancouver had a strong tendency to take offence when the honour of Japan was involved and to fight back to defend that honour, the *Asahi* expressed

<sup>42</sup> The *Jiji Shimpō*, 8 September 1907.

<sup>43</sup> The *Asahi*, 11 September 1907.

<sup>44</sup> The *Hochi*, 12 September 1907.

<sup>45</sup> The *Asahi*, 11 September 1907; the *Tokyo Nichi Nichi*, 13 September 1907.

<sup>46</sup> The *Jiji Shimpō*, 12 September 1907; the *Tokyo Nichi Nichi*, 13 September 1907.

<sup>47</sup> The *Jiji Shimpō*, *ibid.*; the *Asahi*, 12 September 1907.

<sup>48</sup> The *Tokyo Nichi Nichi*, 13 September 1907.

the hope that they would not answer violence with violence this time.<sup>49</sup>

As for the causes of the riot, most newspapers simply reported that the sudden increase of Japanese immigrants to Canada was the major cause. The reason for the increase was explained as follows: because of the law enacted in the United States in 1906 to prohibit entrance of those immigrants who had not come directly from their own countries, the Japanese who had meant to reach the United States via Hawaii had changed their destination to Canada.<sup>50</sup> Reference to economic conflict caused by the increase of cheap labour was not mentioned as a cause of the riot, though it must have seemed a real threat to the white labourers. Most newspapers found that the agitators of the riot were Americans<sup>51</sup> and that the riot was an "infection"<sup>52</sup> of the anti-Japanese fever in California expanding northward and one of "the spasms of discrimination against aliens on the West Coast."<sup>53</sup> This kind of reporting probably helped the Japanese public to maintain faith in the government and the people of Canada.

On the whole, the Japanese public was completely calm about the news of the Vancouver Riot; such a response was clearly different from their attitude toward the anti-Japanese incident in San Francisco in 1906. One newspaper even criticized the Japanese government, not the Canadian government, on the ground that it was utterly unable to devise any appropriate measures to cope with the incident. According to this newspaper, because the Japanese government followed the peace-at-any-price principle at the time of the San Francisco incident, those white labourers who had much to do with the incident "grew presumptuous" and their influence crossed the border to cause the riot."<sup>54</sup>

### *Consequences of the Riot*

Immediately after settling the Japanese claims, the Canadian government instructed King to investigate the causes of the influx of Oriental labourers in British Columbia. King took about a month to complete his mission and was to submit a report to Parliament in January 1908.

<sup>49</sup> *The Asahi*, 11 September 1907.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*; the *Tokyo Nichi Nichi*, 13 September 1907.

<sup>51</sup> *The Asahi*, 14 September 1907; the *Jiji Shimpō*, 12 September 1907.

<sup>52</sup> *The Asahi*, 11 September 1907; the *Hochi*, 12 September 1907; the *Jiji Shimpō*, 13 September 1907; the *Tokyo Nichi Nichi*, 13 September 1907.

<sup>53</sup> *The Jiji Shimpō*, 13 September 1907; the *Tokyo Nichi Nichi*, 13 September 1907.

<sup>54</sup> *The Hochi*, 12 September 1907.

According to official statistics, 11,440 Orientals reached the western ports of Canada in the first ten months of 1907, among whom 8,125 were Japanese.<sup>55</sup> The majority of them were either en route to the United States or were residents returning to Canada after a short visit to Japan, with many in this category being Canadian citizens. Though the influx of Japanese reaching the ports of Vancouver and Victoria at the time doubtless appeared like an invasion to the people of Vancouver, not all of them contributed to an increase in the size of the Japanese population. Also, many arrivals were not directly from Japan but from Hawaii. Because the American government had passed a law forbidding the movement of Japanese into the United States from Hawaii in February 1907, many of them were forced to look to Canada as an alternative. The Japanese government had no jurisdiction over these immigrants once they passed beyond Hawaii's territorial limits.

King's report attributed the riot largely to fear of numbers rather than to racial prejudice or economic conflict. It revealed the fact that among 1,641 Japanese who arrived directly from Japan during the first ten months of 1907, as many as 900 were contract labourers sent through the Tokyo Emigration Company at Yokohama and the Canadian Nippon Supply Company, which was chartered under the laws of British Columbia.<sup>56</sup> It was made clear, too, that the Japanese government maintained rigid control over the emigration of its people by restricting the issuance of passports for those leaving Japan. King quoted the regulatory letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the prefectural governors in 1900 instructing them "to prohibit entirely the emigration of Japanese labourers for the Dominion of Canada or the United States for the time being."<sup>57</sup> King concluded that the most satisfactory way to solve the problem was to prohibit immigration by way of Hawaii, which was not under the jurisdiction of the Japanese government, to forbid the practice of sending and importing contract labourers on both sides, and to limit the Japanese arrivals directly from Japan.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>55</sup> "Report by W. L. Mackenzie King, C.M.G., Commissioner Appointed to Enquire into the Methods by Which Oriental Labourers have been Induced to Come to Canada," *Documents of Foreign Relations Archives*, 3-8-2-20. The records on the Japanese side indicate that among 7,079 Japanese who landed on the west coast of Canada, 2,568 were from Hawaii, 1,100 were returnees, and the new, direct immigrants were only 914. *NGB*, vol. 40-3, no. 1607.

<sup>56</sup> "Report by King," *ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Aoki to the Governors of the Prefectures, 2 August 1900, *NGB*, vol. 33, no. 338.

<sup>58</sup> "Report by King."

While King was trying to ascertain the sources and causes of increased Japanese immigration to Canada, Post-Master General and Minister of Labour Rodolphe Lemieux was in Tokyo to discuss the problem of immigration with the British Ambassador and the Japanese authorities. His task was to urge the Japanese government to enforce stricter emigration control. He was also expected to preserve the friendly relations existing between Canada and Japan and the rest of the British Empire. When he was appointed to the mission in October 1907, the Japanese consul in Vancouver, Morikawa, explained in his report for Foreign Minister Hayashi that the Canadian government had decided to send a mission to Japan because the government realized that, even though the Vancouver Riot itself "was not considered serious in substance, some facts revealed as a result of the riot were of great importance and their implications were not simple."<sup>59</sup> It was apparent after the riot that the problem of Japanese immigrants in Canada was not confined to one part of the country any longer, but had come to be seen as "an important problem concerning the principles of the nation."<sup>60</sup> The government and the people of Japan were informed that the Canadian public admitted "with deepest regret" that the incident was "a disgrace" for them. Japanese people should have the right to enter and reside in Canada as long as the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation was applied to Canada. The government of Canada, moreover, should take prompt and proper measures not to disgrace the pride of Japan.<sup>61</sup> At the same time it was clear to the Japanese government that the people of Canada "were not pleased with the influx of alien immigrants" since their wish was to maintain Canada as "a white men's country."<sup>62</sup>

In Canada, voices against Japanese immigrants were also voices against the Canadian government, which was considered responsible for their increase. Particularly in British Columbia, there was strong criticism of the federal government for not heeding the urgent appeals of the province for the exclusion of the Japanese. For the Conservatives, both federal and provincial, the Japanese immigration problem was a suitable ground of attack against a Liberal government which had been in power for more than ten years. In their expectations of defeating the Liberals in the approaching general election, the Conservatives fiercely criticized

<sup>59</sup> Morikawa to Hayashi, 18 October 1907, *NGB*, vol. 40-3, no. 1776.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Daily News Advertiser*, 8 September 1907, quoted in Sugimoto, *Japanese Immigration*, p. 137.

<sup>62</sup> Morikawa to Hayashi, 24 September 1907, *NGB*, vol. 40-3, no. 1758.



federal immigration policy. Here Prime Minister Laurier found himself in a fix, hoping to win the election and at the same time wanting to maintain friendly relations with Japan. The federal government decided to stop the influx of Japanese immigrants in order to quiet the voice of anti-Japanese agitators and prevent recurrence of similar riots. Although the pretext of sending the Lemieux mission to Japan was "to calm opposing public opinion," the government's "actual expectation" was "to restrict entry of Japanese immigrants."<sup>63</sup>

The Japanese government, aware of the purpose of the mission, did not welcome it. Receiving the news of the Canadian government's decision to send such a mission, through Consul-General Nosse,<sup>64</sup> the Japanese government immediately sent back a cable instructing him to persuade the Canadian government to give up its plan of sending such a mission to Japan.<sup>65</sup> Nosse met Prime Minister Laurier and Minister of Agriculture Fisher, suggesting that it would be "a better policy" to try a different strategy because they would have a poor chance of success in reaching an agreement with Japan on emigration restriction.<sup>66</sup> Commissioner Ishii also made it clear at the meeting with Laurier that Japan could "not make any arrangement in the nature of engagement" for restricting emigration.<sup>67</sup> According to Ishii, Canada did not have the right to request the Japanese government to restrict emigration since Canada had signed the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation.

The Canadian government, however, could not accept the opinion of the Japanese government. Laurier argued once again that a special commissioner should be sent to Tokyo "in order to ascertain the exact position of affairs without taking any rash action." His point was that the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation, which had been "ratified on the assurance that restrictions then existing would be continued by the Japanese government, might have to be denounced if it was shown that the Japanese authorities [had] been wilfully violating it."<sup>68</sup> "Is it not infinitely better in view of trade relations with Japan and of Japan being an ally of Great Britain that the restrictions which we desire should be

<sup>63</sup> Morikawa to Hayashi, 18 October 1907, *NGB*, vol. 40-3, no. 1776.

<sup>64</sup> Nosse to Hayashi, 23 September 1907, *NGB*, vol. 40-3, no. 1756.

<sup>65</sup> Hayashi to Nosse, 27 September 1907, *NGB*, vol. 40-3, no. 1759.

<sup>66</sup> Nosse to Hayashi, 21 October 1907, *NGB*, vol. 40-3, no. 1778.

<sup>67</sup> Nosse to Hayashi, 19 September 1907, *NGB*, vol. 40-3, no. 1754.

<sup>68</sup> Speech by Prime Minister Laurier, quoted in the letter from Nosse to Hayashi, 22 December 1907, *NGB*, vol. 40-3, no. 1796.

imposed not by an act of Parliament but by voluntary action of the Japanese government themselves?" he asked.<sup>69</sup>

In Japan, also, some argued that to refuse Canada's proposal to discuss immigration restriction might lead to denunciation of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation. If the Conservatives won the general election the following year, there was a chance that they might work out a policy to denounce the Treaty, which, in their opinion, was the obstacle to restricting Japanese immigration to Canada. If that were done, Japanese immigrants would not be admitted to Canada and at the same time Japan would suffer a great commercial loss. Therefore, it was argued, Japan had better accept the wish of the Canadian government and give it "assurance that emigration from Japan would be restricted in some form or other," thus giving it no excuse for denunciation of the Treaty.<sup>70</sup> The Japanese government also realized that the Canadian government had no other way than sending such a mission to Japan in order to cope with the unyielding demand for restriction of Japanese immigrants without disgracing the honour of Japan.<sup>71</sup> As the Canadian government knew, for the Japanese government it was always of utmost importance to preserve honour.

Still more important for the Japanese government toward the end of 1907 was a change in Britain's attitude toward Japan. Foreign Affairs Minister Hayashi expressed his anxiety in his message on Japanese foreign policy, describing how the sentiments of the British public toward Japan were changing from sympathy, felt during the Russo-Japanese War, to antipathy.<sup>72</sup> According to him, British foreign policy did not depend on close relations between Britain and Japan any longer and Britain was not as anxious as before to maintain the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.<sup>73</sup> The reason for the change was that the government and the public of Britain began to feel that aggressive Japanese military authorities were infringing on British interests in Manchuria and China. While trying to persuade its military authorities not to infringe on the interests of other nations in Manchuria and China, the Japanese government did not want to suppress Japanese expansion overseas. Then, in dealing with the immigration problem in Canada, the Japanese government had to

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Komura to Hayashi, 7 November 1907, *NGB*, vol. 40-3, no. 1780.

<sup>71</sup> Nosse to Hayashi, 21 October 1907, *NGB*, vol. 40-3, no. 1778.

<sup>72</sup> Hayashi to Genro and Cabinet Ministers, 29 November 1907, *NGB*, vol. 40-3, no. 2200.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

choose a course which would not irritate Britain. Thus the Japanese government accepted the proposal of the Canadian government and agreed to negotiate on restriction of Japanese emigrants, which was to result in the Lemieux Agreement of 1908.<sup>74</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

Throughout the history of Japanese emigration, the Japanese government did not show much interest in it, except for settlement in Manchuria, Taiwan and South America. Until the heightened anti-Japanese sentiments in the United States and Canada began to be felt by the Japanese public toward the end of the nineteenth century, the government did not believe that sending out emigrants was an effective solution to the country's population or economic problems. Certainly emigrants to Canada were not numerous enough to attract the attention of the Japanese government until early in the twentieth century.

After her victory in the Russo-Japanese War, Japan emerged as a first-rate military power. Then, as self-consciousness about "Japanese in the world" grew among the people, the government, too, came to be interested in expansion, particularly as it concerned Japanese commerce. It paid attention to emigration only when anti-Japanese sentiments in the United States and Canada forced it to do so. Emigration was only one part of expansionism, and it saw no particular importance nor practical advantage in emigration as such.

It was at this time that the Vancouver Riot occurred. The then Ministry of Foreign Affairs, headed by Tadasu Hayashi, realized the necessity of encouraging Japan's expansion in the direction of "the lines of least resistance."<sup>75</sup> It stressed industrial and commercial expansion and the limiting of emigration to Canada so as not to jeopardize trade between the two countries, which had become important for Japan as well as for Canada. For them, maintaining good commercial relations with Canada was most important. They did not want to let the anti-Japanese sentiments in Canada affect it. They were anxious, in consequence, that the Vancouver Riot not look serious enough to make the Japanese public feel antagonistic toward Canada.

<sup>74</sup> For a detailed discussion of Lemieux's negotiations with the Japanese government, see Robert J. Gowen, "Canada's Relations with Japan, 1895-1922" (PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1966), pp. 142-91.

<sup>75</sup> Hayashi to Genro and Cabinet Ministers, 29 November 1907, *NGB*, vol. 40-3, no. 2200.

Another important factor in the change of Japanese policy on emigration was the situation in Britain. The Vancouver Riot occurred at a time when Britain, which had played an important role supporting Japan in settling the Japanese immigrant problem in Canada, was beginning to be irritated by the aggressiveness of Japan in Manchuria and China. The Japanese government, anxious to maintain its close relations with Britain, hoped that friendly relations between Canada and Japan would help achieve this goal.

Finally, the Japanese government was always concerned about preserving the honour of Japan in its relations with other nations. Japan would never tolerate emigration limitations imposed by other governments, which would disgrace that honour. The only course Japan could take after the Vancouver Riot was, as a result, to restrict emigration voluntarily. Thus the Japanese government decided to accept the Canadian proposal to negotiate with the Lemieux Mission on emigration restriction.