

“ORIENTING” THE EMPIRE:

Mackenzie King and the Aftermath of the 1907 Race Riots¹

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VANCOUVER'S ANTI-ASIAN RACE RIOTS of 1907 focused global attention on Canada's immigration policies, pushed the Laurier government to adopt even more stringent regulations, and prompted US president Theodore Roosevelt to seek Canada's assistance in brokering an Anglo-American entente on Japanese immigration to the west coast. Recognizing the important role of community resistance to racism, this article recasts the Vancouver riots in light of recent advances in scholarly approaches to race and empire, with a particular focus on the activities of William Lyon Mackenzie King, deputy minister of labour at the time of the riots. King later went on to become a Liberal member of Parliament in 1908 and then prime minister of Canada in 1921. Wilfrid Laurier, Liberal prime minister in 1907, nominated King to conduct an inquiry with the specific mandate of assessing the damages to, and compensation for, Japanese businesses that suffered during the riot. King soon took on other related duties, and for the next eighteen months he, more than any other person, effectively became the Canadian government's specialist on Asian immigration and a roving ambassador. In the process, he articulated a comprehensive vision for the consolidation of a "white" Canada and at the same time sketched a new role for Canada as a bridge towards an international Anglo-American alliance that was also race-based. This vision and the policies adopted in this era were foundational in the consolidation of the Canadian state

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and in the articulation of an autonomous Canadian foreign policy within the British Empire.

The story of the 1907 race riots in Vancouver and their impact on Canadian history and foreign policy has been largely excluded from traditional narratives of Canadian history.² In addition, it is either omitted or played down in many biographies about King.³ However, a burgeoning body of work by historians, researchers, and writers from the affected communities⁴ has greatly enriched our knowledge and understanding of the process of racialization.⁵ No longer are we necessarily bound by the constraints of earlier works, in which a preoccupation with Anglo-Saxon racism at times led to a portrayal of racialized peoples as victims without voice or as people whose identities were externally imposed.⁶ Developments in critical anti-racist theory and postcolonialism have also allowed new analytical insights into the history of race and empire. These innovations enable and encourage new approaches to the 1907 race riots as well as to Asian Canadian studies in general, the lateness of which, as Chris Lee has recently suggested, “is an institutional failure that must be urgently rectified.”⁷

The evidence from this study suggests that the Vancouver race riots were the result of resistance by Asian migrants to previous attempts to limit their arrival and their rights in Canada. It shows that, despite compensation offered for damages, the main impact of the riots was a renewed and determined federal effort to prohibit Asian immigration.

² In his recent study, *The Penguin History of Canada* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2006), Robert Bothwell provides a paragraph on Asian immigration that mentions the race riots, but there is no analysis of the implications. Previous accounts, such as Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond, and John English, *Canada 1900-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987) made no mention of the race riots or of restrictions on immigration until 1923. There is nothing on race as a factor in foreign affairs in Norman Hillmer and J.L. Granatstein, *Empire to Umpire: Canada and the World to the 1990s* (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman, 1994).

³ R. MacGregor Dawson, *William Lyon Mackenzie King* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958) provides cursory treatment. In the chapter on King in *Right Honourable Men* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1994), Michael Bliss does not mention the riots or their aftermath.

⁴ Wing Chung Ng’s *The Chinese in Vancouver, 1945-80: The Pursuit of Identity and Power* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999); Roy Miki’s edited version of Muriel Kitagawa’s writings *This Is My Own: Letters to Wes and Other Writings on Japanese Canadians, 1941-1948* (Vancouver: Talon Books, 1985). Sarjeet Singh Jagpal, *Becoming Canadians: Pioneer Sikhs in Their Own Words* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 1994) are representative examples of this. Asian Canadian literary works have also made an indelible impression on the telling of Canada’s history.

⁵ I use the term “racialization” to mean the application of arbitrary and socially constructed classifications of “race” to define and reinforce unequal relations between dominant and subordinate groups.

⁶ Ng, *The Chinese in Vancouver, 1945-80*, 6.

⁷ Chris Lee, “The Lateness of Asian Canadian Studies,” *Amerasia Journal, Pacific Canada: Beyond the 49th Parallel* 33, 2 (2007): 2.

This process was prolonged and made complex by Asian peoples and governments challenging the diverse measures that Canadian governments employed in their quest to consolidate a white supremacist state within the context of a settler colony in North America.⁸ However, it took place in a transnational context in which the British Empire faced increasing challenges, particularly from the anti-colonial movements in India and China as well as from imperial Germany, Japan, and the United States. The Vancouver riots both reflected and heralded a strengthening of race-based continental ties with the United States and aided in the development of a racialized imperial coalition in Asia that would have serious repercussions both during and after the First World War.

THE LOCAL AND GLOBAL CONTEXT

Asian peoples had arrived on the shores of the Pacific northwest from early times, but migration did not begin until 1858 when Chinese men joined the rush of gold seekers entering from the United States.⁹ A second wave of Chinese migration followed with the beginning of the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1880. Approximately fifteen thousand arrived in the first half of the 1880s, with hundreds perishing in work accidents and countless others dying from disease. Many quit the province to cross the border into the United States. Others stayed and settled in British Columbia.

In 1877, Manzo Nagano became the first recorded Japanese migrant to arrive in New Westminster. Although the Japanese communities would initially grow slowly, by the turn of the century approximately fifteen thousand people from Japan (including Okinawa) had arrived in British Columbia. Most proceeded to the United States, and, as a consequence, the 1901 census records only 4,738 Japanese resident in Canada.¹⁰ In addition, settlers began arriving from India at the turn of the century. Reports about Canada probably reached India after a number of Indian

⁸ This study builds on the fine work by Howard Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Japanese Immigration, the Vancouver Riots and Canadian Diplomacy* (New York: Arno Press, 1978). This was an edited version of the author's master's thesis, which was completed in 1966 at the University of Washington.

⁹ The most informative single volume on the history of the Chinese Canadian community remains Harry Con, Ronald J. Con, Graham Johnson, Edgar Wickberg and William E. Willmott, *From China to Canada: A History of the Chinese Community in Canada*, ed. Edgar Wickberg (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982).

¹⁰ Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), chap. 1, has one of the best overviews of early Japanese migration.

soldiers in the British Hong Kong regiment travelled through Canada on their way back to Hong Kong after attending Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee in London in 1897.¹¹ Subsequently, approximately five thousand Indians – British subjects, almost exclusively male Sikhs from the Punjab – arrived in British Columbia.¹² In other words, transpacific migration was having a substantial impact on west coast demographics at the turn of the century.

From the beginning Asian migrants faced racialization and discrimination, the story of which has been told elsewhere.¹³ Pertinent to this story, however, is the fact that Asian migrants continued to come to the west coast despite the barriers erected against them. Communities formed and provided networks of survival, support, and, at times, even defiance. These communities, and the multifaceted identities associated with them, were often linked to evolving nationalist and anti-imperialist movements in the home countries.¹⁴ The fact that migration and mobility rights were, in the case of non-British subjects, regulated through treaties meant that Chinese and Japanese migrants could at times turn to diplomatic channels to appeal grievances, further reinforcing the transnational character of the communities. This was not the case for those from India since that country had been colonized by the British, giving Indians nominal status as British subjects but no alternate diplomatic representation.

The ascent of Japan to imperial status after its victories in the Sino- and Russo-Japanese wars (1894-95 and 1904-05, respectively) meant that diplomatic lobbying on behalf of those of Japanese descent in Canada was taken seriously in the British Empire. Although the Japanese government, like the Chinese government, had been forced to submit to unequal treaties beginning in 1858, the revision of these documents became the focus of vigorous efforts on the part of the Meiji government. These efforts culminated in the signing of the 1894 Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation, a major step in putting an end to

¹¹ Jagpal, *Becoming Canadians*, 18.

¹² Only nine women immigrated between 1904 and 1920. See Jagpal, *Becoming Canadians*, 23.

¹³ See W. Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002); and Patricia Roy's trilogy, *A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1989); *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man's Province, 1914-1941* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003); and *The Triumph of Citizenship: The Japanese and Chinese in Canada, 1941-67* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007).

¹⁴ See Timothy J. Stanley, "Chinamen, Wherever We Go: Chinese Nationalism and Guangdong Merchants in British Columbia, 1871-1911," *Canadian Historical Review* 77 (December 1996): 475-501.

the unequal treaty arrangement.¹⁵ Full tariff autonomy would only be achieved in 1911, but a key clause in the treaty, which went into effect in 1899, allowed the subjects of both countries "full liberty to enter, travel or reside in any part of the dominions and possessions of the other contracting party." The subsequent signing of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1902, and the Japanese victory over the tsar's forces in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05, enhanced Japan's status within the imperial world, but this turned out to be a double-edged sword.

RACE RIOTS ON THE PACIFIC COAST

Japan's victory over the Russian Empire in 1905, and the subsequent Portsmouth Treaty in September that year, inspired admiration but also resuscitated fears of the "yellow peril," an imagined Asian expansion through military might and mass migration that threatened white supremacy. This helped spark a resurgent anti-Asian campaign that resurfaced in California. Spearheaded by the *San Francisco Chronicle* in February and March 1905, while the Russo-Japanese War was still going on, it targeted what it perceived to be the Japanese "menace."¹⁶ A few weeks later, on 12 May 1905, exclusionists led by San Francisco trade unions formed the Japanese and Korean Exclusion League with the express mission of prohibiting all immigration from Asia. Its name reflected the fact that Chinese immigration had already been banned as of 1882. The San Francisco earthquake and subsequent fire of 18 April 1906 stoked racist passions that threatened Chinatown with elimination. In the aftermath, the Exclusion League pressed home a campaign to force students of Japanese descent out of mixed schools and into those for Chinese students (who had already suffered the lash of school segregation). On 11 October 1906, the school board voted to segregate the Japanese students. This provoked an international crisis as the Japanese government vigorously protested such action to the US president Theodore Roosevelt.¹⁷ In the spring of 1907, Roosevelt brokered a deal whereby the school board agreed to withdraw its segregation order, and,

¹⁵ For a recent English-language study of the unequal treaties with Japan, see Michael R. Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism: The Unequal Treaties and the Culture of Japanese Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

¹⁶ See Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 251-2.

¹⁷ The protests are contained in Gaimusho henshu, *Nihon gaiko bunsbo, taibei imin mondai keika gaiyou fuzokusho* [Documents on Japanese foreign policy: Annexes to summary of the course of negotiations between Japan and the United States concerning the problem of Japanese immigration in the United States (Tokyo: Gaimusho, 1973)].

in return, he passed an executive order prohibiting Japanese immigration into the United States via Hawai'i, Canada, or Mexico.¹⁸

The surge of racism and Roosevelt's measures diverted many would-be Japanese migrants to Vancouver, contributing to the perception of a Japanese invasion of that city. The Exclusion League (renamed the Asiatic Exclusion League in 1907), reinforced by its success in the school board campaign, spread its influence and, by 1907, had made contact with organized labour in Seattle and, subsequently, in Bellingham, Washington, and Vancouver.¹⁹ The Vancouver Trades and Labour Council (VTLC) initiated the formation of the Asiatic Exclusion League (AEL) in July. At a meeting on 12 August 1907 the AEL called for a parade to protest Asian immigration. In Bellingham, meanwhile, shortly after the Monday 2 September Labour Day activities, a number of people began harassing Indian sawmill workers.²⁰ On Wednesday the harassment escalated into wholesale attacks, and groups of workers raided sawmills and dormitories, beating up a number of people and forcing many Indians to flee for their lives.²¹ Exaggerated news reports further fanned the already volatile situation in Vancouver.²²

A full account of the Vancouver race riots remains to be told, although a number of historians have pieced together some of the basic points.²³ On a warm Saturday evening, the Asiatic Exclusion League organized a parade to protest what was portrayed in the popular press as a flood of Asians into Vancouver. Led by a brass band, the league, originally formed in association with Vancouver trade unions, departed from the Cambie grounds and wound its way through the streets of Vancouver. By the time it reached the old City Hall on Westminster Avenue (later

¹⁸ See Erika Lee, "Hemispheric Orientalism and the 1907 Pacific Coast Race Riots," *Amerasia Journal* 33, 2 (2007): 19-47.

¹⁹ Correspondence from the AEL Seattle branch was noted in new business of the 20 June 1907 meeting of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council (VTLC). See Minute Book of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council, 20 June 1907, Special Collections, University of British Columbia Library.

²⁰ The VTLC was in close contact with the Bellingham labour council and anticipated sending a large contingent to participate in Labour Day activities – a move that fell through, however, because of transportation costs. See VTLC minutes, May-June 1907.

²¹ Details of the race riot are contained in Gerald N. Hallberg, "Bellingham, Washington's Anti-Hindu Riot," *Journal of the West* 12 (1973): 163-75.

²² For such an account, see "Hindus Beaten by Angry Whites," *Toronto Globe*, 6 September 1907, 1.

²³ By a full account, I mean one that integrates the riots as the Chinese and Japanese communities experienced them. Basic accounts are contained to various degrees in Sugimoto, *Japanese Immigration*; Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 52-76; Wickberg, *From China to Canada*, 84-7; Roy, *A White Man's Province*, 185-226; Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians*, 63-85; Michael Barnholden, *Reading the Riot Act: A Brief History of Riots in Vancouver* (Vancouver: Anvil Press, 2005).

Main Street), the parade numbered over five thousand people marching behind a banner that read "Stand for a White Canada." Fewer than two thousand of those in the parade were able to squeeze themselves into the hall to hear speeches from A.W. Von Rhein, vice-president of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council; the reverends Dr. G. Fraser and G.H. Wilson; Harry Cowan, a Liberal labour representative; A.E. Fowler, secretary of the Japanese and Korean Exclusion League in Seattle; C.M. Woodsworth, Vancouver Conservative Association president; J.E. Wilson, from New Zealand; and W.A. Young, an organizer for the American Federation of Labour. Meanwhile, a crowd milled outside city hall, where a few of the speakers had come out to speak. Then, a portion of those assembled headed towards Chinatown. According to newspaper reports, one stone was launched at a Chinese-owned store and before long a full-scale riot ensued. The sound of shattering glass filled Carrall Street and the surrounding neighbourhood as the rioters smashed the windows of nearly every store in the community. The rioters then moved north towards the Japanese community centred on Powell Street, but there they encountered resistance. Alerted by the events taking place in Chinatown, a number of Japanese had prepared for the worst and confronted the rioters as they approached. Met by a hail of boards and rocks, the rioters soon retreated. Although the police were dispatched to control the rioters, attacks continued on Sunday and Monday. The Japanese and Chinese communities shuttered their doors and withdrew their labour on Sunday and Monday. Telegrams from Japanese officials in Vancouver capture the action as the riots continued into Sunday: "Just now (10 o'clock PM) the rioters, numbering from six to seven hundred, were marching toward the Japanese section but were dispersed by the Police Force. The number of arrests since the night before last are over twenty."²⁴ At 10:00 AM Tuesday, Japan's consul in Vancouver, Morikawa Kishiro, wired the Canadian prime minister, Sir Wilfrid Laurier: "About 10:30 Monday night (9th) the rioters set the Japanese Primary School on fire, but the building was saved by the Japanese from destruction. I at once interviewed the Mayor at the Police Station and made demand to call out the Militia, whenever necessary."²⁵ Finally, the wave of violence abated.

The race riots made headlines around the world, including in New York, London, Taiwan, Tokyo, and Beijing. In Japan, all the major

²⁴ Consul-General to Laurier, 10 September 1907, Sir Wilfrid Laurier Papers, MG 26, G1, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter Laurier Papers), no. 128810.

²⁵ Consul-General to Laurier, 10 September 1907, Laurier Papers, no. 128812.

newspapers, including the *Asahi* and *Jiji Shimpō*, reported on the riot in critical terms.²⁶ However, both the Japanese government and the newspaper editors were mollified by Laurier's prompt apology. This, and the Meiji leaders' belief in the strength of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, helped to mitigate the effects of the riot on Canada-Japan relations. In other ways the impact of the race riots was far reaching. Over the next eighteen months the Canadian government began a concerted drive to gain firm control over Asian immigration, erecting a solid colour barrier at home and facilitating a "white" Anglo-Saxon alliance abroad. This was resisted by immigrants already in Canada, by prospective immigrants, by anti-colonial movements in the British Empire, and, to some extent, by the Asian governments of the time.

Embarrassed by the lawless violence during the race riot and pressed by Japanese and British officials for some sort of remedial action, Laurier quickly dispatched his minister of labour, Rodolphe Lemieux, to Japan in the hope of obtaining a commitment from the Japanese government to limit emigration. Laurier also appointed the deputy minister of the newly formed Department of Labour, William Lyon Mackenzie King, to investigate the losses sustained by the Japanese community. King followed up this investigation immediately with a second inquiry into the causes of the riot. After entreaties from the Chinese government regarding Chinese losses, King undertook a third investigation in the spring of 1908 into the damages suffered by the Chinese community.

In the meantime, the riots and their aftermath had come to the attention of American president Theodore Roosevelt, who subsequently invited Mackenzie King to Washington, DC, to consult on how best to restrict Asian immigration to both Canada and the United States. These meetings in Washington revived a vision of transatlantic unity among the Anglo-Saxon powers, with Canadian officials playing the role of go-between. Ongoing contradictions between the British and American empires limited the scope of this vision, but there did develop a trilateral consensus on containment of Japan – that is, on preventing Asian immigration to Canada or the United States while recognizing and, at the same time, limiting the Japanese Empire in Asia. The British colonial office had been struggling with this issue for a number of years, and out of this experience a consensus emerged that the favoured approach was to implement measures that were not, on the surface, openly discriminatory. The basic premises of the new

²⁶ Masako Iino, "Japan's Reaction to the Vancouver Riot," *BC Studies* 60 (1983-84): 40.

measures, as well as their application, continued to reflect the racialized views of an Anglo-Saxon elite and invited continued resistance.

THE LEMIEUX MISSION TO JAPAN

In the aftermath of the race riots, Laurier decided to send two government representatives on an official diplomatic mission to Japan to discuss limiting Japanese emigration. The Japanese government had initially resisted such a mission, insisting that there could be no curbs on Japanese emigration because they would violate Article 1 of the Anglo-Japanese treaty of Commerce and Navigation. However, the spectre of a possible Conservative government coming to power and repudiating the treaty if nothing was done, and reports that, even in Britain, the Anglo-Japanese alliance was less favourably viewed than it had been in the past (because of Japanese expansion in China), obliged the Meiji government to finally receive the mission. Led by Rodolphe Lemieux, minister of post and labour, the mission found out the hard way that crossing the Pacific by steamer in mid-winter was a challenge.²⁷ Canadian secretary of state Sir Joseph Pope, who accompanied Lemieux, reported: "We had a long stormy passage across the Pacific, the worst our Captain had known on that route, but all things come to an end, even that voyage. We landed at Yokohama on Wednesday, just three weeks from leaving Ottawa – a long journey."²⁸ Lemieux, a key Quebec minister in the cabinet of Laurier's Liberal government recounted that the trip from Vancouver had been taxing: "faisait froid" he recounted in a personal letter to Laurier.²⁹ The two disembarked from the Canadian Pacific liner the *Empress of China* on 13 November 1907.

Lemieux and Pope first met with the British ambassador in Japan, Sir Claude MacDonald, who took them to meet Japan's foreign minister, Hayashi Tadasu, on Thursday afternoon. Hayashi, as minister to Britain in 1900, was one of the chief architects of the Anglo-Japanese alliance and was a senior member of Prime Minister Saionji Kimmochi's cabinet. A working session was planned for Monday, but the Canadians delayed the meeting to allow the British ambassador to consult with his government. Macdonald had only been instructed to introduce the Canadian delegation to Hayashi, but after discussions with Lemieux

²⁷ A recent biography of Lemieux includes an account of his voyage to Japan. See René Castonguay, *Rodolphe Lemieux et le parti libéral, 1866-1937: Le chevalier du roi* (Quebec: Les presses de l'université Laval, 2000), 84-91.

²⁸ Pope to Laurier, 15 November 1907, Laurier Papers, no. 132091.

²⁹ Lemieux to Laurier, 12 November 1907, Laurier Papers, no. 131842.

and Pope, the ambassador was ready to back the Canadian case “for all he was worth.” He cabled the British foreign ministry asking for permission to intervene, and the cabinet, reported Lemieux, had instructed MacDonald to “support our case before the Japanese authorities.” Throughout the discussions that ensued Macdonald was an active player. The Empire and the Dominion were speaking with one voice when negotiations began on 24 November 1907.³⁰

However, both Macdonald and Lemieux rejected a request from the American ambassador in Japan that all three countries negotiate together. This prompted Theodore Roosevelt to initiate discussions with the Canadian government. Two months earlier, on 30 September 1907, the US secretary of state, William Howard Taft, had met Hayashi, at which time he had suggested the reciprocal exclusion of each country’s labourers – a suggestion that Hayashi rejected as not being reciprocity in fact, given that no American labourers were coming to Japan.³¹ Taft’s attempts at limiting Japanese emigration were made as part of Roosevelt’s attempt to defuse escalating tensions with Japan over the decision by the San Francisco school board to segregate Japanese students. Roosevelt had convinced the school board to revoke its action, but, in return, he needed a deal with the Japanese government to limit emigration. The Lemieux-Hayashi negotiations, backed by the British government, had effectively, pre-empted the US–Japan discussions, a point that Roosevelt would raise in later discussions with Mackenzie King.

At their meeting on 24 November, Lemieux told Hayashi that an “unexpected volume of immigration had unfortunately given rise to certain disturbances and to a strong racial prejudice in the Province of British Columbia.”³² Therefore, he hoped the Japanese government would restrict emigration to Canada, preferably to about three hundred labourers and artisans annually. On December 6, after a series of meeting with Hayashi and Chinda Sutemi, former consul in San Francisco, Lemieux cabled Laurier with a summary of agreements reached to that point. Through three specific measures – a formal exchange of letters, regulations to be issued to governors in Japan to restrict emigration, and regulations to be issued to consular officials in Canada – the Japanese government committed to effectively restrict emigration to former Japanese residents (and wives and children) of Canada, domestic servants, and contract labourers certified by the

³⁰ Lemieux to Laurier, 22 November 1907, Laurier Papers, no. 132100.

³¹ Ralph Eldin Minger, *William Howard Taft and United States Foreign Policy: The Apprenticeship Years, 1900–1908* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), 155.

³² Rodolphe Lemieux, “Memorandum,” 25 November 1907, Laurier Papers, no. 132102.

Japanese consul in Canada as well as a limited number (five to ten per one hundred acres of landholdings) of agricultural workers.³³ Merchants, tourists, and students were not included in these figures. A total of four hundred labourers was the cap put on emigration. In cabling Laurier, Lemieux stated that he awaited instructions so that he could conclude the agreement on Monday, 9 December 1907. A day later, Laurier cabled a rather abrupt reply: "Proposed arrangement not satisfactory. Will cable again Monday."³⁴ Laurier subsequently told Lemieux that he wanted a guarantee that could be written into the public record. In a flurry of cables over the next two weeks, Lemieux's exasperation with Laurier was not far from the surface. In the end, Lemieux obtained a promise from Hayashi that he would deposit a confidential letter with the British minister in Tokyo promising to limit annual emigration of labourers to four hundred per year. Seeking further assurances, the British ambassador raised the issue with Ito Hirobumi, the renowned elder statesman of Japan, who assured him that the regulations and limits would be "scrupulously respected." Even this did not satisfy Laurier, and he cabled instruction to Lemieux to close negotiations without finalizing the agreement: "better come back immediately, by quickest route."³⁵ On Christmas day, Lemieux cabled that he was "sailing today," with Pope to follow in a week's time.

After arriving back in Ottawa, Lemieux submitted a confidential report to cabinet, concluding that the government had only three options – the status quo, abrogation of the treaty, or acceptance of his proposals.³⁶ In elucidating the choices, Lemieux demonstrated an acute sensitivity not only to domestic factors but also to the Japanese government's perspective and the complications that arose from international treaty rights. Regarding domestic factors, Lemieux suggested that the status quo (i.e., continued emigration from Japan) was not worthy of consideration. In examining the "causes of the anti-Asiatic agitation existing in British Columbia," Lemieux stated that the problem arose after the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway, when "the coolies left railway camps to become residents of cities, towns and villages, there to compete in the field of labour connected with the various industries. As a consequence, a strong prejudice began to manifest itself – a

³³ Rodolphe Lemieux to Laurier, 5 December 1907, Laurier Papers, nos. 13212–13216.

³⁴ Laurier to Lemieux, Ottawa, 7 December 1907, Laurier Papers, no. 132131.

³⁵ Laurier to Lemieux, Ottawa, 23 December 1907, Laurier Papers, no. 132170.

³⁶ Rodolphe Lemieux, "Confidential Report: By the Honourable Rodolphe Lemieux, K.C., Minister of Labour, of his Mission to Japan on the subject of the Influx of Oriental Labourers into the Province of British Columbia," 12 January 1908, Laurier Papers, nos. 132060–132090.

prejudice more or less apparent wherever the two races, Mongolian and Caucasian, have come into contact in every part of the world.”³⁷ Lemieux recognized that part of the reason for anti-Asian discrimination was to be found in the “greed of employers who import cheap labour” and the “resentment of labour unions,” but he stressed that the “interests at stake in the Asiatic immigration problem are far more serious, far more complex, than the quarrel between the Unions and corporations.”³⁸ The problem was not only racial antagonism between the “Mongolian and Caucasian” but that, especially in an “Anglo-Saxon community like ours, where democratic institutions prevail, the introduction in large numbers of alien races inherently ignorant of the most elementary principles of self-government, can not but by itself be inimical to the best interests of Canada.” He proclaimed that “British Columbians object to a vast alien Colony, exclusive, inscrutable, unassimilative, with fewer wants and a lower standard of living than themselves.” Further, he stated that British Columbians had

to safeguard the future and distinctiveness of their race and civilization, and in their passionate and unalterable conviction, they cannot be protected unless the free ingress of Orientals is restricted and regulated. As in every Anglo-Saxon community, there exists a deep-seated popular determination to exclude from even the sparsely-settled territories, the concentrated masses of the Orient. Such are the economic factors coupled with race antipathy and incompatibility of ideals, that are at the bottom of all agitation now going on for the exclusion of the Orientals.³⁹

These were the factors, Lemieux concluded, that drove prejudice in British Columbia “as well as in all white communities.” With these words, Lemieux embraced a thoroughly universalist notion of racialized populations, with the “Anglo-Saxon” peoples, being the most advanced of the Caucasian peoples, sitting at the top, and for whom it was only right to exclude the Asian “other.”

Lemieux’s suggested classification of racial hierarchy seemed to conflate the Chinese and the Japanese, but, in fact, he distinguished between them. He noted that the head tax imposed on Chinese immigrants had been relatively effective and that recent “anti-Asiatic” feeling had been directed not against the Chinese but against the Japanese and the “Hindoos.” “The differentiation” he attributed to “the fact that the

³⁷ *Ibid.*, nos. 132061, 132066, 132067.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 132062.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, nos. 132068, 132074.

Chinese do not assert a position of equality with the whites."⁴⁰ This apparently had not entered the minds of the rioters who had trashed the Chinese community only a few months before. Lemieux's musings raise the fundamentally closed circuitry of racialization: those who assumed the mantle of meekness and subservience became the docile, slavish "other," while those who aspired to equality became the dangerous, competitive "other."

The arguments of Hayashi and other Japanese officials also had an impact. Lemieux recounted how Hayashi had argued that Commander Perry, when he first landed in Japan in 1853, had pleaded that the Japanese open their ports and become citizens of the world and that they welcome all races to their shores: "The Japanese government had much difficulty in persuading their people to accept this policy. They did so, however, and now find the doors of the very nation which pressed this policy upon them, shut in their faces."⁴¹ Lemieux stressed that, until Great Britain and Japan signed the 1894 Treaty of Commerce and Navigation, previous treaties had been one-sided and had been considered by many as highly detrimental to the interests of Japan. The presence in them of provisions pertaining to extraterritorial rights, tariff rates, and so on had long subjected Japan to serious material disadvantages and to a keen sense of humiliation. Treaty revision to rid Japan of the unequal terms had become a cause celebre. The signing of the 1894 treaty with Great Britain had signalled a first step towards the abolition of the unequal treaties. Furthermore, stated Lemieux, Japanese public opinion held that the successful wars against China (1894-95) and Russia (1904-05), Japan's military and naval power, and, above all, its new form of government and educational progress indicated that its "standards of civilization [were] on a par with those of western nations."⁴² Finally, Lemieux observed, the whole nation wanted to compete and expand, even though Japan had "come rather late to enter the race for colonization." If the treaty was abrogated by the Canadian government, Lemieux asked, "would Canada impose upon the Japanese a poll tax of \$500, as was done in the case of the Chinese?" To do so would be "practically *exclusion*, and it is contrary to our policy, in so far as the Japanese are concerned. We have always differentiated between the Japanese and the Chinese. Moreover, exclusion would mean a very serious breach in the treaty of alliance between the Mother Country and Japan." Here Lemieux's reflections

⁴⁰ Ibid., no. 132062.

⁴¹ Ibid., no. 132074.

⁴² Ibid., no. 132068.

embrace Japan's imperial status and reflect the emerging stratification of racialized Asians. The word "exclusion" in this context actually refers to overt exclusion. This, according to Lemieux, was quite appropriate to the Chinese population but was not appropriate to the Japanese population, with whom a more nuanced and secret policy would be necessary (i.e., the agreement that he had reached with Hayashi).

In the end, Parliament did endorse the agreement but not before Robert Borden, head of the Conservative Party, lambasted the government for handing over control of immigration to another country – Japan. Shortly after the 1907 race riots, Borden had visited Vancouver and left no doubt where his sentiments and those of the Conservative Party lay. He called for balancing imperial and Canadian interests, respecting treaty rights, acknowledging Japan's greatness and its alliance with Britain, and fostering trade. But, he cautioned, it would be well to remember that there were "considerations greater and higher than those of trade or material progress."⁴³ The one supreme consideration was this: "British Columbia must remain a British and Canadian province, inhabited and dominated by men in whose veins runs the blood of those great pioneering races which built up and developed not only Western, but Eastern Canada."⁴⁴ Racism had taken on hegemonic power within the country. How to ensure a "white Canada forever" was the task to which members of the Anglo-Saxon elite lent their support.

THE KING COMMISSIONS: VANCOUVER

While the Lemieux mission was en route to Japan, King arrived in Vancouver and immediately convened public sessions for those from the Japanese community who had claims for redress. As a result of these first hearings, which lasted until 5 November 1907, King awarded \$9,175 in damages and losses, some \$4,500 less than what was requested by the fifty or so claimants.⁴⁵ King's report lauded the cooperation of the Japanese consul and the lawyer hired to represent the claimants. In assessing damages, however, King was quick to point out that, while the incident was regrettable, there were many who felt that immigration from Asia was excessive: "A feeling against the sudden influx in large

⁴³ "Speech (in part) Delivered by Mr. R.L. Borden," in R.L. Borden, MP, *The Question of Oriental Immigration: Speeches* (n.p., n.d.).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴⁵ Canada, *Report by W.L. Mackenzie King... Commissioner Appointed to Investigate into the Losses Sustained by the Japanese Population of Vancouver, BC on the Occasion of the Riots in That City in September, 1907* (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1908).

numbers of peoples from other parts of the world is one thing, and is quite compatible with a desire to maintain the friendliest relations between the peoples of those countries and ourselves."⁴⁶ In other words, the motivations of the rioters were, according to King, quite understandable and should not be seen as a source of international friction. This was the beginning of King's attempts to appease the Japanese government, on the one hand, and legitimize the goal of creating a "white" Canada, on the other.

In the course of his inquiry, King received information that led him to believe that the increase in immigration in the summer of 1907 was the result of the inappropriate recruiting of Japanese workers on the part of labour contracting companies. The government gave King a second mandate to look into the causes of the riot. He proceeded directly to convene hearings between 11 and 30 November 1907 on the "Methods by which Oriental Labourers have been Induced to come to Canada."⁴⁷ In this second report, King basically conducted a forensic audit of the operations of the Canadian Nippon Supply Company. Of the estimated 11,440 migrants from Asia arriving in British Columbia in the first ten months of 1907, 8,125 were Japanese, 1,266 were Chinese, and 2,047 were from South Asia. However, these figures include those who were already landed immigrants and those who were going to the United States.

For example, of the 8,125 Japanese, 3,619 proceeded to the United States directly. Of the 4,429 who remained, the majority had come from Hawaii, where conditions in the sugar cane plantations had declined to the point of provoking a mass migration. These migrants, already landed in the United States, could not be controlled by the Japanese government, whose "power may end when the territorial limit is crossed." Of the 1,641 migrants who came directly from Japan, 300 were landed, 190 were relatives, and 100 were merchants or students. Only 900 had arrived from Japan under contract with the Canadian Nippon Supply Company to work on the CPR or in the mines. Nevertheless, King concluded that the cause of the riot "was an alarm at numbers, and the cry of a white Canada was raised." In targeting labour contractors, King was looking for a scapegoat, and this almost populist tact – going after corporations – was one way of deflecting responsibility for the attacks against the communities. The irony was that the government was paying similar contractors, both in Canada and abroad, to facilitate the importation

⁴⁶ Canada, *Report by W.L. Mackenzie King*, 19.

⁴⁷ Canada, *Report of W.L. Mackenzie King, C.M.G., Commissioner Appointed to Enquire into the Methods by which Oriental Labourers Have Been Induced to Come to Canada* (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1908) 3, 5, 8, 11, 50.

of white labour from Britain, northern Europe, and (later) southern Europe.

KING AND THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Roosevelt, informed by Taft that his proposals for an agreement to limit immigration between Japan and the United States had been rebuffed, reached out to King, inviting him to Washington to discuss matters of mutual concern.⁴⁸ Laurier consented to King's visit. Roosevelt had closely followed events in Vancouver, telling Henry Cabot Lodge that they would have two positive effects: (1) to convince the British public that the British dominions would take the same attitudes as had America's west coast states and (2) to make Japan realize that "she will have to face the same feeling in the British Empire which she does in the American Republic."⁴⁹ Roosevelt criticized the illegal actions but was very clear that "the attitude which is back of the movement is in each case sound." Thus, on 25 January 1908, Roosevelt met King in the White House. According to King's diary, during the course of the lunchtime conversation Roosevelt suggested that if King were to visit England he might, on behalf of Roosevelt, ask for British assistance since they were allied with Japan. A word from an ally might go far since "the Japanese must learn that they will have to keep their people in their own country."⁵⁰ Roosevelt, stated King, believed that the Japanese government was refusing to limit emigration to the United States and that "they [the Japanese] were simply taking advantage of our politeness. I thought they had done this, and I decided to send the fleet into the Pacific, it may help them to understand that we want a definite arrangement."

King's diary indicates that the American president believed that Lemieux's "ostentatious refusal to have anything to do with the American ambassador had done harm to the situation."⁵¹ King replied that Lemieux had had no instructions to conduct joint negotiations and, thus, had acted quite appropriately. King blamed the press for exploiting the situation, a suggestion that Roosevelt seemed to accept.

⁴⁸ William N. Tilchin, *Theodore Roosevelt and the British Empire: A Study in Presidential Statecraft* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 174.

⁴⁹ Theodore Roosevelt to Henry Cabot Lodge, 11 September 1907, in *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, ed. Elting E. Morrison (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 5:790.

⁵⁰ William Lyon Mackenzie King, *The Mackenzie King*, 25 January 1908.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

Afterwards, Roosevelt brought in Secretary of State Elihu Root, who also discussed immigration questions with King.

Roosevelt hoped to enlist King and the Canadian government as arbiters with the British to ensure that US interests in Japan were not undermined, as he believed that they had been by Lemieux's refusal to engage in joint bargaining. But Roosevelt was hardly dependent on the Canadians or the British. As King recorded, the US president had already decided to dispatch the US Navy to the Pacific (and around the world) in a display of gunboat diplomacy to back up his desire for a hemispheric accord limiting Japanese immigration. Thus, the backdrop to the King-Roosevelt talks was the suggestion that war might break out between Japan and the United States. As King's last entry summarized, the day had been golden, but there was a cloud hovering over it: "It looks as tho' I were to help to preserve peace between nations."⁵²

King reported to Laurier on his talks, emphasizing Roosevelt's suggestion that he act as a go-between with the British. Laurier endorsed the suggestion of such a trip, if not the goal, and sent King back to Washington, where he met Roosevelt, Root, and the British ambassador to Washington on 31 January and 1 February. They agreed that King would go to Britain to gain its support, as Roosevelt informed Laurier in a personal letter written immediately afterwards.⁵³ Roosevelt stressed the common interests not only of Canada, Britain, and the United States with regard to Asian immigration but also of Australia. As it turned out, Australian prime minister Alfred Deakin had invited the American battle fleet to visit Australia, and Roosevelt had enthusiastically agreed since "such a visit would symbolize the unity of the English-speaking peoples of the Pacific."⁵⁴ Roosevelt worried that "race animosity will be called into exercise by some sexual misconduct on the part of a Japanese. But the trip of our fleet has had a most beneficial effect. The Japanese Government has asked us to go to Tokyo, where of course we shall go."⁵⁵ Meanwhile, King would travel to London for talks, but his agenda was somewhat different from what Roosevelt had imagined.

⁵² Ibid., 12.

⁵³ Theodore Roosevelt to Sir Wilfid Laurier, 1 February 1908, in *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, Morrison, 6:917-18. Roosevelt's account of the meeting is contained in Theodore Roosevelt to Arthur Hamilton Lee, 2 February 1908, in *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, 5:918-21.

⁵⁴ Tilchin, *Theodore Roosevelt and the British Empire*, 178.

⁵⁵ Roosevelt to Arthur Hamilton Lee, 8 April 1908, Morrison, *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, 6:995-96.

KING AND CONTINUOUS JOURNEY REGULATIONS

King's itinerary that spring was busy indeed. His voyage to Britain saw him leaving Ottawa on 5 March and returning on 25 April 1908.⁵⁶ In Britain, King met with Lord Elgin (head of the colonial office), John Morley (secretary of state for India), Edward Grey (Britain's foreign minister), as well as a host of other officials. Talks regarding Roosevelt's proposed hemispheric agreement did not go far, but, according to King's report of his trip, there was a strong consensus among British officials for exclusion: "That Canada should desire to restrict immigration from the Orient is regarded as natural, that Canada should remain a white man's country is to be not only desirable for economic and social reasons ... is necessary on political and national grounds."⁵⁷ In the end, King's talks focused on developing a program to deal with immigration from South Asia. In regard to the specifics of halting Indian emigration, King and British officials agreed that "a native of India is not a person suited to this country" because he/she is used to a "tropical climate," has manners and customs "so unlike those of our own people," and is possessed of an "inability to readily adapt." The "privation and suffering ... render a discontinuance of such immigration most desirable in the interest of the Indians themselves."⁵⁸ Furthermore, any substantial immigration could, King asserted in his report, "occasion considerable unrest among workmen whose standard of comfort is of a higher order, and who, as citizens with family and civic obligations, have expenditures to meet and a status to maintain which the coolie immigrant is in a position wholly to ignore." Policies adopted by the Government of India, pressure on the steamship companies, and implementation of a continuous voyage stipulation by the Canadian government would put an end to the problem, King reported.⁵⁹ King stressed again in this report that the issue was sensitive because "foreign relations and consideration of high imperial importance [were] involved in the question of Oriental immigration." The subject was not a new one for British officials, attested King, since Australia, South Africa, and India had raised

⁵⁶ *Report by W.L. Mackenzie King, C.M.G., Deputy Minister of Labour, on Mission to England to confer with the British Authorities on the subject of Immigration to Canada from the Orient and Immigration from India in Particular* (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1908).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

⁵⁹ The continuous voyage regulation demanded that immigrants purchase a through fare from India to Canada. The governments of Canada and Britain then pressured the steamship companies to not provide direct passage.

the issue in years past. Fortunately, concluded King, the restrictive measures contemplated meant that "enacting legislation either in India or in Canada which might appear to reflect on fellow British subjects in another part of the Empire has been whole avoided." King concluded: "Nothing could be more unfortunate or misleading than that the impression should go forth that Canada, in seeking to regulate a matter of domestic concern, is not deeply sensible of the obligations which citizenship within the empire entails."⁶⁰ After numerous challenges from the South Asian community, the Laurier government, based on King's recommendations, revised the immigration act to oblige those from South Asia to come by direct passage to Canada.⁶¹

King had completed his reports on the first two inquiries he had conducted in Vancouver before leaving for England. In the meantime, however, appeals by the Chinese government prompted Laurier to ask King to conduct a third and final inquiry into the losses sustained by the Chinese community. After having arrived back in Canada in late April, King then crossed the country once again, arriving in Vancouver in late May. He conducted hearings from 26 May to 5 June 1908.⁶² In his report, submitted on 9 June 1908, King awarded damages greater than twenty-five thousand dollars to over two hundred Chinese claimants after taking testimony from more than one hundred witnesses.⁶³ King pointed out that a number of community members had purchased "a considerable quantity of firearms and ammunition" to be used in the case of further unwarranted attack.⁶⁴ Claims for such purchases were disallowed. That fall, King stood for election and won his seat in Ontario, but his travels were far from over.

KING'S GLOBAL TOUR

As a result of King's visits to Washington, the US state department had written King earlier in the year suggesting that he attend a special conference of the Joint International Opium Commission in China.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 10.

⁶¹ This measure replaced the previous "continuous journey" regulation. See Norman Buchignani, Doreen M. Indra, Ram Srivastava, *Continuous Journey: A Social History of South Asians in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985), 22-7; and Roy, *A White Man's Province*, 212.

⁶² Canada. *Report by W.L. Mackenzie King... Commissioner Appointed to Investigate into the Losses Sustained by the Chinese Population of Vancouver, B.C. on the Occasion of the Riots in That City in September, 1907* (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1908).

⁶³ Ibid., 10-1.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 12.

King and Laurier had agreed he should go, but his election that October gave him pause as he considered whether his priority should be to remain and work towards a cabinet position as minister of labour. After being reassured by Laurier that his political career would not suffer in his absence, King decided to make the trip despite advice to the contrary from some of his political backers. His nine-hundred-page diary of this trip provides invaluable insights into King's emerging views on race and Empire,⁶⁵ and it reveals his reasons for deciding to go.⁶⁶ According to King, the Opium Commission had a humanitarian dimension with which Canada should be identified; it gave Canada an opportunity to be represented equally with other nations of the world; and it might enhance commercial opportunities with China. But in King's mind the "most important of all reasons" was that "this continent was face to face with a serious problem, growing out of the relations with the Orient and the Pacific slope and the probable movement of Asiatic peoples; that in some form or another we would sooner or later, have to face the question of how these peoples could be restricted from coming to this side; that some first-hand knowledge of conditions in the Orient was essential if we were not to be completely in the dark."⁶⁷ Although King would remark on many aspects of his Asia trip, this primary concern would remain front and centre, even after he returned to Canada.

Prior to leaving, King met with Albert Grey, the governor general in Canada who encouraged him to travel to India as well as to China and Japan: "His Excellency pointed out in regard to India that what he most feared at the present time was not so much an uprising which it would be impossible to cope with, but assassinations ... Hindus in British Columbia were circulating in South Africa the literature which they were publishing in British Columbia ... there was a concerted movement on the part of Indians in different parts of the world to make trouble."⁶⁸ At Grey's urging, Laurier permitted King to include India in his trip. Meeting with Laurier prior to his departure, King suggested that "something in the nature of the Monroe Doctrine for the continent of North America in regard to the immigration of peoples from the Orient was desirable."⁶⁹ He told Laurier that his talks with Roosevelt in the spring indicated that the US administration would be willing to

⁶⁵ The report is entitled *Mission to the Orient* and comes in three volumes, which include pages G2215 1A to G2215 900. See Mackenzie King Papers, MG 26 J 13, Library and Archives Canada.

⁶⁶ *Mission to the Orient*, 3:1.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

⁶⁸ *Mission to the Orient*, 1:13.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

reach such a deal "immediately before the Roosevelt regime concluded." Such an agreement, suggested King, would "amount to a virtual alliance between these two great powers so far as any question arising out of the Oriental immigration was concerned." Laurier, however, preferred that each country make separate arrangements. "As to the Hindu business, the chief factor was the CPR," stated Laurier. "They had been told in so many words that their subsidy would cease if they carried any more Hindus to this country."⁷⁰ In travelling to India, King would ascertain whether the continuous journey regulations were working.

King departed Ottawa without fanfare on 14 December 1908, ostensibly to participate in the International Opium Conference in Shanghai. In fact, however, the real goal of his mission was to assure that immigration from Asia was strictly limited, particularly from China. He hoped to engage the Chinese government in negotiations towards achieving quotas to reduce the number of Chinese coming to Canada.⁷¹ Having arrived in London, King met with numerous officials, including the British foreign secretary Edward Grey. He told Lord Grey that he hoped to meet with Chinese representatives in Peking while in China, with a view to stopping or severely restricting immigration from that country. The five hundred dollars head tax had proven effective initially, but as many as fifteen hundred Chinese had found the resources to put up the money in 1907.⁷² This was still too many, and King stated that, in return for the more liberal admission of merchants and students and the abolition of the head tax, his objective was to totally exclude workers from emigrating. If this proved impossible, he hoped to negotiate a deal with the Chinese government to place "voluntary quotas" on the number of workers emigrating, similar to the agreement made with Japan in early 1908. King also queried Grey regarding Roosevelt's suggestion of hemispheric or regional agreements since "the question now was getting to be such a large one that it might be that some understanding between the white peoples and the yellow and black races would be necessary in the interests of preserving peace."⁷³ Grey worried that King's proposal

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ John Hilliker, former head of the historical section of Canadian foreign affairs wrote a general account of King's voyage but excluded discussion of King's immigration initiatives. See John Hilliker, "Mackenzie King on the Pacific Rim, 1909: Thinking about an East Asian Policy for Canada," in *Las Relaciones Internacionales en el Pacífico (Siglos XVIII-XX): Colonización, Descolonización y Encuentro Cultural*, ed. Dolores Elizalde (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1997), 575-89.

⁷² "Foreign Secretary to Minister in China," 31 December 1908, *Documents on Canadian External Relations* (hereafter *DCER*), vol. 1, 1909-1918 (Ottawa: Foreign Affairs Canada, 1967), 592.

⁷³ *Mission to the Orient*, 1:98.

for a conference to look at “zonal” segregation would be too transparent and that King would let the matter drop without, however, relinquishing his hopes for continental arrangements.

King travelled through France by train and then boarded a ship to cross the Mediterranean. King remarked as he arrived in Egypt that the greatness of the British Empire was reflected in how “the British flag controls the strategic points on the earth’s surface.” For him, such knowledge reinforced the importance of belonging to such an empire. Furthermore, “as I saw the American fleet, I could not help thinking that if the British and American nations could agree on an alliance against injustice they would be all powerful in controlling the peace of the world.”⁷⁴

King’s discussions in India focused on the revised cabinet orders in council of May and June 1908, which, respectively, imposed a “continuous journey” provision on emigrants from India as well as a regulation requiring two hundred dollars minimum cash on hand upon landing. The British governor of India, Lord Minto, later wrote Laurier informing him of his satisfaction with King and the measures taken, which had avoided the “invidious legislation aimed particularly at British Indians” and that had caused problems in other British territories.⁷⁵ In reply, Laurier explained the necessity for the race laws: “You remember the trouble we had with the Chinese immigration when you were in Canada. Strange to say, the Hindu and all people coming from India, are looked upon by our people in British Columbia with still more disfavour than the Chinese.”⁷⁶ King expressed his relief upon departing India: “It is impossible to describe how refreshing it is to be again with people of one’s own colour. One becomes very tired of the black races after living among them. It is clear the two were never intended to intermix freely.”⁷⁷

King arrived in Shanghai on 16 February 1909 and then proceeded quickly to Beijing (Peking) in early March to discuss immigration matters with the Qing government, then on its last legs. King aggressively sought to have the government impose quotas on emigration to Canada. He had long discussions with the British ambassador in China, J.N. Jordan, in preparation for the meetings with the Chinese foreign affairs office. King stressed that the essential question was whether the

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁷⁵ Government of India to Secretary of State for India, 11 March 1909, *DCER* 1:596.

⁷⁶ Laurier to Minto, 13 April 2009, as reproduced in O.D. Skelton, *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1921), 354.

⁷⁷ *Mission to the Orient*, 1:293.

Chinese government would impose restrictions on emigration; otherwise, King told Jordan, the government would have to “increase the head-tax or pass an Exclusion Act.”⁷⁸ King’s 9 March diary records his reflections on whether a Christian or a Christian nation could approve of immigration restrictions. He concluded “that were we to restrict with a view of depriving people of one civilization of any benefits which our civilization could give them in the way of light or learning, such an act would be unchristian and selfish in the highest degree, but to say that corporations were not to be allowed to bring men to the Dominion for the sake of exploiting them and lowering and helping to destroy the standards which with great difficulty were building up for our working classes, or to allow guilds or other organizations to sell other men into slavery, that they themselves might reap profits out of the bondage of these men[,] was not unchristian.”⁷⁹ Perhaps King alone was capable of bringing together race, class, and religion in such an expression of paternal benevolence. To King, students, tourists, and those “capable of learning of our civilization” should not be excluded, but a firm hand was necessary to ensure peace: “As brothers sometimes got along better by sharing different houses in the same town,” peoples might get along better by “confining their living to the particular parts of the earth to which nature seemed to have assigned them.” Jordan had opposed restrictions in the past, mused King, but a visit to Canada and his study of the situation in Australia now predisposed him towards restriction: “he thought Canada should be a white man’s country and should be kept as such.” However, Jordan cautioned that Chinese officials considered immigration restrictions to be a violation of earlier treaties with Britain, a fact that surprised King and reinforced his belief in the need to work towards greater autonomy for Canada within the Empire.⁸⁰

King’s considerable negotiation skills and efforts were not enough to overcome the resistance and inertia on the part of China’s foreign ministry. King insisted that the desire to restrict Chinese immigration to Canada was not motivated by race prejudice but was, rather, simply an economic and political issue. However, King’s counterpart, acting foreign affairs minister Liang Tun-yen, cut to the chase in the discussions, suggesting that freedom of movement would allow a balancing of economic factors. Furthermore, he pointedly asked why the Canadian government did not restrict all foreigners. In response to this, King could

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 3:7-8.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 22-4.

only prevaricate: "This is pretty much what we are doing."⁸¹ They then proceeded to discuss the Lemieux-Hayashi agreement. Liang recognized that the Canadian government could exclude Chinese migrants, but, he stated, "it is in violation of treaty rights for you to exercise that power, the capitation tax is in violation of the treaty." According to Jordan, who also attended the talks, Liang raised the spectre of a boycott of Canadian goods similar to the boycott that took place in 1904 against American goods.⁸² In a later session, Liang complained that he was being asked to camouflage Canadian actions: "To ask us to tell our people that they must not leave China to go to your country is for us to slap our own people in the face, so that you may be relieved of slapping them."⁸³ After having read the details of the Lemieux-Hayashi accord, however, Liang began to concede ground, and a tentative deal to limit emigration to five hundred per year (Laurier had suggested one thousand) and to use passport issuance to control emigration seemed possible. However, at this point, talks faltered for reasons that remain unclear, and King left China no further ahead in his quest to permanently restrict Chinese emigration.

From Beijing, King travelled into northeast China (Manchuria) and on 7 April boarded a ship from Dairen (Dalny) to Kitakyushu (Moji). He then proceeded by rail via Miyajima and Kyoto to Yokohama and Tokyo. King's discussions in China and Japan were wide-ranging. The American ambassador in China, William Woodville Rockhill, informed him about the 1904 boycott of American goods in retaliation for Roosevelt's tightening of immigration restriction against Chinese, further reinforcing King's belief in the need to negotiate racism.⁸⁴ One of the levers that became apparent to King was the Japanese government's own imperial project in Asia. The British ambassador, John Jordan, had told King earlier that Korea "had simply been stolen from the Chinese by the Japanese. One of the saddest sights he had ever experienced was the time that he had said good-bye to the Koreans with whom he had been associated with while Minister and seeing at the moment that their country was simply done."⁸⁵ And while travelling in northeast

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁸² Jordan's reports and King's official memoranda are in *DCERI*:597-607. In May 1904, the Shanghai Commerce Association launched a boycott of American goods in response to a Congressional act passed the previous month making previous exclusion laws permanent. See I-yao Shen, *A Century of Chinese Exclusion Abroad*, trans. Shi Yi (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2006), 46-7.

⁸³ *Mission to the Orient*, 3:56.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 2:133.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 162.

China, King read *Tragedy of Korea* by Frederick Mackenzie, a Canadian reporter sympathetic to Korea. The volume, reflected King, was "a strong indictment against Japan which to my mind should be read by every person who has anything to do with international diplomacy." However, King also met Komura Jutarō, who had replaced Hayashi Tadasu as Japan's foreign minister. Komura told King that Asia was Japan's sphere of influence, that Korea and Manchuria were destinations of choice for Japanese emigration: "It is for this reason," Komura told King, "that we don't want our people to go to America, because we need them all here." Future reluctance to confront Japanese imperialism in northeast China in the 1930s can be traced to this claim that, if Japanese citizens were to be limited in their access to North America, then Anglo-American leaders had no right to constrict Japan's claims in Asia.

In discussions with Ishii Kikujirō, who had been in Vancouver at the time of the riots, King took care to demonstrate that he knew about the various schemes to bring in Japanese labourers at the time of the riot, and "while I took care to say nothing that could be offensive I feel that I have helped to make secure the certainty of Japan living up to her undertaking."⁸⁶ After dining at the American embassy where the talk ranged freely regarding military rivalries in the Pacific, King mused that the United States would one day "be pulled into a conflict with Japan."⁸⁷ King returned to Canada in early May, reinforced in his belief that Asian migration had been brought under control due in no small measure to his own efforts. So proud was he that he sent a number of his government reports to Harvard to fulfill the requirements for a PhD, which he had abandoned when he joined the civil service. In a rather ironic twist, Harvard chose his second report on the race riots, "Methods by which Oriental Labourers have been Induced to Come to Canada," as the equivalent of a dissertation and awarded him his doctorate.

Over the next few years, King and the Laurier government continued to wrestle with the resistance that the race barriers created. South Asians in Canada were keenly aware of the discriminatory nature of the immigration laws and disenfranchisement regulations. They petitioned the Crown in 1910 to overturn the orders in council that invoked the continuous journey and two hundred dollars possession regulations.⁸⁸ Furthermore, in early 1911, three hundred British subjects of Indian

⁸⁶ *Mission to the Orient*, 2:234.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 241.

⁸⁸ For related memoranda on this, see *DCER* 1:609-11.

descent signed a memorial to the British government protesting Canadian immigration laws. These appeals fell on deaf ears in Ottawa as Laurier and the Liberal government defended a white Canada while, at the same time, trying to appease the Japanese government. On 3 April 1911, the British and Japanese governments renewed the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation. Laurier, however, refused to renew its adherence, insisting that Article 2, the mobility clause, be abrogated, as had been done for the United States.⁸⁹ On the whole, however, Laurier was quite satisfied with the success of his exclusionist measures. While attending an imperial conference in London in 1911, he participated in a special meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence called by British foreign secretary Edward Grey to discuss the early renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.⁹⁰ Grey and the British cabinet wanted to renew the treaty for another ten years in the hope of preempting growing opposition to Japan's imperial ascendancy within the foreign ministry, the media, and on the part of some of the British Dominions. British officials shared the values of white supremacy, but for Grey, the strategic importance of having Japan as an ally in East Asia, in the context of the looming conflict with Germany, overrode any other concerns.⁹¹ Having already decided on early renewal and a ten-year term, Grey decided to consult the Dominion leaders to neutralize any possible opposition from that quarter. Grey explained the strategic importance of the alliance to the British Empire and soothed immigration concerns by asserting that the Japanese government was not interested in sending people to the Dominions but, rather, preferred them to go to Korea or South Manchuria.⁹² Having succeeded in imposing quotas on Japanese emigration, Laurier was pleased to line up behind Grey, calling for friendship with Japan and the continuation of the treaty for fifty years or more. This view irritated the Australian delegates, who thought that Laurier's apparent generosity towards Japan was predicated on Canada's proximity to the United States, a circumstance that did not hold for Australia, which had even more stringent exclusion regulations than did Canada. For the Australian government, renewal and extension of the Anglo-Japanese alliance meant an increasing dependence on Japan

⁸⁹ DCER 1:612.

⁹⁰ For details see Peter Lowe, "The British Empire and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1911-1915," *History* 55 (June 1969): 212-25.

⁹¹ The permanent under-secretary, Sir John Anderson, described the Japanese as "aliens and undesirable aliens at that," as cited in Lowe, "The British Empire and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance," 212.

⁹² CID meeting, 26 May 1911, Cab 38/18/40, p. 9, PRO, as cited in Lowe, "The British Empire and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance," 214.

for its defence at a time when racialized notions painted the Japanese as sneaky, competitive, and quite unworthy of alliance status. The Australians, however, swallowed their doubts and supported renewal, which took place on 13 July 1911.

CONCLUSION

Examining the 1907 Vancouver race riots in isolation can lead too easily to a view that casts BC workers or politicians as racist and the federal government as a mediating influence. However, if taken as one act in a dynamic interaction between migrants from Asia and attempts to limit their entry and their rights in Canada, the Vancouver race riots prove to be much more than what today might appear as an appalling act of injustice. The evidence here would suggest that, in fact, the race riots prompted the federal government to take immigration matters firmly in hand and to consolidate its powers to exclude Asian peoples. In analyzing the causes and remedies for the riot, federal officials and politicians agreed with the rioters: Canada must remain a white country and peoples of Asian descent had to be excluded. The Lemieux mission to Japan and King's journeys to Washington, England, India, China, and Japan in pursuit of policies that would largely prohibit Asian emigration were the continuation and, indeed, the fulfilment of the work of the rioters by other means. The ensuing measures – forcing quotas on Japanese emigration in the Lemieux-Hayashi agreement, adopting the continuous passage regulations that particularly affected South Asian migration, and attempting to further restrict Chinese migration – together represented a keystone in the arch of Canadian history.

The defeat of the Liberals in 1911 did not bring an end to these policies; if anything, they were reinforced. The Conservative governments upheld the exclusionist laws, worked to enable provincial legislation that prohibited white women from working for Asian employers, and provoked the now infamous *Komagata Maru* tragedy of 1914. When King became prime minister after a Liberal victory in 1921, the "white" Canada vision he articulated between 1907 and 1909 became even more pronounced. His government enacted the 1923 Chinese Exclusion Act despite vociferous protests by many in Canada as well as by the nascent Chinese governments. In 1928, King's government introduced further restrictions on Japanese immigration quotas, to 150 per year.

The communities affected did not die. "Paper sons" and "picture brides" ensured some renewal, and within Canada, community organi-

zations continued to press for an end to discrimination. For the most part, however, these efforts were undertaken on behalf of specific communities that remained relatively isolated one from the other. The war in Asia further exacerbated this trend, and the Pacific War, beginning with the attack on Pearl Harbor, prompted the King government to engage in the uprooting, dispossession, dispersal, and attempted expulsion of the Japanese Canadian population.⁹³ Only after the war was any substantial progress made in dismantling what had become a white supremacist state.

As mentioned in the introduction to this article, the race riots and their implications have largely escaped serious scrutiny in mainstream scholarship. This may well reflect what contemporary anti-racist theorists such as John Gabriel and Yasmin Jiwani argue is the power of whiteness to reproduce itself through discursive techniques such as exnomination, naturalization, and universalization.⁹⁴ In short, whiteness is often assumed as the norm, and the racializing past is omitted or rendered as an exceptionalizing footnote to the main story – that of the achievement of Canadian autonomy and eventual nationhood. To go beyond this narrative requires problematizing and deconstructing the processes involved in a manner that gives voice to racialized others and breaks down traditional boundaries, between domestic and foreign policies, for example, or between local and global resistance. In this case study, Asian migrants continued to come to Canada despite the barriers erected against them. The Chinese and Japanese governments tried to resist discrimination against peoples from their countries although compromise or outright defeat was often the result. Anti-imperialist movements in China and India also had a significant impact on imperial policies, the movement in India obliging the British colonial office to be much more cautious regarding how issues of race were handled within the British Empire. This became evident as early as 1897 during the imperial conference in London, at which time Joseph Chamberlain articulated the need to refrain from specific naming of racialized groups in order to avoid providing grist to the anti-imperial mills in India, China, and Japan.⁹⁵ King, in pursuing his agenda of negotiated exclusions, was in fact reflecting a tone the Empire had already set. What was new in the

⁹³ The destruction of the communities and the attempted expulsion of the Japanese in Canada may well be termed “ethnic cleansing,” depending on the definition employed.

⁹⁴ John Gabriel, *Whitewash: Racialized Politics and the Media* (London: Routledge, 1998); and Yasmin Jiwani, *Discourses of Denial: Mediations of Race, Gender, and Violence* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006).

⁹⁵ See Jeremy Martens, “A Transnational History of Immigration Restriction: Natal and New South Wales, 1896–97,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 34, 3 (2006): 323–44.

equation was the American factor. In that regard, Ed Kohn has argued in his study of Canada-American relations that Anglo-Saxonism was extremely important in creating continental affinities but that it went into decline in the post-1903 period.⁹⁶ As a popular phenomenon this may have been true, but common interests in racialization with regard to Asian peoples led elites in both countries to imagine a new world in which Anglo-Saxon aspirations would weld an alliance between the British and American empires. Over time, Canadian governments would render this a cornerstone of Canadian foreign policy – one that traces its origins to the Pacific Coast riots of 1906–07.

⁹⁶ See Edward P. Kohn, *This Kindred People: Canadian-American Relations and the Anglo-Saxon Idea, 1895-1903* (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004).