

# HOWARD CHARLES GREEN AND JAPANESE CANADIANS<sup>1</sup>

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It's only natural that ... [they] should be worked up over the war and the proper place for every one of them is a detention camp.

—Howard Green

**I**N 2007, THE HOWARD GREEN BUILDING, located at 401 Burrard Street in Vancouver, was renamed for Douglas Jung (a former Conservative MP for the riding of Vancouver Centre and the first Chinese Canadian MP). Howard Charles Green (1895–1989), after whom the building was first named in 2006, was also a Conservative parliamentarian. He was an MP from 1935 to 1963, serving in the Opposition as well as in a variety of cabinet posts in the Diefenbaker government.<sup>2</sup> Public protests spawned by the initial naming decision focused on Green's discriminatory attitudes towards Japanese Canadians during and after the Second World War as well as on his support for evacuation, repatriation,<sup>3</sup> and exclusionist immigration policies thereafter. All of

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<sup>1</sup> The author wishes to acknowledge the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and thank Drs. P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Robert Wardhaugh as well as the peer reviewers and editor of *BC Studies* for examining drafts of this article.

<sup>2</sup> Howard Green was a life-long public servant of Canada. Born in 1895 and raised in Kaslo, British Columbia, he served in the First World War, joining the 54th Kootenay Battalion and completing his wartime service at 6th Brigade in Second Division's headquarters as a staff learner. In 1935, he was elected to the federal Parliament as a Conservative for Vancouver-South and continued to represent his city and province until 1963, serving for decades in the federal Opposition and for almost six years in the Diefenbaker government. His roles in government included: house leader, acting prime minister, chairman of caucus, minister of public works, acting minister of defence production, and secretary of state for external affairs. It was for this unusually long and prestigious service to Canada that a naming committee selected Green's name for 401 Burrard Street.

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the terms "evacuation" and "internment," see: Roy Miki, *Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice* (Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 2004), 51ff; Patricia E. Roy, *The Triumph of Citizenship: The Japanese and Chinese in Canada, 1941–67* (Toronto: UBC Press, 2007), 15. It is because of its familiarity that the term "evacuation" is used in this article to describe the removal of Japanese Canadians from British Columbia's "security zone." Debate also continues regarding the term "repatriation." See Miki, *Redress*, 101ff. Though



The Douglas Jung building in Vancouver. Photograph by the author.

this led the minister for public works and government services Canada to change the name of the new eco-friendly building.

According to the protestors, Green “hated” Japanese Canadians. Grace Eiko Thomson, president of the National Association of Japanese Canadians, claimed that Green harboured a “hostile and relentless hatred of the Japanese Canadians.”<sup>4</sup> Roy Miki stated similarly that, “from a Japanese Canadian point of view, he [Green] was one of the

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“deportation” or “expatriation” are more accurate, “repatriation” is also used in this article because of its familiarity.

<sup>4</sup> Ben Hamamoto, “Japanese Canadians Urge Removal of Racist Politician’s Name from Building,” *Nichi Bei Times Weekly*, 2 November 2006.

most feared politicians in Canada because he was pretty relentless in his hatred of Japanese Canadians.<sup>5</sup> Other critics were even more explicit in describing Green's beliefs and actions as "exceptional."<sup>6</sup>

Historians have focused, with good reason, on the unjust suffering of Japanese Canadians during and after the Second World War, whether they were naturalized (Issei) or Canadian born (Nisei). The confiscation of fishing vessels, homes, and personal belongings; the inadequate accommodations to which internees were consigned; the low pay they received; the general reluctance of Canadians to accept evacuees into their communities; and other wrongs have been documented in considerable detail. The subsequent efforts to disperse or deport the evacuees have also received attention. As Stephanie Bangarth points out, the injustices Japanese Canadians suffered need to be recognized and fully understood so that they will never be repeated.<sup>7</sup>

However, focusing on the suffering of Japanese Canadians tends to homogenize the individuals who favoured discriminatory policies. Ken Adachi, in *The Enemy That Never Was*, lists pro-evacuation BC MPs but emphasizes quotations from the most outspoken supporters, such as Thomas Reid (Liberal – New Westminster) and Ian Mackenzie (Liberal – Vancouver Centre). His allegation that the vast majority of BC politicians harboured the same "single-minded extremism" lacks careful scrutiny.<sup>8</sup> Despite considering Green "one of the most feared politicians in Canada because he was pretty relentless in his hatred of Japanese Canadians," Miki homogenizes BC MPs and does not mention Green by name in his book *Redress*.<sup>9</sup>

The propensity to label tends to limit a more thorough understanding of the situation. Howard Green held racist views. While little evidence of his childhood racial beliefs survives, he grew up in British Columbia where the desire to create a "white man's province" was "endemic."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Lena Sin, "Japanese Canadians Want MP's Name Removed from Building," *The Province* (Vancouver), 25 October 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Ben Hamamoto, "Vancouver Building Renaming Aborted after Outcry from Canadian Nikkei," *Nichi Bei Times Weekly*, 15 March 2007. For similar sentiment, see also Tim Reid, "Letter to the Editor," *Globe and Mail*, 1 November 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Stephanie D. Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest: Defending Citizens of Japanese Ancestry in North America, 1942-49* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 194.

<sup>8</sup> Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991), 202-5, 297.

<sup>9</sup> Miki, *Redress*. Ann Sunahara similarly groups BC MPs and fails to mention Howard Green by name. Ann Gomer Sunahara, *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1981), 11, 117.

<sup>10</sup> Peter W. Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 167.

Green was taught to discriminate against individuals based on socially constructed stereotypes pertaining to both culture and appearance. His peacetime antipathy to Japanese Canadians in British Columbia, however, was soon eclipsed by security concerns. Beginning in the 1930s, Green, like most in British Columbia, feared that imperialistic powers such as Japan or Germany might strike at Canada. He also worried that immigrants from these countries might constitute a fifth column.<sup>11</sup> His conceptions of race and ethnicity thus led him to judge both white and non-white immigrants as potential security threats. After Japan's defeat in 1945, Green's concerns regarding BC security receded only gradually, and his more general aversion to Japanese Canadians remained. Green's consistent espousal of security concerns were genuine; and his views were more complex than his present-day critics allege.

Although progress was slow and incomplete, Green's beliefs did moderate. In 1959, he expressed regret about the repatriation of Japanese Canadians and indicated that he enjoyed working with the Japanese government on international disarmament. Describing Green's racism as "relentless" ignores these changes in his beliefs. The label "hater" also obscures the complexity of racial views.<sup>12</sup> In Parliament, Green was one of the speakers who most frequently discussed Japanese Canadians. Rather than counting the number of pages containing his comments in *Hansard* or in newspaper articles, it is more useful to understand what he actually said and why he said it. We should examine how and why intelligent and prominent politicians such as Green continued to cling to racist beliefs and what caused them to change.

<sup>11</sup> A "fifth column" is a group of locals who support invading forces.

<sup>12</sup> Throughout the debates described in this article, Green's diction was much milder than that of his exceptionally racist peers. Green generally used terms like "Japanese Canadians," "Japanese," or the "Japanese problem" in the House of Commons, only very occasionally using the term "Jap" (although in his personal letters he used the latter term less sparingly than he did in the House). Other MPs were far more derogatory. A.W. Neill famously commented: "Once a Jap always a Jap" (Canada, *House of Commons Debates* [hereafter *Commons Debates*], 25 February 1941, 1017). In what Angus MacInnis would later describe as a "flesh-creeping speech" Neill also referred to Japanese Canadians as "heathen" worshippers of a "heathen god," a "cancer," and further commented that "you cannot breed a white man in a brown or yellow hide" (*Commons Debates*, 30 June 1943, 4208-9, 4212). T.J. O'Neill asked: "How much longer are we going to pussyfoot with those yellow devils in the west [BC]?" (*Commons Debates*, 19 June 1942, 3480). And Thomas Reid opined: "I am just wondering how these foolish professors and unwise teachers really can believe in their own hearts that we have produced in this country a group of completely civilized human beings who are only one generation removed from savagery" (*Commons Debates*, 22 November 1945, 2416). Green's diction did not compare to that of these men.

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Howard Green's security concerns were consistently apparent. In 1931, British Columbians took note when the world failed to act against the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. Green's first campaign as a federal candidate in 1935 included anti-Japanese policies in its platform. In doing so, he joined candidates from both the Liberal and Conservative parties in British Columbia.<sup>13</sup> He was particularly worried about defending Canada's Pacific coast. In 1936 and early 1937, Green expressed a desire for more anti-aircraft emplacements as well as mounted naval guns, without identifying any particular threat to justify defensive initiatives.<sup>14</sup> At this stage his activism remained limited; he recognized that there was no imminent threat to Canadian security, but he was concerned nonetheless.

When Japan began its military campaign in China in 1937, Green grew "very much concerned about what might happen on the west coast."<sup>15</sup> Japan was rapidly annexing territory in the western Pacific, and Green worried that these attacks would eventually include North America. The new tone and level of detail in Green's suggestions is worth noting. He urged the immediate construction of a strong Canadian navy and encouraged its presence on the Pacific coast. He advocated borrowing reserve ships from Britain until Canadian replacements could be constructed. The construction of highways to quickly move soldiers and material was also a concern.<sup>16</sup> In addition, Green advocated joining a defensive alliance with Pacific Commonwealth countries as well as with the United States.<sup>17</sup> He hoped that such measures would deter an external threat or, failing that, make a war more winnable. Although overall defence spending was increased, few in distant Ottawa took Green's suggestions seriously.<sup>18</sup> Green's continuing demands during defence debates demonstrated his dissatisfaction with Canada's level of

<sup>13</sup> Patricia E. Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man's Province, 1914-41* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 157.

<sup>14</sup> *Commons Debates*, 28 May 1936, 3170-72; 22 February 1937, 1097-98, 1120-21.

<sup>15</sup> Howard Charles Green interview by Dr. R.H. Roy, interview 221, 16 December 1971, George R. Pearkes Collection, file 8.5, University of Victoria Special Collections, Victoria, 2.

<sup>16</sup> *Commons Debates*, 13 May 1938, 2872-73.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 2875; 3 April 1939, 2555.

<sup>18</sup> Howard to John (son), 15 May 1938, City of Vancouver Archives, Add. mss. 903 (hereafter Howard Green Fonds), 608-F-1, file 4, 6; James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada: Appeasement and Rearmament* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), 2:146-53.

preparedness for a war in the Pacific.<sup>19</sup> His concern regarding Japanese expansion was not unique.<sup>20</sup>

At the beginning of 1938, Green entered the long-standing debate on Japanese immigration. In doing so he demonstrated that his anti-Japanese views were not limited to strategic concerns. When A.W. Neill led BC MPs in demanding a halt to further Japanese immigration in February of that year, Green was the first of many BC MPs to offer support. He, like others, noticed that Japanese immigrants tended to settle within their own ethnic communities, that Japanese workers concentrated in a few select industries such as fishing and lumber, and that Japanese children continued to attend Japanese-language schools after their English classes were complete. In short, Japanese Canadians resisted Canadian assimilation and were thus a “state within a state.”<sup>21</sup> Given the alleged continuing high birth rate in Japanese Canadian families, he feared that further immigration would make “assimilation” impossible. Significantly, Green did not consider Japanese immigrants inferior to whites:

That nation [Japan] deserves the greatest credit for what it has done, for the way it has progressed. Probably no nation in the history of the world has done so well in so short a time. The Japanese race are merely different from our race; perhaps in some things they are not as good, in others are better. But our problem is simply the question of whether or not we can assimilate the race in this nation we are trying to build.<sup>22</sup>

Green respected the Japanese “race”; however, like most Canadians at the time, he desired immigrants who “assimilated.” In the same debate, former prime minister R.B. Bennett (Conservative – Calgary West) went further than Green by drawing attention to the fifth column potential of Japanese Canadians.<sup>23</sup> Even Angus MacInnis (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation – Vancouver East), an advocate for Japanese Canadians and equal rights generally, was drawn into the racially charged debate: “Any measures adopted by the government to put an end to oriental immigration will have my support and approval.”<sup>24</sup> Liberal prime minister Mackenzie King also agreed with the arguments provided by Green

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, *Commons Debates*, 16 May 1939, 4108; 14 March 1941, 1545.

<sup>20</sup> For more on this subject see Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 143; Adachi, *Enemy That Never Was*, 184–86.

<sup>21</sup> *Commons Debates*, 17 February 1938, 557–59.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 559.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 565. Green made this association a few months later in similar speeches (1 April, 1938, 1966–67; 13 May 1938, 2871).

<sup>24</sup> *Commons Debates*, 17 February 1938, 564.

and others, at one point suggesting that the distinction was a question of “civilizations rather than race” and that, as long as this difference persisted, “there is bound to be unrest.”<sup>25</sup> Instead of supporting Neill’s bill, however, King insisted that diplomatic obligations to the British Empire took precedence over the arguments put forward.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, as Bangarth points out, until 1944, “liberal” Canadians generally accepted and supported the expectation that non-whites would “assimilate” into surrounding cultures.<sup>27</sup> Again, though repugnant by today’s standards, Green’s comments were not exceptional for the time.

Given the recent controversy, it is ironic that, early in the war, Green most feared the fifth column potential of German and Italian Canadians who were suspected of supporting the Axis cause. He recognized that most German and Italian Canadians were loyal to Canada, and he hoped to allay fears regarding their allegiance by supporting a variety of policies. First, he advocated self-policing. German and Italian communities should work to ensure that no one in their community committed acts of sabotage or violence against the state.<sup>28</sup> Second, he advocated the creation of “naturalization textbooks” and clubs as well as a more elaborate naturalization ceremony. He hoped that these measures would intensify the loyalties of immigrants while decreasing suspicions of subversion.<sup>29</sup> Green had a simple solution for Axis sympathizers:

It is the duty of the government to detain – to detain, I repeat – every man or woman who is for the enemy or who aims to wreck our institutions. Once they are detained they are no menace. Leave them loose and you need all the way from ten to a hundred men to watch each one effectively ... Further, the people who are interned should be put to work.<sup>30</sup>

Green also advocated deporting extreme sympathizers.<sup>31</sup> He demanded that neither naturalization nor country of birth should shelter people from accusations of disloyalty. “Naturalization is no obstacle to a follower of Hitler,” he asserted. “It is an excellent cloak to hide his activities.”<sup>32</sup> Green had been wary of German Canadians for some time. The quotation with which this article begins actually states: “It’s only natural that *the Kaslo*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 570.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 568.

<sup>27</sup> Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*, 43, 76-77, 80.

<sup>28</sup> *Commons Debates*, 11 June 1940, 677.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 March 1941, 1184; 22 February 1943, 608-9.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 June 1940, 676-77.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 August 1940, 2563-64. For the same sentiment, see 22 February 1943, 609.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 June 1940, 677.

*Germans* should be worked up over the war and the proper place for every one of them is a detention camp.”<sup>33</sup> According to Green’s father, some German Canadians in Kaslo had appeared to support Germany during the First World War.<sup>34</sup> Green believed that “Canadian volunteers overseas have the right to insist that their loved ones and the homeland shall be free from treachery.”<sup>35</sup> When trying to ensure Canadian security, Green used race and ethnicity to judge individuals of all descents, not just those of Japanese descent.

## II

Unsurprisingly, Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor, Hong Kong, and other Allied Pacific territories in December 1941 dramatically sharpened Green’s fears. He worried that

today or tomorrow Japanese invaders may be on Canada’s Pacific coast, in my own province of British Columbia, tying up Canadian prisoners of war and bayoneting them to death, and raping and murdering our women as they did in Hong Kong. The province of British Columbia should be treated as a war front, just as Great Britain is treated as a war front.<sup>36</sup>

Every new Japanese victory, from the fall of Singapore to combat in the Aleutian Islands, heightened the BC fear that the province would be next.<sup>37</sup> Green noted Japan’s repeated radio announcements threatening a major attack on North America, and he feared that the west coast’s defences were insufficient to do more than allow a “strategic retreat” to the Rockies.<sup>38</sup> While this would ensure the defence of the rest of Canada, such action would leave “the people on the coast to their fate.”<sup>39</sup> The Vancouver MP was “glad” to have experienced the air raid drills and believed the gravity of the situation would heighten pressure on Ottawa to pay

<sup>33</sup> Emphasis mine. Howard to Dad, 3 January 1915, Howard Green Fonds, 608-R-4, file 4, 1.

<sup>34</sup> Dad to Howard, 16 December 1914, Howard Green Fonds, 608-F-3, file 6, 1-2.

<sup>35</sup> *Commons Debates*, 11 June 1940, 678.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 March 1942, 1559-60.

<sup>37</sup> For Pearl Harbor, see *Commons Debates*, 29 January 1942, 152. For the fall of Singapore, see Howard to Folks (parents), 15 February 1942, Howard Green Fonds, 593-E-4, file 5, 1. For the Battle of Coral Sea, see Howard to Folks, 8 May 1942, Howard Green Fonds, 608-F-2, file 1, 4. For Aleutian Islands, see *Commons Debates*, 19 June 1942, 3483-84. Yet again, Green’s fears were far from unique. See Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 156-57.

<sup>38</sup> For instance, in an article minimizing an announcement from Tokyo that an attack was “within the realm of possibility,” Green highlighted the threat rather than the Allied response. See “Tokyo Predicts Invasion of US,” *Vancouver Sun*, 9 January 1942, Green family collection.

<sup>39</sup> *Commons Debates*, 29 January 1942, 185.

more attention to the Pacific war.<sup>40</sup> Green believed the threat of Japanese bombing, raids, or even invasion to be imminent, and he heightened his efforts to secure stronger defences on the Pacific coast.<sup>41</sup>

Howard Green's advocacy of defensive measures was so adamant that the minister of defence, J.L. Ralston, met with him for over an hour to discuss Pacific defences. Afterwards, Ralston offered to arrange for Green to speak with Canada's chief of staff, Lieutenant General Kenneth Stuart. As a result of these meetings, additional troops were stationed on the west coast. Green was sufficiently appreciative to write to others about the event as well as to recall it in considerable detail in 1950, 1971, and again in 1980.<sup>42</sup> His concern for the security of the coast was sincere, and, if working behind the scenes promised greater success, then that was the approach he pursued. In voicing these concerns, Green was expressing the views of the majority of British Columbians and certainly the vast majority of those residing along the coast.<sup>43</sup>

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Green joined the chorus of BC MPs demanding the evacuation of Japanese Canadians from the coast because he believed that many were Axis sympathisers.<sup>44</sup> Rumours that Japanese Hawaiians had assisted in the attack on Pearl Harbor were rampant, stories of Japanese atrocities in Asia were widespread, and fears of their repetition in British Columbia abounded.<sup>45</sup> Although he agreed that some Japanese Canadians were loyal to Canada, Green feared that most were not. He equated government passivity with negligence:

On the Pacific coast no one knew whether or when Japan might attack; no one knew what the Japanese living there would do in the event of attack, and no one knew which Japanese could be trusted and which could not. So it was only natural that in Canada, as in the United

<sup>40</sup> Howard to Folks, 15 December 1941, Howard Green Fonds, 593-E-4, file 4, 2-3.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, *Commons Debates*, 23 March 1942, 1560-61.

<sup>42</sup> Howard to John, 10 February 1942, Howard Green Fonds, 608-F-3, file 3, 2-3; Howard to Folks, 15 February 1942, Howard Green Fonds, 593-E-4, file 5, 2; *Commons Debates*, 9 June 1950, 3147-48; Howard to A.J. Cowan, 11 February 1942, Green family collection; Howard Charles Green interview by Dr. R.H. Roy, 16 December 1971, George R. Pearkes Collection, file 8.5, University of Victoria Special Collections, 2-3; Howard C. Green interview by J. Edwin Eades, 21-22 October 1980, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC) MG 32, B-13, vol. 13, file 4, 58-59.

<sup>43</sup> Roy, *Triumph of Citizenship*, 19-24, 46-50.

<sup>44</sup> *Commons Debates*, 29 January 1942, 156-57.

<sup>45</sup> J.L. Granatstein and Gregory A. Johnson, "The Evacuation of the Japanese Canadians, 1942: A Realist Critique of the Received Version," in *On Guard for Thee: War, Ethnicity, and the Canadian State, 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Canadian Committee for the History of the Second World War, 1988), 109, 116; Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 156-57. The rumours regarding Hawaii were inaccurate. See Adachi, *Enemy That Never Was*, 204-6.

States, there was insistence that all Japanese be moved away from the Pacific coast. It was not a matter of persecution; it was a matter perhaps of life and death for the Canadian people.<sup>46</sup>

Fear motivated Green to advocate the evacuation. Though ill-informed and racially based, Green's approach was logical:

There has been treachery elsewhere from Japanese in this war, and we have no reason to hope that there will be none in British Columbia. If we were in a similar position, if it were Canadians in Japan, we might feel much the same; we would be only too willing to assist British troops should they attempt to land on the Japanese coast. The only complete protection we can have from this danger is to remove the Japanese population from the province.<sup>47</sup>

These views were not unique. Bangarth and others have noted the considerable support across Canada for the evacuation of Japanese Canadians.<sup>48</sup> While some writers claim that BC politicians intentionally raised and exaggerated fears of a fifth column to permanently remove Japanese Canadians from the coast, Patricia Roy aptly describes Green as "genuinely frightened."<sup>49</sup>

Roy is less sympathetic towards Green's actions later in the war. Ironically, one of the BC towns that received Japanese Canadian evacuees was Green's hometown of Kaslo, which he visited annually and where his parents still resided. Roy quotes a letter from Green that states: "if you ever get them [Japanese Canadians] into Kaslo you will never get them out for I believe the families will go [to Kaslo] too."<sup>50</sup> He went on, however: "Strictly speaking they [Japanese Canadians] should all be moved out of the Province because some day we are going to be right in the battle front there."<sup>51</sup> In the remainder of the letter he continued to describe Japanese Canadians as a threat. Green's assessment of Japan's ability to project military force at Kaslo was incorrect, but his views reflected the paranoia and fears of many in 1942. Green did not want the Japanese Canadians in his hometown, and fear continued to be his primary motivation for opposing their evacuation to Kaslo.

<sup>46</sup> *Commons Debates*, 30 June 1943, 4203.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 January 1942, 156.

<sup>48</sup> Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*, 34; Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 148-55.

<sup>49</sup> Roy, *Triumph of Citizenship*, 33-36, 66; Escott Reid, *Radical Mandarin: The Memoirs of Escott Reid* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 163; Adachi, *Enemy That Never Was*, 202-4, 208-9; Miki, *Redress*, 49-50.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 106-8; Howard to Folks, 22 March 1942, Howard Green Fonds, 593-E-4, file 5, 3.

<sup>51</sup> Howard to Folks, 22 March 1942, Howard Green Fonds, 593-E-4, file 4, 6-7.

Green's attitudes towards individuals associated with belligerent countries were complex and, at times, contradictory. For example, Green never advocated the wholesale internment or evacuation of German or Italian Canadians. He understood that most were loyal to Canada. But he did not believe Canada could safely allow Japanese Canadians the same opportunities to prove their loyalty or to enjoy the same rights as did Canadians from other belligerent states.<sup>52</sup> He feared that the threat posed by Japanese Canadians was fundamentally different from that posed by German or Italian Canadians because he believed they were less "assimilated" and, therefore, still loyal to Japan.

### III

With the Allied victories at Coral Sea and Midway in 1942 and 1943, respectively, debates in the House of Commons moved to planning postwar policies for Japanese Canadians. The proposals varied dramatically. Many extremists advocated the total repatriation of all Japanese Canadians, whether foreign or Canadian born. A.W. Neill had advocated repatriating all Japanese Canadians to Japan as early as June 1942.<sup>53</sup> George Cruickshank (Liberal – Fraser Valley) did not want Japanese Canadians to return to British Columbia and therefore also asked for wholesale deportation.<sup>54</sup> Although he was not a vocal supporter, Angus MacInnis advocated dispersal, but he was unequivocally opposed to repatriation. He assumed that British Columbia would also "take its share" of Japanese Canadians once the war ended.<sup>55</sup> MacInnis was against repatriation because "it would not be repatriation in the proper sense; it would be the deportation or exile for these people [Japanese Canadians]."<sup>56</sup>

Grace Eiko Thomson claims that "Mr. Green sought deportation of all Japanese, regardless of citizenship, as the 'ideal' solution."<sup>57</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Howard Green did suggest that Japanese Canadians sign up for construction work in order to prove their loyalty, but this was a far more limited and less desirable option than were those he was willing to give German or Italian Canadians. See *Commons Debates*, 29 July 1942, 4937.

<sup>53</sup> *Commons Debates*, 19 June 1942, 3487. See also *Commons Debates*, 4 August 1944, 5943-44, where Neill provides some rationale for his stance.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 August 1944, 5947.

<sup>55</sup> Angus MacInnis and Howard Green, MPs, "Should We Send the Japs Back?" *Maclean's*, 1 December 1943, 12, 34-38; *Commons Debates*, 30 June 1943, 4215-16.

<sup>56</sup> *Commons Debates*, 30 June 1943, 4215. It also bears mentioning that the ccf's MPs initially disagreed regarding the repatriation question. Not all supported MacInnis's egalitarianism. See Roy, *Triumph of Citizenship*, 121, 143-44.

<sup>57</sup> Grace Eiko Thomson, "Naming of Federal Building," *Pan Asian Canadian*, 30 October 2006, <http://freewebs.com/panasian2/campaigns.htm> (viewed 25 February 2009). This statement

This assertion is incorrect. Green advocated a two-part program that, although drastic, racially based, and repugnant by modern standards, was less extreme than were policies advocated by many MPs. If the other provinces could be persuaded to accept more Japanese Canadians (which, at the time, seemed unlikely), Green favoured the dispersal of all Japanese Canadians deemed loyal to Canada in order to prevent their re-integrating into Japanese Canadian communities. If Japanese Canadians were spread across the country, he believed that they would embrace their surroundings and more fully abandon their Japanese culture (which Green equated with nationalist sympathies if not outright allegiance). He also asked that the current immigration ban be continued after the war. Green expected that the supposed split allegiance of Japanese Canadians would subsequently evaporate.<sup>58</sup> He was aware of obstacles to a successful dispersion policy, however, and, in 1944, noted:

The Prime Minister said the government proposed to encourage the movement of Japanese to other parts of Canada ... Under the present law Japanese in eastern Canada cannot acquire land. They cannot buy a business. They cannot set themselves up in business and yet many of them are merchants. Unless some provision is made to allow them to resettle on a permanent basis, the Prime Minister will be disappointed in his attempt to spread them across Canada.<sup>59</sup>

Green recognized that dispersal was only viable if Canada provided Japanese Canadians with the basic opportunities required to rebuild their lives. He was against the geographic concentration of Japanese Canadians.

Repatriation was also part of Green's platform. He was particularly wary of Japanese Canadians who did not move east of the Rocky Mountains or who signed the government's repatriation survey. In his assessment, those who refused to disperse planned either to return to Japan or to settle on Canada's Pacific coast.<sup>60</sup> In Green's eyes, Japanese Canadians who requested passage to Japan had renounced their British nationality (10,632 in all, although 4,720 later asked that their request

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is paraphrased from Adachi, *Enemy That Never Was*, 297.

<sup>58</sup> *Commons Debates*, 30 June 1943, 4200-4206; 4 August 1944, 5925; MacInnis and Green, "Should We Send the Japs Back?" 35.

<sup>59</sup> *Commons Debates*, 4 August 1944, 5925. In subsequent years Green also asked that Japanese Canadians receive "adequate, in fact generous" compensation "as quickly as possible" for financial losses resulting from the undervalued sale of their properties. See *Commons Debates*, 22 April 1947, 2319.

<sup>60</sup> *Commons Debates*, 4 August 1944, 5925; MacInnis and Green, "Should We Send the Japs Back?" 35.

be cancelled).<sup>61</sup> Subsequent research has shown that a large number of Japanese Canadians signed the government survey for reasons unrelated to allegiance: some no longer trusted the federal government because it had sold their property well below its 1942 value; others hoped that requesting repatriation would allow them to stay in British Columbia rather than be dispersed; pressure and financial incentives (such as paid passage) from the federal government provided additional incentives.<sup>62</sup> Green was aware of some of these grievances, but, as a proud British subject, he still found the renunciation of British status (or, in the case of naturalized Japanese Canadians, an interest in returning to Japan) unacceptable as well as threatening; therefore, he advocated the repatriation of Japanese Canadians whose loyalty was considered suspect.<sup>63</sup>

The Canadian government's initial Japanese Canadian policy was markedly similar to Green's. Prime Minister King argued that a small number of Japanese Canadians were disloyal; however, he went on to say:

It has not ... at any stage of the war been shown that the presence of a few thousand persons of Japanese race who have been guilty of no act of sabotage and who have manifested no disloyalty, even during periods of utmost trial, constitutes a menace to a nation of almost twelve million people.<sup>64</sup>

Nevertheless, King agreed that allowing Japanese Canadians to return to British Columbia would be "unwise." Those who had demonstrated disloyalty (including those requesting repatriation) would be transported to Japan. "With cooperation on the part of the other provinces," in order to prevent renewed distrust, the remaining majority would be encouraged to resettle "more or less evenly throughout Canada" rather than in a concentrated area. In addition, Japanese immigration was halted for the years immediately following the war.<sup>65</sup> King's motivations differed from those of Green. King's primary concern was domestic politics, while Green, although wanting an "assimilated" provincial populace, continued to justify his support of dispersal and repatriation due to his security concerns. Both Green's peacetime and wartime concerns stemmed from racism, but the complexity of his views led him to advocate a more limited repatriation policy than did many of his peers.

<sup>61</sup> Adachi, *Enemy That Never Was*, 303.

<sup>62</sup> Miki, *Redress*, 101-3, 257-58; Adachi, *Enemy That Never Was*, 302.

<sup>63</sup> *Commons Debates*, 30 June 1943, 4205.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 August 1944, 5916.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 5915-17.

## IV

Historians stress how the advent of the United Nations and the notion of universal rights led many Canadians to discard traditional racist beliefs in the years following the Second World War.<sup>66</sup> They also note, however, the continuation of racism among a significant portion of the population of British Columbia.<sup>67</sup> According to Ken Adachi:

While anti-Japanese hostility east of the Rockies generally abated after the end of the war, political and public pressure from British Columbia remained a constant – and was the chief reason for restrictions [prohibiting the return of Japanese Canadians to the “security zone”] being held over until March 31, 1949.<sup>68</sup>

Green did not immediately follow the progressive trend and, for several years, remained firmly committed to his past convictions. For example, during the 1945 federal election, Green campaigned against allowing Japanese Canadians to return to British Columbia and urged that they not be empowered with the franchise.<sup>69</sup> In an oft-quoted comment made after the election, Green asked that Japanese Canadians not be allowed to return to the Pacific fisheries because racial tensions would revive and result in “bloodshed.”<sup>70</sup>

More generally, Green continued to perceive persons of Japanese descent as a security threat. He described all Japanese as “emperor-worshippers,” and while he agreed that some Japanese Canadians were undoubtedly loyal to Canada, he asked: “how can we expect the vast majority of them to be loyal Canadians first?”<sup>71</sup> He therefore continued to ask for the dispersal of those who were willing and deemed loyal, while continuing to request that the remainder be repatriated.<sup>72</sup> A variety of BC MPs including George Pearkes (Progressive Conservative

<sup>66</sup> Mary Taylor, *A Black Mark: The Japanese Canadians in World War II* (Ottawa: Oberon Press, 2004), 181; Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*, 180.

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, Patricia E. Roy, “Reopening the Door: Japanese Remigration and Immigration, 1945-68,” in *Contradictory Impulses: Canada and Japan in the Twentieth Century*, ed. G. Donaghy and P. Roy (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 159; Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*, 112, 188.

<sup>68</sup> Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was*, 336.

<sup>69</sup> “Green Urges Ouster of Japs, Housing for War Veterans,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, 17 May 1945, 16.

<sup>70</sup> *Commons Debates*, 5 April 1946, 619. In a letter to his wife, Green explained that he used the word “purposely because I believe that is what there will be.” He was not fear-mongering. Howard to Marion, Spring 1946, Howard Green Fonds, 608-F-2, file 2, 5. Roy, *Triumph of Citizenship*, 204-5.

<sup>71</sup> *Commons Debates*, 22 November 1945, 2417.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 2416-22.

– Nanaimo), Davie Fulton (Progressive Conservative – Kamloops), and James Sinclair (Liberal – Vancouver North), made similar requests.<sup>73</sup> In the end, nearly four thousand Japanese Canadians were deported to Japan before increasing public opposition caused the King government to cease the practice.<sup>74</sup>

Green also asked that Japanese Canadians who had been in Japan when war was declared and who had served in the Japanese military be prevented from immigrating to Canada.<sup>75</sup> Not differentiating between volunteers and conscripts (towards whom Green might have been expected to be more sympathetic), he repeatedly asked that they be stripped of their British citizenship and that new Canadian citizenship regulations not create a loophole for their re-entry into Canada. Paul Martin Sr. (Liberal – Essex East), secretary of state, agreed with Green's belief that individuals who had served in the Japanese military were undeserving of Canadian citizenship. However, Martin insisted that the Canadian government, like the governments of other countries, would only revoke the citizenship of an individual if that person acquired an alternative nationality.<sup>76</sup>

Why did Green continue to fear Japanese Canadians after Japan had been defeated and his security concerns should have abated? During his service in the First World War, Green witnessed the defeated German armies, and his letters gushed with youthful pride.<sup>77</sup> Two decades later, Germany rebuilt, and Canadian blood was again spilled, this time in the Second World War. Japan's defeat and unconditional surrender, therefore, did not preclude its reascension. Still believing that the majority of Japanese Canadians would undertake fifth column activities if requested, Green thought that allowing them to return to British Columbia would be foolish.<sup>78</sup> If Japanese Canadians were allowed to return to the province, they would be "again in contact with Japanese merchant ships, going back and forth to Japan, again under domination to the Japanese consul, still worshipping the Japanese emperor and still a menace."<sup>79</sup> On another occasion he warned:

I do not think Canadians in other parts of the country have the right to expect Canadians on the Pacific coast to face the possibility of such

<sup>73</sup> Roy, *Triumph of Citizenship*, 204-5.

<sup>74</sup> Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*, 180.

<sup>75</sup> Roy, *Triumph of Citizenship*, 247-49.

<sup>76</sup> *Commons Debates*, 2 May 1946, 1150-52; 3 May 1946, 1181-82.

<sup>77</sup> See, for example, Howard to Sister, 9 December 1918, Howard Green Fonds, 593-E-2, file 11.

<sup>78</sup> John Green, interview by author, 15 December 2007.

<sup>79</sup> *Commons Debates*, 5 April 1946, 618.

happenings [i.e., a Japanese Canadian fifth column] ten years from now or even a hundred years from now. We were nearly caught once; let us not get into a position where we can be caught again.<sup>80</sup>

Patricia Roy describes Green's continued emphasis on security themes as "odd given the country's [i.e., Japan's] thorough defeat."<sup>81</sup> His concerns were steeped in racial ideals, but they were also based on experience. As it turned out, Japan did reascend, but as a Western ally. It took Green longer than most to understand that there would be no future war with Japan.

As years passed Green slowly accepted that Japan was a Western ally, and his security concerns diminished. In June 1952, he delivered his last statement on Japanese Canadians, and it was clear that his racism persisted. He demonstrated extremely modest progress during a debate regarding the Japanese peace treaty that would end Japanese "enemy-alien" status and thus remove a hurdle to their immigration. For instance, he acknowledged that "a fresh page is turned now, and we are welcoming Japan back into the brotherhood of nations." He also recognized the contributions Japanese Canadians, now dispersed across the country, were making to Canadian society. But he remained staunchly opposed to "substantial" Japanese immigration because he claimed it would reinvigorate racial tensions.<sup>82</sup> Other MPs did not participate in the discussion because they did not share Green's convictions. Green's specific concerns were therefore "exceptional." However, the government's reply to Green's comments, made by Lester B. Pearson (then secretary of state for external affairs), provides important context: "There is no desire on the part of the [Canadian] government ... to ease in any way the possibility of Japanese emigration to Canada; to make it any easier in the future for them to get here than it has been in the past – and it has not been very easy in the past."<sup>83</sup> By this time, statements such as Green's were increasingly rare in the House of Commons. That said, government immigration policy remained "racist" for more than a decade.<sup>84</sup> The difference between requesting a policy and maintaining one that already exists is important, but the similar policies espoused by both parties is noteworthy. Canada continued to be a country in which racially discriminatory immigration policy was the norm.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 22 April 1947, 2322.

<sup>81</sup> Roy, *Triumph of Citizenship*, 212.

<sup>82</sup> *Commons Debates*, 16 June 1952, 3300–3301.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 3302.

<sup>84</sup> Roy, *Triumph of Citizenship*, 250–62.

V

Howard Green remained a prominent member of the Opposition until 1957, when he became minister of public works (among other portfolios) in the Diefenbaker government. On 4 June 1959, he was appointed secretary of state for external affairs. Between 1952 and 1959, Green's racial beliefs moderated but by no means disappeared. Almost exactly a month after his appointment, he signed his first international agreement: a pact with Japan for cooperation in the peaceful use of atomic energy. Although an ironic coincidence, it set the tone for Green's subsequent relationship with Japanese dignitaries. Under his supervision, Canada worked with Japan in the continuing disarmament negotiations in Geneva as well as in the United Nations General Assembly, and Green frequently referred to Japan as one of Canada's "best friends." He later commented: "I cannot remember one issue upon which they [Japan] took an active part against us and on many the two nations stood together ... [they] were always particularly strong in their support of resolutions dealing with the need for disarmament negotiations and the dangers of radiation and nuclear testing."<sup>85</sup> An example of this cooperation was a United Nations General Assembly resolution, co-sponsored by Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Iran, Japan, Norway, Pakistan, and Sweden, petitioning the USSR to abandon plans for a fifty-megaton thermo-nuclear test.<sup>86</sup> Although the Soviets later detonated the device, the mutual attempt to rally world opinion was significant.<sup>87</sup>

As secretary of state for external affairs, Green also met with foreign dignitaries. In letters to his mother describing two visits by members of the Japanese government (one including the Japanese prime minister), Green described his visitors as "very intelligent" and "very friendly." More specially, he commented that the Japanese foreign minister, Zentaro Kosaka, had a "very good sense of humor [sic]."<sup>88</sup> Of course, Canada's good relations with Japan owed much more to international context and the passing of time than it did to Green's initiative, and his position required that he be cordial in public. Green's private expressions

<sup>85</sup> Howard to Mother, 24 January 1960, Howard Green Fonds, 593-E-5, file 7, 5; Howard Green, "Speech - International Affairs Night at the Annual Meeting of the Board of Evangelism and Social Service of the United Church of Canada," 26 February 1960, LAC, MG 32, B-13, vol. 12, file 19, 23-24; Howard Green, "Staunch Friend," 9 January 1964, *Victoria Colonist*.

<sup>86</sup> "Continuation of Nuclear and Thermo-Nuclear Tests and Obligations of States to Refrain from Their Renewal," UNGA Res. 1632 (xvi), UN Doc. A/C.1/L.288, 27 October 1961.

<sup>87</sup> Office of Public Information. *The United Nations and Disarmament: 1945-1965* (New York: United Nations Publication, 1967), 162.

<sup>88</sup> Howard to Mother, 24 January 1960, Howard Green Fonds, 593-E-5, file 7, 2-3; Howard to Mother, 18 September 1960, Howard Green Fonds, 593-E-5, file 8, 2.



Howard Green (right) greeting Japanese Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi (left) in June 1960. Newspaper unknown, Howard Green Fonds, 605-D-4 File 8.

of enjoyment, however, indicate his sincerity, and it is difficult to envision him expressing such satisfaction ten years earlier.

In 2006, Grace Eiko Thomson asked: “why did Mr. Green not, in his long life, reconsider his past and offer an apology?”<sup>89</sup> Historians frequently quote a 1967 interview, in which Green defended the “internment” of Japanese Canadians as “a matter of life and death,” to demonstrate the continuation of Green’s racist beliefs.<sup>90</sup> However, in a 1959 interview, although Green defended the evacuation he regretted having advocated repatriation because, “since then, the Canadian-Japanese people have done extremely well; they are making a splendid contribution [to Canadian society].”<sup>91</sup> Green’s beliefs moderated with time; he was not a “relentless hater” of Japanese Canadians.

That said, it must be recognized that Green’s more enlightened attitude towards Japanese people did not dispel his concerns about Japanese immigration to Canada. In 1961, a Japanese person could only

<sup>89</sup> Grace Eiko Thomson, “Naming of Federal Building,” *Pan Asian Canadian*, 30 October 2006, <http://www.freewebs.com/panasian2/campaigns.htm> (viewed 25 February 2009).

<sup>90</sup> “WW II Anti-JC Politician Green Reaffirms JC Evacuation Decision,” *New Canadian*, 7 October 1967.

<sup>91</sup> A.C. Forrest, “Has Howard Green Got It?” *United Church Observer*, 1 December 1959, 10.

immigrate to Canada if she or he were the spouse or a child (under the age of eighteen) of a Canadian resident. Even individuals who satisfied these requirements were admitted on a case-by-case basis. The Japanese government asked Ottawa to allow a few hundred Japanese workers and their families temporary entry as trainers and managers at Japanese financial ventures located in Canada. As secretary of state for external affairs, Green opposed approving this limited request because “it would [have] restrict[ed] the Government’s freedom of action in this situation.”<sup>92</sup> Green continued to fear a “flood” of Japanese immigrants and, therefore, avoided any measures that would “open the door.” By the end of the year he was overruled, and Ottawa approved the entry of up to 150 Japanese employees and their families for up to three years at a time. Yet, some in the Department of Citizenship and Immigration continued to be wary of Asian immigration, and it was not until the advent of the 1967 points system that ethnic discrimination was, “at least in theory,” removed from Canadian immigration policy.<sup>93</sup> The number of individuals desiring similar policies to Green was dwindling, but he was not alone. Moreover, his beliefs were contradictory. He valued the existing Japanese Canadian population while continuing to oppose its increase through immigration. Green’s progress was modest, but it should not be dismissed.<sup>94</sup>

## VI

Both the evacuation and the repatriation of Japanese Canadians, along with immigration limitations, were morally reprehensible; but analysts must venture beyond this conclusion in order to properly understand the attitudes behind these actions. There is no question that Green judged individuals based on racial stereotypes. However, “relentless hatred” does not accurately describe his beliefs. Green’s position reflected attitudes common in British Columbia during much of his life. That his concerns also applied to immigrants from other belligerent countries demonstrates a certain consistency. The fact that he judged Japanese Canadians as a group rather than as individuals should not obscure either his earnestness or the fact that he did not advocate total repatriation. While he did not completely overcome his prejudice against the

<sup>92</sup> Director of Immigration to Deputy Minister, “Japanese Non-Immigrants,” 21 March 1961, LAC, RG 26, vol. 128, file 3-33-19, pt. 2, 1; Roy, “Reopening the Door,” 159.

<sup>93</sup> Roy, *Triumph of Citizenship*, 262.

<sup>94</sup> It should be noted that Howard Green’s children and grandchildren insist that he never imparted such feelings regarding Japanese Canadians during his later years.

Japanese, Green's beliefs did moderate and he eventually repented having advocated repatriation. The extent of Green's concerns was increasingly exceptional after the Second World War, yet Canadian governments hesitated to remove immigration barriers until 1967. The unwillingness of Green's critics to understand the complex nature of his racism has led them to misrepresent both its extent and its nature.

Should Green's conduct regarding Japanese Canadians have led to the public shaming caused by the erasure of his name from the building at 401 Burrard Street? Historians argue that individuals need to be judged within the context of their time. Today, race is understood as a social construct and as an unjust motivator for action. This was not always so. Green's critics focus on his actions prior to 1946, when, by today's standards, his beliefs were indeed most reprehensible. Yet, this was also the period when they were the most widely accepted. Today, those familiar with 401 Burrard's initial name are unlikely to be aware of the complexities of Green's views, how they compared to those of others, or how they moderated with the passage of time; rather, they will simply remember him as a racist.