

QUEBEC NEWSPAPER REACTIONS TO THE 1907 VANCOUVER RIOTS:

Humanitarianism, Nationalism, and Internationalism

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INTRODUCTION

AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF Canadian social and political history is the encounter between the nation's two founding (non-Aboriginal) peoples, the British and the French, whose sometimes troubled coexistence the novelist Hugh MacLennan famously referred to in 1945 as the "two solitudes." This encounter has been particularly consequential (and complex) in French-majority Quebec, the historic cockpit of struggle between the two groups. Meanwhile, members of other ethnic and racial groups, as they have settled in Canada, have been forced to engage in social "triangulation," interacting variously with English and French Canadians and defining their group identity by reference to both groups. The attraction has not always been equal: for various reasons, most ethnic Canadians, even in Quebec, have tended throughout history to connect more with the dominant English group. They have studied the English language, felt the influence of dominant Anglo-Canadian values, and confronted discrimination by that group. Yet French Canadian thinkers and political actors have also powerfully contributed to public discourse and policy in relation to ethnic groups in Canada.

One notable case study of conflicting English and French Canadian perceptions of ethnic Canadians lies in the varied reactions of Quebec newspapers to the issue of Japanese immigration to British Columbia in the early years of the twentieth century and, in particular, to the attacks on Japanese and Chinese immigrants in the Vancouver riots of September 1907.¹ Both anglophone and francophone organs in Quebec

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devoted front-page coverage to the riots for several days after the events, and they offered extended accounts of conditions in Vancouver.

Beyond such reportage, Quebec journalists placed the “Japanese question” within a larger frame. The events in British Columbia intersected with the concerns of both the French- and English-speaking populations over questions of identity and belonging, and reshaped discourse within Quebec with regard to the intersection of race, citizenship, and Canada’s place in the world. In an era before opinion polls, the press provided the main forum for airing and judging public discourse. Studying the newspaper coverage of the riots in the Quebec press thus offers a new and unique window into how the events shaped a larger history of ethnic groups outside of British Columbia – groups whose histories have most often been studied in isolation.

The news from Vancouver led to a stark divide in press opinion, a split that was informed by the rivalry between (and among) English and French Canadians. Quebec’s mainstream anglophone press, principally represented by the rival Montreal-based dailies the *Montreal Star* and the *Montreal Gazette*, underlined the larger global resonance of the events in Vancouver and speculated, in particular, as to their impact on relations between Japan and the British imperial government in London. Writing for an elite audience secure in its social position and confident in Canada’s future as a white Christian society, they supported the rights of the Japanese minority and called for prosecution of white rioters as hoodlums.

In contrast, the leading francophone dailies – *La Presse* and *La Patrie*, which were based in Montreal, and *Le Soleil*, a Liberal Party-affiliated journal based in Quebec City – spoke for a mixed audience of working-class French Canadians plus a smaller number of professionals. Coverage in these journals presented a dramatic tension between nationalism and humanitarianism. On the one side, “nationalist” writers sought to justify or even defend the rioters’ actions by depicting them as a response to a threatened “invasion” of Canada by Japanese immigrants whom they considered immutably foreign and unassimilable. They likewise described the riots as a product of Canada’s colonial subjugation to Great Britain and of its international policy, which did not take account

on francophone news coverage, and Midge Ayukawa, Andrea Geiger, Denise Helly, Laura Madakoro, Simon Nantais, and Patricia Roy for readings and suggestions.

¹ This article covers the riots as primarily a part of the “Japanese question”: there was rather less expression (and division) of opinion in Quebec regarding violence against Chinese immigrants, and the riots did not bring Canadian officials to tender official apologies to the imperial Chinese government in Peking, as they did to Tokyo.

of the interest of Canadians. In contrast, their “humanitarian” opponents insisted on protection of civil rights for all Canadian residents and voiced sympathy for the Japanese as valuable immigrants who were peaceable victims of racist outrages.

BC BACKGROUND

Before examining and interpreting the Quebec newspaper coverage of the Vancouver riots, it is useful to review briefly the September 1907 events and their historical background. Although the first Japanese immigrant, Manzo Nagano, arrived in British Columbia in 1877, it was only in the 1890s, after the Canadian government imposed a head tax on Chinese immigrants and the Japanese government lifted existing restrictions on labour migration, that Japanese began migrating to Canada in visible numbers.

Virtually all the immigrants settled in British Columbia. Their entry catalyzed a series of exclusionary campaigns among white workers and activists in the province. In 1895, people of Japanese ancestry in British Columbia were stripped of the vote. In 1897, following pressure from the newly formed “Anti-Mongolian Association,” the BC legislature passed a law barring Chinese and Japanese aliens from public employment. Two years later, the provincial legislature voted the first of a series of race-based laws, based on South Africa’s Natal Act, that used various stratagems to restrict Japanese immigration.² The Dominion government of Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier, though it did not challenge official discrimination within the province, disallowed the immigration restrictions in order not to disturb British imperial foreign policy towards its Japanese ally.³ Although officially Japanese subjects retained the right of free entry into Canada as a result of Japan’s treaty with Great Britain (to which Canada became a signatory in 1906, albeit with expressed reserves on the immigration question), Tokyo used administrative measures to

² On the Natal acts and exclusionism in British Columbia, see Andrea Geiger, *Subverting Exclusion: Transpacific Encounters with Race, Caste, and Borders, 1885-1928*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

³ W. Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1978). In 1900, Tomekichi Homma, a naturalized Canadian citizen, successfully challenged the 1895 disenfranchisement law in a BC court. However, two years later, the British Privy Council overturned the court’s ruling on appeal. See Andrea Geiger-Adams, “Writing Racial Barriers into Law: Upholding BC’s Denial of the Vote to Its Japanese Canadian Citizens, *Homma v. Cunningham*, 1902,” in *Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest*, ed. Louis Fiset and Gail Nomura, 20-43 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005).

limit Japanese immigration to Canada in order to calm tensions over immigration.

As a result of Japan's administrative measures, plus the disruptions caused by the Russo-Japanese War, Japanese immigration to Canada fell to almost nothing in the years 1904-05.⁴ However, in the aftermath of the Japanese victory over Russia, and as Japanese immigration to the United States subsided in response to anti-Japanese pressure in California, Japanese immigrants (notably "transmigrants" from Hawaii) began arriving in Canada in force. In the course of several months during 1906-07, some five thousand Japanese, more than double the existing population, landed in British Columbia, and, by 1907, there were allegedly ten thousand Issei in the province.⁵

Local whites in Vancouver, the province's largest city, anxious over labour competition and inflamed by racial bias against Japanese, Chinese, and "Hindoo" immigrants (mostly Sikhs) from India, responded to the newcomers by organizing protests and circulating a petition to Parliament that drew thousands of names. The local labour movement became a centre of exclusionist activity.⁶ With help from a circle of American nativist agitators (such as Arthur E. Fowler, the secretary of the Seattle Japanese and Korean Exclusion League, and Frank Cotterill of the American Federation of Labor, who built on the existing structures), a new Asiatic exclusion league formed in Vancouver.

THE VANCOUVER RIOTS

On 7 September 1907, the Vancouver Asiatic Exclusion League called a mass evening parade and meeting at City Hall to protest Asian immigration. A succession of speakers, including Harry Cowan and C.M. Woodworth plus a series of local clergymen, called on the Dominion government to restrict Asian immigration totally. A visitor from New Zealand, labour leader J.E. Wilson, described the restriction of Chinese elsewhere in the Empire. Demonstrators massed outside the building waving white banners labelled "For a White Canada" and burned an effigy of British Columbia's lieutenant-governor, James Dunsmuir

⁴ Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), 39-42.

⁵ The official figures are not altogether trustworthy. Also, as some of these were transmigrants arriving from Hawaii with the intent of passing (back) into the United States, the number of actual settlers was significantly smaller. Still, the entry of ethnic Japanese was sufficiently large to prompt a strong public reaction.

⁶ See Patricia Roy, *A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1989), 192.

(a large-scale employer of Asian labour in his coal mines), on the grounds that he had refused to assent to anti-Japanese legislation. Incited by the speakers, the crowd broke out into mob violence. Crowds of white thugs pushed towards Chinatown. While the Chinese community, according to reports, fled indoors, a cordon of police kept the rioters from pushing onto Hastings Street. Instead, after marching down Carrall Street, rioters invaded there and on neighboring streets, hurling bricks and stones at Chinese-owned businesses and residences and breaking their windows. After damaging the large majority of Chinese-owned properties and leaving the streets a sea of broken glass, the mob abandoned its *Kristallnacht* and set off for the Japanese neighbourhood east of Westminster Avenue (Main Street) and near the waterfront.

By the time the mob recongregated at Powell Street, it had reached an estimated one thousand persons. Marching down Powell Street and throwing stones, rioters broke glass windows on houses and shops and inflicted serious damage to several stores and to the Japanese Bank. Soon bands of Japanese immigrants armed with broken bottles and sticks, and a few with swords and axes, assembled to defend their community and expel the rioters – one group threw down sake bottles from a second story window onto rioters below, while others hurled bricks or blocks of wood.⁷ According to one account, four white rioters were killed in the altercation. Meanwhile, violence broke out along the waterfront. Several Japanese who engaged in fistfights with white toughs on the Canadian Pacific Railway pier were thrown into the water by their opponents and then rescued, with difficulty, by supporters. Soon police began arriving and dispersed the mob, arresting seven rioters. While some rioters attempted to return to Chinatown, they were rebuffed by cordons of police.

The following day, police were stationed in the city's Chinese and Japanese communities to preserve order. They sealed off Powell Street from (white) outsiders. Community members nonetheless formed defence units, and some bought firearms. Chinese leaders called a general strike to protest the racial violence. The labour stoppage lasted two days and partly paralyzed the city's restaurants and hotels.

⁷ Ibid., 190 and following. For accounts of the riots, I rely primarily on Roy and on Howard H. Sugimoto, "The Vancouver Riots of 1907: A Canadian Episode," in *East across the Pacific: Historical and Sociological Studies of Japanese Immigration and Assimilation*, ed. Hilary Conroy and T. Scott Miyakawa, 92-126 (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO Press, 1972). See also "Powell Street Riot – 1907," *Continental Times*, 1 January 1957, II, 1903, pp. 5, 8 (an article that appears to be an English translation of a Japanese-language original); plus the compilation of newspaper stories by the Museum of Vancouver in "Museum of Vancouver, 1907 Anti-Asian Riots," <http://www.museumofvancouver.ca/sites/default/files/MOVedu%20Anti-Asian%20Riots%20Story.pdf>.

The riots sparked intensive newspaper coverage around the world. Most local and provincial English-language media played down the violence of the riots and reported that no deaths had occurred. The *London Times*, as well as many Canadian newspapers, placed the principal onus for the violence on American agitators. Though the Americans formed a convenient scapegoat, it was clear that, underlying the events, there was a long-standing pattern of anti-Asian organizing among local labour unions, churches, and political leaders. As accounts of the Vancouver events in Asian newspapers such as the *Taiwan Daily News* and the *Chinese Western Daily News* made clear, endemic violence against Asian immigrants was present in Vancouver long before the riots and continued even after their end.⁸

The riots and their aftermath put pressure on the nation's political leaders. Conservative opposition leader Robert Borden joined local white authorities in defending the agitation. Borden asserted that British Columbia was and must remain "a White Man's province."⁹ Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier was forced (as well as enabled) to act. To placate Japan as well as Great Britain, Laurier appointed a team headed by his deputy minister of labour – and future prime minister – W.L. Mackenzie King to tour the riot area and report on the amount of damages caused by the riots, which the federal government then awarded. (In a sign of the government's priorities, most of the funds were directed towards fixing the Japanese consulate rather than towards repairing damaged shops or houses.)¹⁰

Meanwhile, hoping to calm the anger of the restrictionists and remove the political issue without violating Japan's treaty rights, in December 1907 Laurier dispatched his labour minister, Rodolphe Lemieux, to Tokyo to negotiate an immigration agreement with Japan: the Lemieux mission represented the first ever occasion on which Canadians bypassed London and undertook an independent foreign mission. Lemieux arrived in Tokyo in December 1907. Although his Japanese hosts refused any explicit undertaking, Lemieux succeeded in obtaining from First Minister Count Hayashi a private promise that Japan would henceforth permit only four hundred Japanese labourers each year to enter Canada;

⁸ Sugimoto, "Vancouver Riots," 101-07; Henry Yu and Woan-Jen Wang, "Perspectives on the 1907 Riots in Selected Asian and International Newspapers," INSTRCC UBC website, http://www.instrcc.ubc.ca/1907_riotwj/.

⁹ Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was: A History of Japanese Canadians* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), 41-46.

¹⁰ On the diplomatic response to the riots, and the differential treatment assigned claims of Japanese and Chinese, respectively, see Julie F. Gilmour, *Trouble on Main Street: Mackenzie King, Reason, Race, and the 1907 Vancouver Riots*, (London, UK: Allen Lane, 2014).

as in the United States, entry of merchants and ministers, as well as the families of established immigrants, remained unrestricted.¹¹

On his return from Japan in January 1908, Lemieux reported to Parliament on his mission. Although Lemieux, because of his promise to Hayashi, was unable to make public any figures, he and Laurier assured his colleagues in Parliament that immigration would be limited and hailed Japan's willingness to cooperate. In a long exposition, Lemieux discussed the history of the "Japanese problem" in Canada. He made clear that unrestricted Japanese immigration posed a menace to the "Anglo-Saxon" civilization of the West, a category in which he clearly included French Canadians such as himself:

In an Anglo-Saxon country like ours, where democratic institutions prevail, the introduction in large numbers of foreign races unfamiliar with our principles of self-government can only be considered dangerous ... These orientals belong to a civilization formed over the centuries in ways radically and totally different from ours. It is thus clear that British Columbians must oppose this vast foreign colony – exclusive, inscrutable, unassimilable, retaining their particular customs and characteristics.¹²

Laurier backed his minister with a two-hour speech of his own. Despite his advocacy of a friendly foreign policy towards Japan, Laurier made the case for a restrictive policy in apocalyptic and racially charged terms: "In all the nations where they have met, the white and mongol races have demonstrated their antagonism. The population of British Columbia is small, and it is understandable that they fear if the wave of Asian immigration is not contained, power will soon pass from one race to another."¹³ The "Gentleman's Agreement" was supported by a large majority in Parliament. While its provisions were further refined during the 1920s, when the annual total of immigrants was reduced to 150, the Gentleman's Agreement remained in effect until the Second World War.¹⁴

¹¹ Adachi, *Enemy That Never Was*, p. 81.

¹² Untitled editorial, *La Presse*, 29 January 1908.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ On the Gentleman's Agreement and Canada's prewar diplomatic relations with Japan, see, for example, John D. Meehan, *The Dominion and the Rising Sun: Canada Encounters Japan, 1929-41*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006).

QUEBEC AND JAPANESE IMMIGRATION

In contrast to whites in British Columbia, most Canadians in Quebec remained distant from and indifferent to the Japanese presence in the first years of the twentieth century. There were only a few Japanese residents in Montreal – Mr. Shaw T. Nishimura settled in Montreal in 1900 as a representative of the Japan Central Tea Association,¹⁵ the Yokohama Silk Company sent agents, and a Japanese consulate opened downtown in 1902 before moving to Ottawa shortly afterwards. These businessmen – like their counterparts in Vancouver, in fact¹⁶ – fit in smoothly alongside the city’s Anglo merchant elite and had little to do with the French-speaking majority. Writer/publicist K.T. Takahashi, who lived in Montreal and ran a stationery store during the 1890s, produced a pamphlet about Japanese immigrants in British Columbia that was published by the *Montreal Gazette* in 1897. In the pamphlet – arguably the first published English-language writing by a Japanese Canadian – Takahashi countered popular anti-Japanese sentiment by turning nativist arguments on their heads. Thus, he urged white employers in British Columbia to employ Japanese immigrants, who intended to stay and build Canadian society, rather than hiring white American migrant workers who would take their earnings and return south.¹⁷

Even as the Japanese arrived in British Columbia, European immigration to Quebec, which had been minimal from 1867 to 1896, expanded dramatically, with new immigrants arriving from Southern and Eastern Europe. This caused massive disturbance, in particular, among Quebec’s majority French Canadian community, whose members resented having to compete with the newcomers for jobs.¹⁸ Furthermore, the Roman Catholic Church, which dominated French Canadian intellectual life, underlined the importance of immutable racial and ethno-religious identities in opposing entry by Italians, Jews, and other groups: “To the French Canadian Catholic Church, immigration was a horrid experience which stripped individuals of their ties and sense of attachment to family

¹⁵ “Prominent Americans Interested in Japan and Prominent Japanese in America,” supplement to *Japan and America*, January 1903, 85.

¹⁶ Roy, *White Man’s Province*, 220.

¹⁷ K.T. Takahashi, *The Anti-Japanese Petition: Appeal in Protest against a Threatened Persecution* (Montreal: Montreal Gazette Press, 1897).

¹⁸ Norman McDonald, *Canada, Immigration and Colonization, 1841-1903* (Aberdeen, UK: Aberdeen University Press, 1966), 187; Paul-André Linteau, René Durocher, et Jean-Claude Robert, *Histoire du Québec Contemporain*, vol. 1, *De la Confédération à la crise 1867-1929* (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1979), 176.

and community values.”¹⁹ French Canadian liberals, who had supported Confederation as a means of striking a balance of power between English and French, opposed the immigration of members of other nationalities as a destabilizing force. In addition, many educated French Canadians, like their English counterparts, were influenced by prevailing social Darwinist ideas and viewed immigrants from outside Western Europe as inferior and even dangerous on racial grounds.²⁰

Still, the west coast was far from Quebec, and the presence of the Issei in the west was hardly visible, either in the anglophone or francophone press, except in the larger context of immigration. A cartoon from the journal *Le Canard* in 1900 (see Figure 1) caricatured new immigrants in stereotyped fashion and thereby emphasized their undesirability. Alongside the hook-nosed Jew, the swarthy bearded Slav, and the savage African witch doctor was the crafty Oriental. Yet *Le Canard* also satirized French Canadian restrictionists in a 1903 cartoon, presenting them as greedy children who refused to share a meal that was too large for them alone. A later cartoon from *Le Canard* (Figure 3) depicted Japanese immigrants in dehumanized terms as a swarm of insects harassing west coast whites, though it also satirized the exaggerated nature of British Columbian xenophobia.²¹ In early 1907, an editorial in *La Presse* had expressed doubts over anti-Japanese legislation in British Columbia not because it was racist but, on pragmatic grounds, because it hindered development:

If British Columbia’s laws against the Japanese remain, so be it. However, our country, being young, must follow the example of the United States, and so far as the development of our railroads in concerned, the policy of the Canadians people should be: whether you are black, yellow, red or white, come and work!²²

¹⁹ “Pour l’Église catholique canadienne-française, l’émigration est une expérience néfaste qui fait perdre aux individus leurs liens et sens d’attachement aux valeurs familiales et communautaires.” In Denise Helly, *Les Chinois à Montréal, 1877-1951* (Montréal: Éditions de l’IQRC, 1979), 179.

²⁰ Fernande Roy, *Progrès. Harmonie. Liberté: le libéralisme des milieux d’affaires francophones à Montréal au tournant du siècle* (Montréal: Boréal, 1988), 238 *passim*.

²¹ In contrast to the Quebec press, even before September 1907 Western newspapers generally favoured restriction of Japanese immigrants on overtly racist grounds. For instance, the editors of *Le Manitoba*, a francophone paper operating out of Winnipeg, called for a curb on immigration, whatever impact such an action might have on the British and Japanese governments, and alleged that Canada was being “invaded by the yellow race.” See “Un coup d’œil sur l’extrême Ouest,” *Le Manitoba*, 8 May 1907. Simultaneously reflecting and inflaming anti-Japanese hysteria, the editors proceeded a few weeks later to report “credible rumours spreading that most of the Japanese currently immigrating to the American continent are soldiers, many of whom have seen service in the Russo-Japanese War” (*Le Manitoba*, 31 July 1907).

²² “Un véritable péril national,” *La Presse*, 16 January 1907.

XXIIe Année—No 40 MONTREAL, 25 AGOUT 1890 JOURNAL A UN SOU

Le Canard

Humoristique—HEBDOMADAIRE—Illustré

RÉDIGÉ EN COLLABORATION H. BERTHELOT, Fondateur BUREAUX: 126 Rue Ste-Elizabeth

L'IMMIGRATION

SIXTON.—Voici un joli lot d'Immigrants que j'ai eu pour presque rien.
 Mlle CANADA.—Mon Dieu ! combien va-t-il m'en coûter pour les renvoyer.

Pour les Rhumes obstinés, le Croup, l'Asthme, la Grippe, etc., etc., donnez le **BAUME RHUMAL** 25 cts la bouteille dans toutes les Pharmacies et Epiceries.

Figure 1. *Le Canard* satirizes immigrants and presents Canada as an alarmed housewife wondering how much it would cost to get rid of them

2^{ème} Année—No 13 MONTREAL, 14 FEVRIER 1903 UN SOU

Le Canard

H. BERTHELOT, } JOURNAL HUMORISTIQUE { BUREAUX
FONDATEUR. } PARAISSANT LE SAMEDI { 1585-1597 RUE ONTARIO

LE CANADA POUR LES CANADIENS



Bien sûr que je vais me donner une indigestion, si je mange tout cela seul; je ferais peut-être mieux d'inviter mes voisins.

Figure 2. This time *Le Canard* satirizes restrictionists as greedy children.



NOTRE IMMIGRATION!
CB: Wilfrid, protège-moi contre ces maudites bêtes!

Figure 3. British Columbians plagued with insects from Japan plead with Sir Wilfrid Laurier to protect them. *Source: Le Canard*, September 1907.

Though the support expressed for Japanese immigration was conditional and self-interested, the editorial dramatized the lack of urgency over immigration restriction that both linguistic groups in Quebec seem to have felt before September 1907.²³

THE ANGLOPHONE PRESS

Reaction to the Vancouver riots in the Montreal anglophone press was almost immediate. The *Montreal Star* led off its coverage on Monday, 9 September 1907, with a front-page article that began by proclaiming,

²³ For more discussion of the long history of Japanese Canadians and French Canadians, see Greg Robinson, "Two Other Solitudes? Historical Encounters between Japanese Canadians and French Canadians," in *Contradictory Impulses: Canada and Japan in the 20th Century*, ed. Greg Donaghy and Patricia Roy, 140-57 (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2008).

“For five hours during Saturday night Vancouver was ruled by a mob.”²⁴ However, after summarily mentioning the attacks on the Chinese and Japanese quarters, the *Star* article spoke at length of a “disgraceful incident” that preceded the riots – namely, the mob’s action in burning the effigy of Lieutenant-Governor Dunsmuir. Such leading coverage, accompanied by a sketch of Dunsmuir, demonstrated the priority that the newspaper placed on the position of the Crown’s representative.²⁵ The article concluded with official reports by two Japanese diplomats deploring the violence and listing the damage incurred. This was followed by a separate dispatch describing the views of the London-based newspaper *Pall Mall Gazette*, which had expressed sympathy with the rioters as the “prospective victims of an Asiatic invasion” who had provided a warning that the immigration issue could not be postponed.²⁶

The next day, the *Star*’s main story, which bore an Ottawa by-line, focused on the diplomatic side of the incident, again underlining the imperial aspects of the question. Noting that Canada’s central government would likely apologize to Japan and indemnify the Japanese victims of the riots, the article included the text of a telegram from Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier to the mayor of Vancouver deploring the violence against the subjects of the emperor of Japan, a British ally.²⁷ Curiously, in contrast to the mass of coverage, which centred on increasing Japanese immigration and the threat of “invasion,” the *Star*’s analyst insisted that it was counterproductive as well as outrageous: “The outbreak in Vancouver is regarded as particularly unfortunate, as it took place at a time when the problem of limiting Japanese immigration to Canada had about been solved.”²⁸ After the lead article appeared a selection of articles on the riots and their aftermath from the American press (which took different positions on the event, but all of which disclaimed the leadership of American agitators in inciting the riots) and the British press.²⁹ That same day, the *Star* ran an editorial on the riots. The editors expressed no sympathy for the rioters,³⁰ but they praised the Japanese (by implication slamming the Chinese) for their rapid response

²⁴ “Anti-Oriental Agitation in West Culminates in Attack on Chinese and Japanese by Vancouver Mob,” *Montreal Star*, 9 September 1907.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ “Dangers of Asiatic Invasion,” *Montreal Star*, 9 September 1907.

²⁷ “Canada Will Probably Apologize to Japan for Vancouver Riots and Recoup Japanese for Losses,” *Montreal Star*, 10 September 1907.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ “An American View of Vancouver Riots” and “English News on the Vancouver Riots,” *Montreal Star*, 10 September 1907.

³⁰ “The Vancouver Race Riots,” *Montreal Star*, 10 September 1907.

in arming to protect themselves. "As to their right to protection by the authorities, there cannot be a moment's dispute. So long as they are in the country, they are entitled to safety and to all the immunities guaranteed by the law." The editors likewise deplored the excitement over Japanese immigration and its alleged threat to "white domination." While they conceded that white labourers needed protection against unfair competition, they stated that this could be managed without barring all Asians from immigrating, even as women workers – who posed a much greater threat to a "white man's wage" – had been integrated into the workplace.³¹ Lest this message appear insufficiently forceful, the editors continued the next day with a follow-up editorial entitled "Punish the Hoodlums," which called for exemplary action against the "hoodlum class," including mass incarceration, as the best way to demonstrate both "the moral superiority of the white man" and that "it is a serious thing to set London and Tokio – to say nothing of Ottawa – by the ears."³²

The *Montreal Star's* essentially imperially inflected vision of the Vancouver riots reached a sort of climax on 12 September 1907, when the editors discussed the perils of the riots for Great Britain's international position. While Tokyo might be impressed by a show of Pacific coast anti-Japanese solidarity with the United States (where the attempts of the San Francisco school board to segregate Japanese American schoolchildren had catalyzed a period of heavy tension between Washington and Tokyo), the Vancouver riots could result in serious friction between Japan and Great Britain at a crucial time. France's semi-alliance with Great Britain (sealed in the so-called "entente cordiale" of 1904) was placed in jeopardy by French actions in Morocco. At the Algeciras Conference the previous year, overriding German objections with British and American support, France had obtained international recognition of its "special role" (i.e., a protectorate) in Morocco. French military action against Moroccan rebels in August 1907 threatened to align France with an aggressive Germany, something joint action might avert:

This, then, is no time for Britain and the United States to get at loggerheads; or for either of them to permit a serious misunderstanding with Japan ... Canadians must never forget that they, too, live in the world, and must take note of international problems. The foreign policy of the British Empire is as much their concern as that of any other British subjects.³³

³¹ Ibid.

³² "Punish the Hoodlums," *Montreal Star*, 11 September 1907.

³³ "Japanese Troubles and Morocco," *Montreal Star*, 12 September 1907.

Like its anglophone rival, the *Montreal Star*, the *Montreal Gazette* took a firm position against the Vancouver rioters and called for exemplary punishment. However, if the *Montreal Star's* editorials centred on the interests of British diplomacy as the prime reason for denouncing the rioters, the *Gazette* took a more sensationalist and idealist position. The journal began its coverage of the events on 9 September with a set of front-page dispatches, apparently from other Canadian newspapers, describing the events. Unlike the *Star*, however, the *Gazette* did not include coverage from either British or American newspapers. The following day, the *Gazette* featured a special article alleging that Japanese communities in Vancouver had obtained stocks of dynamite to blow up any further attacking mobs, while local Chinese were purchasing revolvers.³⁴

In the same issue, the *Gazette* ran an editorial deploring the attacks perpetrated by “hooligans” on the Chinese and Japanese. The editors did not express any sympathy with anti-immigration sentiment but, rather, deplored the fact that peaceable residents were targeted by the mob “because of their color.” The editorial’s anti-racist message was reflected in its peroration: “A mob that is permitted to persecute one class of people will soon think it can tyrannize over any class, and will become a public danger that only the shedding of blood can check.”³⁵

On 11 September 1907, the *Gazette* once more led with a sensationalist headline, “Ammunition Seized,” in which it alleged (without foundation) that a shipment of thirty rifles and five thousand rounds of ammunition ordered by local Chinese merchants had been discovered by police and seized, even as a dozen Chinese had been arrested for carrying revolvers. Meanwhile, authorities, who had found a mound of oil-soaked waste in the local Japanese mission school, feared an arson plot.³⁶ Like the editors of the *Montreal Star*, the editors of the *Gazette* included Canadian Associated Press dispatches reporting the negative reactions of the *Times* and other London newspapers to the rioting as well as the telegrams of regret sent to Japan by Governor General Lord Grey and by Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier (neither of the newspapers seems to

³⁴ “Dynamite,” *Montreal Gazette*, 10 September 1907. I have been unable to trace the source for the stories of dynamite, which do not seem to have been reported in other newspapers.

³⁵ “The Vancouver Outrage,” *Montreal Gazette*, 10 September 1907.

³⁶ “Ammunition Seized,” *Montreal Gazette*, 11 September 1907. The writer of the article introduced a slightly comic note in describing boycotts launched by local Chinese workers following the riots: “The strike of Chinese cooks, servants, and domestics disarranged the menu of fashionable Vancouver hotels and restaurants ... and closed a score of restaurants. In many cases guests at hotels were made victims of a new and strange diet, while chaos reigned in many homes.” Considering the long-standing parade of racially inflected Western stereotypes about exotic (or barbarous) Chinese dishes, the idea that diners cut off from Chinese chefs were put on a strange diet was perhaps facetious.

have remarked upon the oddity that Canada's leaders apologized to the Japanese government but not to the Chinese government).

Interestingly, the editors appended to these articles a dispatch on pogroms in Kishinev, describing a "serious and outrageous" incident in which anti-Jewish rioters invaded the town's "Hebrew quarter" and murdered eighty Jews. While the text of the Kishinev article did not mention the anti-Asian disturbances in Vancouver, the juxtaposition of the articles, which was surely deliberate, underlined the editors' concerns over racial violence.³⁷ The implicit warning was made explicit a day later, in a comment on the *Gazette's* editorial page:

Kishinev is the latest scene of Russian attack upon the Jews, eighty members of the persecuted race having fallen victim to mob wrath. With what has just transpired in Vancouver Canadians are not in a position to be too hard on the Russian toughs. Christianity has a lot to do all over Christendom before the intelligent heathen will see it as it ought to be.³⁸

Despite the tenor of these warnings, the *Gazette* soon began winding down its coverage. On 12 September, it reported that the situation in Vancouver was calming down and that a shipload of some one thousand Asian labourers who had taken passage on the SS *Monteagle* had landed in Victoria amid fears that their arrival in Vancouver would catalyze new demonstrations. This proved not to be the case. Although several dozen Japanese immigrants left the boat in Victoria out of prudence, the next day the *Monteagle* proceeded to Vancouver and the remaining passengers disembarked without difficulty.³⁹

On 13 September 1907, the *Gazette* featured a final set of front-page reports on the aftermath of the riots. The lead article, a special for the newspaper, focused on the role of labour unions in the troubles. Despite the efforts of Prime Minister Laurier and other officials to ascribe the violence to a few local "hoodlums" incited by agitators from the United States, the riots were in fact part of a larger labour movement with nationwide connections: "While there is no doubt that the rough element did the work of destruction, it is also the fact that every labor [sic] unionist

³⁷ "80 Jews Murdered," *Montreal Gazette*, 11 September 1907. Kishinev, in Russian Moldavia, had been the site of a large-scale pogrom in summer 1903, in which forty-nine Jews died and some five hundred were wounded. The September 1907 pogrom prompted the Hebrew poet Hayyim Nahman Bialik to pen two poems, "On the Slaughter" and the longer "In the City of Slaughter."

³⁸ Untitled editorials, *Montreal Gazette*, 12 September 1907.

³⁹ "More Asiatics Arrive," *Montreal Gazette*, 12 September 1907.

in the city is pledged to resist the entrance of any more yellow laborers, and they will resort to force if necessary.”⁴⁰

THE FRANCOPHONE PRESS

The news of the Vancouver riots broke in Quebec’s three main French-language organs, *La Patrie*, *La Presse*, and *Le Soleil*, on Monday, 9 September 1907. Their first accounts, taken from wire services or from articles in the anglophone media, were largely identical. All four reported that the crowd had organized to burn an effigy of James Dunsmuir and then formed into a mob. After attacking Chinese shops on Carrall and Pender Streets, they invaded Powell Street, where the Japanese residents defended themselves with weapons, and bloody pitched battles took place.

Yet if the French newspapers carried largely identical stories on what happened, they differed strongly in their reactions to the news. *La Patrie* took a position that joined opposition to the rioting with sympathy for the rioters’ cause. Its editors referred to the violence as an understandable reaction to the real problem of Asian immigration. As early as 9 September, *La Patrie* ran an editorial entitled “Whites against Yellows.” The editors affirmed in the strongest terms their loathing for racial rioting, comparing the Vancouver incidents to pogroms in Russia and to the deadly 1906 Atlanta Riot: “We know to what regrettable excesses racial hatreds often lead. We see examples of it every day, in every country. The massacres of Jews in Kishinev and the incidents in Georgia where whites mobbed blacks are still recent in the memory of all.”⁴¹ Yet the editorial added that it was easy to understand the state of mind of the British Columbians, who considered their dearest interests threatened by the arrival of Japanese “coolies” and wondered whether such an “invasion” would lead them, the first inhabitants, to be pushed out.⁴² While the “first inhabitants” to whom *La Patrie*’s editors refer were clearly whites, the historian might note that they were in fact preceded in their occupation not only by First Nations, who really *were* original occupants, but in many cases by Chinese, blacks, and other groups who had been resident in the area of British Columbia for half a century by the time that European settlers arrived in large numbers.

The following day, a further editorial stated that the national Liberal government was caught in an impasse. On the one hand, their leaders needed to take into account the sensitivities of Japan, which did not

⁴⁰ “Union Men behind the Agitators,” *Montreal Gazette*, 13 September 1907.

⁴¹ “Blancs Contre Jaunes,” *La Patrie*, 9 September 1907.

⁴² *Ibid.*

wish its subjects excluded (or mobbed), and those of Great Britain, who, as an ally, wished to appease them. On the other hand, there were the British Columbians, who would not give up an exclusionist policy – *La Patrie* cited BC MP R.G. McPherson, who (using a rather excessive historical analogy) compared the situation in Vancouver to the revolt against tyranny in Boston at the outbreak of the American Revolution. “It is not only the hotheads, or some excited individuals, as one might think, who drive the anti-oriental movement. It is the entire population with its political leaders at the head.”⁴³ It is noteworthy that, in making such a claim, McPherson not only justified the violence but tacitly admitted that that it was a tactic for which he and the BC political class were responsible or at least complicit. (Since the chief target of the American revolutionaries was the Loyalists, who proceeded to settle English Canada, this was a curious historical analogy for a Canadian political leader to make.) *La Patrie*’s editorialist, for his part, signalled in a concluding passage which side he thought should prevail:

According to the letter of the treaty now in force, there is no written restriction that forbids British or Japanese subjects from immigrating to each other’s country. It is time to ask ourselves if we haven’t opened our gates too wide.⁴⁴

One might have thought that *La Presse*, the chief rival of *La Patrie* among mainstream francophone dailies, would have taken a position less hostile towards Japanese immigrants. Not only had *La Presse*’s editors spoken in support of Japanese immigration in the months before September 1907, as mentioned above, but the newspaper’s editor-in-chief, Jules Helbronner, was himself a Jewish immigrant from France who had suffered

⁴³ “Le problème asiatique,” *La Patrie*, 10 September 1907.

⁴⁴ Ibid. While I have restricted myself in this article to analyzing the daily press, I might note that there was also a good deal of comment about the Vancouver riots in the weekly press, which was even more extreme in drawing nationalist conclusions. *La Verité*, an ultramontane (extreme Catholic) organ edited by the American-born writer Jules-Paul Tardivel; *La Libre Parole*, an activist Catholic organ that was the ancestor of *L’Action Nationale*; and the arts and leisure journal *Le Passe-Temps* all spoke of the riots as a product of the British colonial subjugation of Canada, which could not set its own immigration policy. See the compilation of articles in “Question du Jour,” *Le Passe-Temps*, 5 October 1907. *Le Passe-Temps* meanwhile mentioned a petition by BC unions to Prime Minister Laurier to restrict Asian immigration, describing his response, in essence, as “Get stuffed!”: “There are two reasons that the petition of British Columbian workers [to restrict immigration] will be thrown in the trash. 1. Our subjection to England, which has long prepared the crushing of the United States by Japan. Canada which, since the time of McDonald, has become less and less a nation, must without complaint serve as a pawn of English diplomacy on the world chessboard; 2. The immigration policy of a government that would not hesitate to pay \$5.00 a head for gorillas, if it was in the interest of the capitalists. The workers do not contribute anything to the party’s campaign war chest, and instead they use the this chest to buy the workers’ vote” (ibid.).

anti-Semitic prejudice in his career in Montreal. *La Presse* was generally supportive of Prime Minister Laurier and his Liberal government.

Yet, in the wake of the Vancouver riots, *La Presse* took almost from the beginning an extreme position, speaking unequivocally in support of violent whites and expressing racial hostility towards Asian immigrants. In its initial, mostly descriptive article of 10 September, *La Presse* reported the riots as a “regrettable incident” caused by the immigration of an excessive number of Japanese and Chinese. The article reported that five hundred whites attacked the Asian districts, and it added (dubiously) that neither firefighters nor police had been able to stop the crowd from hurling various Japanese into the sea. It further stated that the Japanese community’s residents defended themselves ferociously, wounding three whites with knives and two with thrown bottles.⁴⁵

The following day, with regard to the violence, *La Presse* began a feverish mixed effort of justification and scapegoating. First, on 11 September its editors reprinted an extract of an article from the *Portland Oregonian*, which blamed the riots on a pair of American agitators, E.A. Fowler of the Anti-Chinese and Korean Immigration League and Frank W. Cotterilli.⁴⁶ Then a few days later *La Presse* decided instead that the Asians themselves were to blame. Since they came to Canada only to make money and then leave, the newspaper’s editors insisted, and were just as unassimilable as the “Niggers in the United States,” they had no right to protection. Worse, in their view, the Japanese responded when attacked:

The threatening attitude of the Japanese during the recent tussle does not bode well. They were only a handful, after all, yet they spoke of arming themselves to face their aggressors, threatening even to blow them up with dynamite. What colony of civilized men would dare, in a place inflamed by prejudice, throw out such provocations to the excited majority? ... Such bravura is an invitation to a [war of extermination] and nothing more. It is up to Canada to protect its future against such a dangerous invasion, since as soon as the Japanese and Chinese will be the least bit in force, no power in the world will be able to stop them from slitting people’s throats.⁴⁷

Having first decided that the riot was justified, and having then moved on to blame first the Americans, then the Asian victims, *La Presse* proceeded within the week to conclude that there had been no riots at

⁴⁵ “La Situation est grave à Vancouver,” *La Presse*, 10 September 1907.

⁴⁶ “Les instigateurs de l’émeute,” *La Presse*, 11 September 1907.

⁴⁷ “La race jaune en Amérique,” *la Presse*, 12 September 1907.

all! Rather, following the *Ottawa Free Press*, *La Presse* alleged that local Asians had merely been gripped by an excess of excitement after a child threw a pebble through the window of a Japanese shop (some pebble, if it could smash the glass!). The editors asserted that the journalist who had first reported these events as full-scale riots should be punished for poisoning Canada-Japan relations.⁴⁸

The reasons behind *La Presse's* swift (and self-contradictory) change of story are not clear, but they added up to a desperate and futile attempt to deflect blame for the violence from the rioters. Even the editors of *La Presse* must have realized that their position that nothing of consequence had taken place in Vancouver was transparently false as they then pivoted to campaigning for the total exclusion of all Asian immigrants. An editorial quoted derisively a piece in the *London Times* that had held that the rights of all those on British soil, of whatever colour or race, must be defended by the province and the Crown. The response of the editors (themselves based five thousand kilometers from Vancouver) was snide: "It is easy to submit philosophically to an inconvenience six thousand miles away ... But these advocates of imperial dignity do not even permit Canadian cattle to enter England when it goes against the interests of their farmers. What if, instead of simple animals, we asked them to accept harmful and unacceptable people?"⁴⁹

In another editorial appearing shortly afterwards, *La Presse's* editors again called for a ban on Japanese immigration. They admitted that Japan had made amazing progress towards building a modern state. However, this meant that Canada, rather than accepting Asians, must be all the more aware of the "Yellow Peril," whether from Japan or from "the Hindoos." Prime Minister Laurier, they added, should take special care to block the emigration of Japanese from Hawaii, who "felt themselves free to invade the shores of British Columbia" since Canada had signed the Anglo-Japanese Treaty.⁵⁰ It must be stated that it was not just the excitement of the moment that led the editors to use such extreme language. Several months later, in January 1908, *La Presse* repeated its negative views of Japanese immigrants, reporting in indignant terms that three firefighters in Victoria had been attacked by "a horde" of "oriental demons."⁵¹

Curiously enough, there was a partial exception to the extremist position taken by *La Presse*, and this came in its editors' criticism of opposition leader Robert Borden's comments defending the rioters:

⁴⁸ "Les délit de la fausse nouvelle," *La Presse*, 17 September 1907.

⁴⁹ "Regain d'impérialisme," *La Presse*, 12 September 1907.

⁵⁰ "M. Borden dans la Colombie Britannique," *La Presse*, 1 October 1907.

⁵¹ "La Colombie Britannique," *La Presse*, 2 January 1908.

“These speeches, coming just a few days after the unfortunate clash in Vancouver, are reprehensible in the highest degree. The duty of a public man in moments of crisis is to try to calm spirits and not to further irritate them.”⁵² However, since the editors had themselves expressed sentiments akin to Borden’s, and then waited an entire month before criticizing his position, such comments might be seen as inspired more by loyalty to Prime Minister Laurier and the ruling Liberals than by abstract feelings of humanity.

The polar opposite of *La Presse* in its view of the riots was the daily *Le Soleil*, based in Quebec City. *Le Soleil*’s editors reacted to the events in Vancouver by stating bluntly that they were an international disgrace and that Canada’s duty was to officially apologize and offer damages to Japan: “The Japanese here have rights to the same protection that we give to all other categories of our population, according to the treaty recently concluded between Canada and Japan; thus the events that took place in Vancouver involve Canada as a nation.”⁵³ *Le Soleil*’s defence of the rights of Asian residents shone most strongly in early November. In an editorial, the paper ridiculed Rudyard Kipling’s proposal, made in a letter to the *Montreal Gazette*, that Canada sponsor more immigration by Europeans. Kipling suggested that settlement by Europeans would counter the peril of Asian immigration.⁵⁴ *Le Soleil* retorted that Canada would need the equivalent of the entire population of England to meet its workforce needs and could not simply rely on individual Europeans. In its conclusion, the editorial showed more appreciation of Asian immigrants than of their European counterparts:

“We want a white man’s country!” This is the cry that gets raised. Thus, we admit those who carry knives and guns under their jackets, we admit puny creatures, vagabonds who travel the country half-naked, and yet we refuse peaceful workers because they are yellow! We need not say what would happen if China and Japan ever closed their ports to our ships and levels a special tax on our citizens.⁵⁵

⁵² “M. Borden dans la Colombie Britannique,” <paper? date?>

⁵³ “Une violente agitation anti-japonaise existe dans la Colombie Anglaise,” *Le Soleil*, 11 September 1907. See also “De graves émeutes ont eu lieu et on ignore ce qui va en advenir. Blancs contre jaunes. Les Japonais ont droit à la protection de nos lois,” *Le Soleil*, 10 September 1907.

⁵⁴ Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) was a prolific British novelist/poet renowned for his support of imperialism. His 1899 poem “The White Man’s Burden,” written to advocate US control of the Philippines, represented Asians as “half devil and half child.” His letter to the *Gazette* was published following the close of his extended tour of Canada, during which Kipling visited Montreal and spoke to admiring audiences at McGill University and the Canadian Club.

⁵⁵ “Le remède de M. Kipling à l’immigration asiatique,” *Le Soleil*, 6 November 1907.

CONCLUSION

From the first, Quebec's anglophone press presented the events in British Columbia from an essentially imperialist standpoint, making frequent reference to the British press and describing the reaction in England and the implications for diplomatic relations between Great Britain and Japan, especially their naval alliance. At the same time, the position of the anglophone press was essentially legalistic: the riots amounted to disorder. Indeed, the editors of the *Montreal Gazette* bluntly asserted that the actual damage they caused was beside the point:

In thinking about and apologizing to Japan over the Vancouver trouble there is risk of the real issue being lost sight of. The great affront was not to the yellow race, but to Canadian law, which the rioters defied when they assailed men entitled to peaceably live on Canadian soil. The politicians may fume, but the magistrates should remember the main fact and make others remember it, too.⁵⁶

While this attitude reflects an impressively colour-blind sense of justice on the part of the editors, it also reflects their unabashed elitism. Significantly, none of the newspapers thought to interview Japanese Canadians, either in Montreal or on the west coast, to learn their point of view. Indeed, the fact that editors of the anglophone press posited racism as immaterial meant that they failed to consider public opinion among white British Columbians and the large-scale pressure for exclusion.

Such lofty attitudes were largely absent among francophone writers, who presented the rioting in Vancouver as a response to an Asiatic "invasion." Even *Le Soleil*, which distinguished itself by its forthright denunciation of the rioters, couched its support for the rights of Japanese immigrants in pragmatic as well as moral terms. Its editors warned: "If we give in to prejudice to the point of excluding Asian workers from our land, the white man's country will someday see the day when whites will find it hard to live there. Someday we will need the manpower we now refuse."⁵⁷

Whatever the position of the newspapers, restrictionist policies prevailed in Quebec following the riots. The Hayashi-Lemieux Gentleman's Agreement, carried out by French Canadian leaders with the avowed mission of keeping Canada an "Anglo-Saxon nation," proved wildly

⁵⁶ Untitled editorial, *Montreal Gazette*, 12 September 1907.

⁵⁷ "Le remède de M. Kipling à l'immigration asiatique."

popular among both anglophones and francophones in Parliament.⁵⁸ Moreover, the Vancouver riots provided racist public opinion a larger forum for expression. According to historian Fernande Roy, in the months that followed the Vancouver riots, the French-language commercial press in Montreal published “several hateful articles demanding the total prohibition of immigration by Chinese, Japanese, and Blacks.”⁵⁹ Even though blacks had lived in Canada for three hundred years and were primarily concentrated in the east, Caribbean immigrants were subject to the same hostility as were “foreigners” who could not be assimilated into Canadian society.

EPILOGUE

Public opinion in Quebec, at least as filtered through newspaper coverage, seemed to tilt solidly against Japanese immigrants in the aftermath of the Vancouver riots. Certainly, Quebec voters supported Wilfrid Laurier and his cabinet in forging the Hayashi-Lemieux agreement and the Gentlemen’s Agreement. Even among anglophones, the humanitarian side of the post-riot discourse remained buried beneath the nationalist force. Perhaps surprisingly, given this reaction, a generation later Quebec would become a haven for dispossessed Issei and Nisei from British Columbia, and it would be French Canadians who demonstrated an openness.⁶⁰ Quebeckers first became widely engaged with Japanese Canadians during the Second World War, in the wake of their mass confinement by the Canadian government. After federal authorities refused to provide high schools for the young Japanese Canadians removed to confinement sites in the east of British Columbia, French Canadian priests and nuns were dispatched to the area and opened Catholic schools in Greenwood. Meanwhile, small groups of Japanese Canadians attracted by Montreal’s cosmopolitan reputation began to resettle in the city. The flow became more perceptible after Prime Minister W.L. MacKenzie King’s 1944 order-in-council requiring Japanese Canadians to relocate outside of British Columbia on pain of being deported to Japan, and at least two thousand Japanese Canadians settled for at least some time in Montreal, whose resident Japanese population reached 1,247 by the end of 1946 and

⁵⁸ Greg Robinson, *A Tragedy of Democracy: Japanese Confinement in North America* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2009), 15; Robinson, “Two Other Solitudes?,” 156-57.

⁵⁹ Roy, *Progrès. Harmonie. Liberté*, 238.

⁶⁰ Robinson, “Two Other Solitudes?”

continued to expand.⁶¹ A few hundred Issei and Nisei also resettled during 1945-46 in the Quebec town of Farnham, where the government opened a hostel to house the migrants temporarily, and most later migrated to Montreal.

Although Premier Maurice Duplessis verbally opposed the migration of ethnic Japanese, Quebec remained the only province with a large Japanese population that did not impose any legal restrictions on them during the wartime era. French Canadians, led by Catholic missionary groups such as the Sisters of Christ the King, worked to find housing and employment for the migrants. Canon P.S.C. Powles, a former Anglican missionary in Japan, simultaneously formed the Montreal Committee on Japanese Canadians, a largely English Canadian group, to assist the newcomers.

To be sure, even in Montreal there were expressions of prejudice and discrimination, particularly among English Canadians. In October 1944, McGill University became the first Canadian university officially to close its doors to Japanese Canadian students, on the grounds that, since they were not admissible for military training, educating them would be a waste.⁶² The *Montreal Star* editorialized in May 1944 that the Japanese Canadians were spies for Tokyo, and it advocated deporting the entire Japanese Canadian population “lock, stock and barrel” to Japan once the war was over.⁶³ Following challenges by student groups as well as outside agencies, McGill partly rescinded its policy in 1945.

In the aftermath of the war, when the Canadian government announced its intention to involuntarily deport the ten thousand Japanese Canadians still living in the confinement sites, anglophone activists such as F.R. Scott and Forrest LaViolette joined francophone counterparts led by Thérèse Casgrain to form the Montreal Committee on Canadian Citizenship/Le Comité pour la défense de la citoyenneté canadienne in order to support the rights of Japanese Canadians. The *Montreal Gazette* published an open letter by Scott criticizing the government’s policy.

Meanwhile, in contrast to 1907, francophone newspapers lined up in support of the rights of Japanese Canadians after 1945, especially in the face of threatened deportation. Jacques Perrault, future chairman of the Board of *Le Devoir*, joined the Montreal Committee on Canadian

⁶¹ *Vancouver Sun*, 17 March 1945, cited in Forrest E. LaViolette, *The Canadian Japanese and World War II* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1948), 239; Montreal Japanese Canadian survey, 1953, cited in Keiko Minai, “The Japanese in Montreal: Socio-Economic Integration and Ethnic Identification of an Immigrant Group” (MA thesis, McGill University, 1977), 9.

⁶² “Race restrictions at University Hit,” *Montreal Gazette*, 2 November 1944.

⁶³ La Violette, *Canadian Japanese and World War II*, 306.

Citizenship. *La Patrie* ran a photo of a Japanese Canadian reading a book on citizenship and explained that the federal government's plan to "deport" such people would, in fact, be expulsion as they had been born in Canada and would be strangers in Japan.⁶⁴ In the 25 March 1946 issue, the editors of *La Patrie* pointedly included a photo of George Tamaki, a Japanese Canadian selected as a legal counsel in Saskatchewan. Another daily, *Montréal-Matin*, ran a story on a Japanese Canadian named G. Suzuki who was serving with Allied intelligence in Asia: this story's headline was "Long Live Democracy."⁶⁵

The welcome offered by Quebec press, both anglophone and francophone, to the Japanese Canadian migrants in the 1940s demonstrated the distance that these journals, like the larger population, had travelled since 1907, and it reflected the evolution of a cosmopolitan humanitarian position. Their actions helped lay the foundation of a durable and prosperous Japanese community in Montreal.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ "Que Veut dire déportation?," *La Patrie*, 22 January 1946.

⁶⁵ "Vive la démocratie!," *Montréal-Matin*, 16 February 1946.

⁶⁶ On the development of Montreal's Japanese community, see Christian Roy, "Histoire de la communauté japonaise du Québec, 1942-1988" (PhD diss., Université du Québec à Montréal, 2016).