

A Governor-General's Views on Oriental Immigration to British Columbia, 1904-1911

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The 4th Earl Grey, Governor-General of Canada from 1904-1911, looked at every Canadian problem from an imperial viewpoint — what solution to the problem would best further the aim of imperial unity? On occasion this imperial outlook blinded him to the fact that there was a real problem present. Such was the case at first when he encountered opposition in British Columbia to the entry of immigrants from Japan. Orientals were essential to his plans for the future of British Columbia. The objections of British Columbians were therefore unacceptable. However, before his departure from Canada he had reversed his opinion, while still judging from an imperial viewpoint.

Grey believed that closer imperial ties could be fostered by bringing more British immigrants to Canada. They would have to be immigrants of "the right sort," a phrase Grey did not think it necessary to define. The majority of immigrants entering Canada at this time were not coming from Britain. Large numbers of Americans were pouring into Western Canada, and Grey came to Canada with the idea that this influx represented a danger to the nation and the empire. He feared the more "radical" democracy of the United States and thought that American influence might undermine British respect for law. The next few years, Grey was convinced, would witness a struggle for Canada between the United States and Britain, and a large American population would tip the scales in favour of the United States. One of his primary tasks as governor-general was to work to "keep both Canada's hands on the Union Jack." He feared that his task might prove difficult because "if the tide is setting in toward America, however energetically I wield my mop I may be Dame Partington after all."¹ To a large extent his fears were dispelled on his first trip to Western Canada. He learned that the Americans were experienced farmers who brought with them capital and expert knowledge. If they arrived with unsound political notions or dreams of annexing Canada to the United States these would soon be dispelled, Grey was sure,

¹ Grey to Alfred Lyttelton, Colonial Secretary, August 16, 1904; Grey to Hanbury Williams, September 13, 1904, Grey Papers.

by their recognition of the obvious benefits of Canadian government and justice.²

Only in British Columbia did he discern danger from the American immigrants. The Americans in British Columbia were not successful farmers and enterprising businessmen but labour organizers and labourers in the mines and lumber camps. Writing to a friend in England he described the British Columbia situation: "The population is chiefly a mining population — the miners are members of organized Trade Unions who respond to the pressure of a button situated in the heart of the United States — the result is that the beautiful Province of British Columbia has the clutch of Yankee Trade Unionism upon its lovely throat and it can only gasp, not breathe."³ The Americans in British Columbia, Grey believed, were not interested in the future of British Columbia but only in the profit of the moment. "A big profit today and let the future go rip is the prevailing sentiment," he told Lord Elgin.⁴

The British Columbia politicians, Grey decided, were helpless in the face of the voting power of the miners. To solve this problem Grey advocated that every effort should be made to attract men with capital to invest in fruit farms. The fruit farmer, Grey told Laurier, is "the most desirable of all citizens."⁵ During a visit to British Columbia in the fall of 1906, Grey aroused the enthusiasm of Lieutenant-Governor Dunsmuir for the idea of promoting the fruit growing industry. Dunsmuir decided to purchase, clear and plant one thousand acres and offer them at cost price plus 5% to selected families. Grey strongly recommended to English friends that a farm in British Columbia would be a fine investment for their sons, and he himself purchased a large fruit farm.⁶ However, the people whom Grey wished to bring to British Columbia were deterred, Grey believed, by what they heard of the scarcity of farm workers and domestic servants. As an answer to the problem Grey rashly proposed the importation of oriental labour. When he began to advocate this, he came face to face with a very strong anti-Asiatic feeling in British Columbia.

British Columbia had acquired an oriental population early in its history. The Chinese came to British Columbia with the first gold rush in 1858. From then on they continued to come from both California and

² Grey to Lyttelton, September 17, 1905, *ibid.* Grey makes no mention of the fact that a large number of the Americans entering Canada were Germans and Scandinavians.

³ Grey to Lady Wantage, November 16, 1906, *ibid.*

⁴ Grey to Lord Elgin, Colonial Secretary, October 8, 1906, Elgin Papers.

⁵ Grey to Laurier, October 4, 1906, Grey Papers.

⁶ Grey to Lady Wantage, January 2, 1907, *ibid.*

China. Resentment against them grew but they were needed to work on the railroads and attempts to pass legislation excluding them failed until the Canadian Pacific Railway was completed. In 1885 the dominion imposed a fifty dollar tax on Chinese entering the country and by 1903 this had been increased to five hundred dollars, in effect excluding immigrants from China. The Japanese who began to come into Canada about 1885 were by the turn of the century also disliked by many British Columbians. The federal government, watching the growth and awakening of Japan, was thinking of it as a potential power and market and did not consider it wise policy to treat the Japanese as they had the Chinese. A number of provincial acts restricting the Japanese were disallowed by the federal government. In this stand they were strongly supported by the British government who feared that Canada would pass openly discriminatory legislation which might endanger the British alliance with Japan. In 1903 the Japanese government agreed to voluntarily limit emigration to Canada. On the strength of this guarantee the Canadian government decided to seek admission to the Anglo-Japanese Trade Treaty which they had previously turned down.

Tension between British Columbia and the federal government over admission of orientals and feeling against those orientals already in British Columbia was at a high point when Lord Grey began to put forward his proposal for the development of fruit farms with oriental labour and the need for more orientals to act as domestic servants for the Englishmen he hoped to bring to British Columbia. In his eagerness to promote his fruit farm schemes Grey chose to ignore the strong objections to more orientals. In a letter to Laurier he expressed his belief that Mr. Nosse, the Japanese Consul General in Ottawa, "must be mistaken in assuming that the Japanese are under a moral obligation to you not to allow any of their people to emigrate to Canada." He could not advise friends to purchase farms in British Columbia if they would not be able to obtain servants. He had just received a letter "from a friend of mine who is 6 ft. 2, son of a Quaker Banker in the North of England. He is about 30, has a very handsome wife of about 5 ft. 10, both as strong as horses," seeking advice about where to take up a farm. Grey's object in writing to Laurier, he said, was "to ask whether I am to inform my friend, Mr. Backhouse, the son of the Quaker Banker, that British Columbia certainly offers greater attractions for settlement for a man of means, (he has a private income of \$4,000 p.a. and will have more) provided he can get servants, but the difficulty of obtaining servants or labour of any kind is so great that he had better go

to South Africa where the labour difficulty is not so acute.”⁷ Grey was disappointed too with the attitude of the British Columbia Liberals. Even Ralph Smith, Grey told Laurier, “stout fellow tho’ he is” did not dare to advocate the importation of more Asiatic labour although he “realizes the great want and curses his fate that his gallant wife should have to toast her comely face over the kitchen fire every day because the Chinese Head Tax makes it impossible for him to get a Chinese cook.”⁸

Even more important, in Grey’s view, than provision of necessary labour was the need to remain on good terms with Japan and China, so that Canada would get her full share of the great potential market of the Orient. Because these markets never materialized it is difficult to appreciate the great hopes some Canadians held for the Orient as an outlet for Canadian exports.

Grey’s imagination was caught by an advertising scheme used by the Canadians at the 1903 Japanese Trade Exhibition at Osaka. The Canadians demonstrated bread baking, and gave free samples to educate the Japanese people in the advantages of wheat flour. With Nosse, Grey worked out an elaborate plan for Canadian bakeries and tea rooms in Japan. The baking was to be done in a kitchen with a plate glass front so that the process could be watched. In the tea rooms Canadian breads, butter, jams and jellies would be served.⁹ Grey worked hard to persuade the federal government to finance this project. Sydney Fisher, the Minister of Agriculture, who had led the Canadian delegation to the Japanese exhibition shared Grey’s enthusiasm for the Japanese trade but he could offer Grey no hope of government support for the Canadian bakeries.¹⁰ Disappointed, Grey remarked that he was “quite unable to sympathize with the reasons given by Mr. Fisher for doing nothing.”¹¹ Fisher agreed with Grey’s proposal that a young energetic trade commissioner should be sent to Japan but he was unable to find the right man just then. Grey was more successful in promoting his plans with private individuals and received several promises of support.

The possibilities of trade with Japan did not, however, outweigh in British Columbian minds the disadvantages and dangers of oriental immigration, and in April 1905 the provincial government passed a new Immigration Act with a language restriction. Grey was indignant that the bill

⁷ Grey to Laurier, January 8, 1907, *ibid.*

⁸ Grey to Laurier, October 4, 1906, *ibid.*

⁹ Grey to King Edward VII, July 13, 1906, *ibid.*

¹⁰ Fisher to Grey, September 21, 1905, *ibid.* Fisher to Laurier, September 20, 1905.

¹¹ Grey to Laurier, July 13, 1906, Grey Papers.

should have been passed and astonished that the Lieutenant-Governor, Henri Joly de Lotbinière, signed it. Lotbinière was an old man and his signing of the bill, Grey concluded, demonstrated his unfitness for his job. Taking some credit for Laurier's prompt disallowance of the act, Grey assured Lyttelton, and later Elgin, that the lieutenant-governor would not act in this way again. To show his disapproval Grey refused an invitation to British Columbia in the fall of 1905, and allowed the reason for his refusal "to reach responsible ears."¹²

Grey gives no indication in his correspondence that he was aware that four similar bills, and numerous other discriminatory acts had been disallowed previously. Laurier needed no prompting from the governor-general. The federal government had determined to adhere to the Anglo-Japanese treaty without attempting to remove the immigration clause, but were seeking assurance from the Japanese government that they would continue voluntary restriction.¹³ At this point they would not allow the action of the British Columbia government to disturb these negotiations. Since federal legislation took precedence over provincial legislation in immigration matters and since there was little sympathy in the rest of the country for the British Columbia legislation, Laurier did not hesitate to use disallowance, despite his dislike of this weapon.

In June 1906, the Dominion parliament passed a new Immigration Act. It included a clause which gave the government power to deal specifically with any class of persons whom it deemed desirable to exclude and to regulate admission according to the amount of money held by the immigrants.¹⁴ Soon they were receiving requests to act under these clauses to prevent the landing of Hindus in British Columbia. Hindu immigration began very slowly during the summer of 1906. A few earlier arrivals, enterprising Sikhs who had seen British Columbia on their way to the Queen's Jubilee in 1897, had been successful in finding work, particularly in the lumber camps. Their glowing reports of life in the new land and the money they sent home encouraged others to follow.¹⁵ Apparently the Canadian Pacific Railway Company was actively recruiting immigrants from India as well. As their ships landed these strangely dressed dark skinned newcomers, letters and telegrams arrived in Ottawa demanding

¹² Grey to Lyttelton, May 1, 1905, Grey Papers. Grey to Elgin, October 8, 1906, Elgin Papers.

¹³ Charles J. Woodsworth, *Canada and the Orient* (Toronto, 1941), 65.

¹⁴ C. P. Lucas, *Report on Colonial Immigration into the Colonies*, July 1, 1908, C.O. 886/1.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* Tieng-Fang Cheng, *Oriental Immigration in Canada* (Shanghai, 1931), 138-9.

their exclusion.¹⁶ Although Laurier considered taking action he was advised by the Chief Justice that he could not take action under the 1906 Act and he could find no formula to exclude Indians without passing openly discriminatory legislation.

In this case there were no trade interests involved but there were imperial considerations. Grey was much concerned about these British subjects of the King and urged upon Laurier the necessity of treating them with kindness, but he regretted that their arrival had not been carefully planned so that they could have come at the beginning rather than at the end of summer and been provided with good interpreters to help them get settled. Rather than pass exclusion laws the Canadian government tried to get the co-operation of the Indian government to restrict immigration but the Indian government found this impossible.¹⁷ The number of Hindus arriving was greatly exaggerated. The official statistics list only 387 arrivals in 1906, but few as their numbers were, the Hindus added a new element to an already explosive situation.¹⁸

The year 1906 was one of labour unrest. There were strong demands for wage increases and 138 strikes, some of them serious. The coal miners of Fernie, British Columbia, numbering 1,600 workmen, struck from September 22 to November 13.¹⁹ The voice of labour was stronger and more radical in British Columbia than in any other part of Canada. The International Workers of the World was rapidly gaining strength in the province.²⁰ Every union manifesto contained a denunciation of oriental labour; therefore condemnation of the federal government for failing to act became a wise stand for provincial politicians. The Conservative provincial premier, Richard McBride, used the failure to stop oriental immigration as a glaring example of the lack of interest Ottawa had in the welfare of British Columbia. The Orientals were thus a political issue as well as a social one, but Liberals in British Columbia joined in the petitions to Laurier to take action against the admission of any more Asiatics. They realized that in the face of the Anti-Asiatic feeling in British Columbia Liberals stood no chance of gaining power provincially and were

¹⁶ William Templeman, M.P., Victoria, to Laurier, September 1, 1906; R. G. Macpherson, M.P., Vancouver, to Laurier, September 4, 1906; Buscombe, Mayor of Vancouver to Laurier, October 9, 1906, Laurier Papers.

¹⁷ C.O. 42/908/47401, December 10, 1906, Minute of the Canadian Privy Council.

¹⁸ *Canada Year Book*, 1913, 106-7.

¹⁹ *Canadian Annual Review*, 1906, 290.

²⁰ Robert E. Wynne, "Reaction to the Chinese in the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia, 1850-1910," Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Washington, 1964.

rapidly losing their hold on the province federally. The Liberal fears seemed justified when, in the provincial elections in February 1907, the Conservatives substantially increased their majority after a campaign in which they asserted that a Liberal victory would mean 50,000 more Japanese in British Columbia.

In the spring of 1907, Grey thought that he saw an opportunity to improve Canadian-Japanese relations. He discovered, to his horror, that Prince Fushimi of Japan, on a return journey from Britain, was sailing from Seattle on an American ship. The governor-general lost no time in having the plans re-arranged so that the Prince and his party sailed from Vancouver in a British ship after a royal tour of Canada.²¹ The Prince, Grey instructed, should be treated exactly as Prince Arthur had been treated. This was a wonderful opportunity to impress Japan with Canadian friendliness. The tour, arranged by the Under Secretary of State, Joseph Pope, was highly successful. The Prince was given a warm welcome by whites and orientals alike when he visited Vancouver in May. The welcome given the Prince was put forward by the Asiatic exclusionists as proof that there was no personal animosity against the Japanese but only a legitimate objection to British Columbia being turned into an Asiatic province. Grey was gratified by the success of his efforts on behalf of Canadian-Japanese friendship. In fact, the absence of demonstrations against the Prince's visit did not indicate any lessening of anti-Asiatic feeling, which was, on the contrary, becoming more intense and widespread. In the 1907 spring session of the British Columbia legislature another Immigration Act was introduced. Although it was a private member's bill it was supported by the government and faced little opposition from the Liberals. On this occasion, the Lieutenant-Governor, James Dunsmuir, reserved the bill.²² This action aroused a storm of protest aggravated by the fact that Dunsmuir was an employer of Asiatic labour. The objection to Dunsmuir's action was slow to develop but became strong during the summer months when the number of Asiatics entering

²¹ Grey to Sir Thomas Shaughnessy, May 8, 1907, Grey Papers. Grey to Elgin, May 9, 1907, C.O. 42/913/6488.

²² The details of this incident have never been clear. McBride knew before the Dominion government that the bill was to be reserved but refused to admit that he had advised reservation. The federal government said that they had not advised reservation. Thus Dunsmuir *seems* to have acted on his own. During his visit to British Columbia in 1906, Grey had no doubt expressed to Dunsmuir his belief that the former Lieutenant-Governor should not have assented to the similar 1905 Act. Whether or not this influenced Dunsmuir is not known. Brian D. Smith, "Sir Richard McBride, A Study in the Conservative Party of British Columbia, 1903-1916," Unpublished M.A. thesis, Queen's University, 1959. Margaret A. Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History* (Vancouver, 1958), 350.

the province increased sharply. A large number of Japanese began to arrive from Hawaii and the numbers of Hindus rose also. Most British Columbians were unaware that many of the Japanese immigrants went on to the United States.

On August 12, 1907, the Anti-Asiatic feeling was given a focal point with the formation of the Asiatic Exclusion League. Organized with the assistance of similar American associations, the executive was predominantly labour unionist but they received support from prominent men of both political parties. Alexander Gilchrist, President of the Liberal Association, moved, and C. M. Woodsworth, President of the Conservative Association, seconded a resolution declaring that the aggressive Japanese must be checked, or they would "ultimately control this part of Canada."²³ R. G. Macpherson, Liberal Member of Parliament for Vancouver, proclaimed that the slogan "Canadians for Canada" would soon be "Asiatics for Canada." The League prospered and soon had 2,000 members and \$5,000 in its treasury.²⁴ Leadership and encouragement for the League came from the United States but it could not have been established if the anti-Asiatic feeling had not been strong in British Columbia.

As with all mass prejudice it is very difficult to explain what lay behind the support given to the League. By the summer of 1907 there was in British Columbia a real fear of the Japanese. The Japanese were an economic threat. They were aggressive, ambitious, and successful. Unlike the Chinese they were not content to remain in subordinate positions. Many had become owners of fishing fleets, managers of lumber camps and owners of thriving stores in Vancouver. Nevertheless, the professed objection to their presence was not predominantly an economic one. A frequently expressed charge was that the Japanese government was deliberately placing its nationals in British Columbia in preparation for taking over the province.²⁵ First the islands off the coast would fall into their hands and then the mainland. The acceptance by the federal government of Japanese promises to limit emigration revealed to British Columbians the naivety of the Liberals in Ottawa. "The Japanese," Macpherson warned Laurier, "is as full of deceit as he is of urbanity."²⁶ Whether or not this idea was deliberately started by the union organizers, it was actively

²³ *Canadian Annual Review*, 1907, 385.

²⁴ McInnes Report, 11.

²⁵ Macpherson to Laurier, August 20, 1907, Laurier Papers. Laurier considered this idea ridiculous. He wrote in this connection to Grey on September 10, 1907: "Is there anything so absurd that the popular imagination will not conjure up in a moment of panic?" Grey Papers.

²⁶ Macpherson to Laurier, August 20, 1907, Laurier Papers.

fostered by them in an attempt to unite the people of British Columbia against the Orientals. They refused to accept the Orientals into the unions, but constantly complained that the Japanese and Chinese kept wages down by accepting less than union rates. In the face of the fear of the Japanese "invasion," the attitude toward the Chinese became almost tolerant so long as the five hundred dollar entrance tax prevented the arrival of more Chinese.²⁷ Most of the Chinese already in British Columbia were content with jobs which Europeans did not want and those who ran shops operated on a very small scale, for the most part supplying only their own people. The complaints against the Chinese as a factor lowering the moral and sanitary standards of British Columbia, stories of their gambling and opium smoking, which had been the chief arguments in earlier days were not so frequently heard now, although some speakers still included such remarks in their general condemnation of Orientals.

The attitude toward the Hindus was described by Grey and others as one of "pity." However, the pity took the form of a desire to exclude Hindus from British Columbia and even to send home those who were already there. There were complaints that their unsanitary living conditions were a threat to the health of Vancouver. Since they were unable to rent houses and lived in terribly overcrowded conditions, there may have been some grounds for the fear, but the solution offered was not improved housing but deportation. Opposition to Hindu immigration was always put forward on humanitarian grounds. Hindus were unsuited to Canada, the exclusionists said, the climate was too severe and they would die of consumption; their religious and social habits, never precisely defined by the opposition, made it difficult for them to find or keep jobs. Several employers, however, declared them to be good and dependable workmen.²⁸ The argument that Hindus should be kept out for their own good was a persuasive one and people who were not exclusionists accepted it as valid. At the end of 1906 Grey told Elgin that he did not believe it to be true that Indians were not suited to the climate of British Columbia "where the roses bloom on xmas day." He then attributed the difficulties met by the Hindus to the "usual prejudice . . . which invariably confronts novelties." They had, he reported, been very badly treated but many had found employment and were doing well. But less than a year later Grey was urging the Indian government to prevent emigration to Canada "in the interests of humanity" and expressing his distress at the thought

²⁷ Grey to Elgin, November 14, 1907, Grey Papers. McInnes Report, 10.

²⁸ *Canadian Annual Review*, 1906, 295-6.

of "these fine fellows dying of cold and consumption."²⁹ The feeling in British Columbia he explained to James Bryce, the British Ambassador in Washington, was "fear of the Japs" and "pity for the Hindus." Apparently he had been convinced by reports from British Columbia that the Hindus could not adapt to life there.

Through all the attacks on Chinese, Japanese, and Hindus ran the argument that they could not be assimilated. Even an article which advocated the admission of Asiatics spoke of "races which whether inferior or not, are at least unmixable with the Anglo-Saxon people."³⁰ There was a fear that the presence of this alien and unassimilable element would prevent the coming of desirable immigrants, although no one ever offered any proof that this had occurred. Racial prejudice, economic insecurity and fear of an overwhelming mass of Asiatic immigration were exploited by union organizers and party politicians. Canadians in the rest of Canada failed to realize the intensity of this anti-Asiatic feeling until it was brought dramatically to their attention by the riot in Vancouver on September 7, 1907.

The Asiatic Exclusion League called a meeting in the Vancouver City Hall on September 7.³¹ Before the meeting there was to be a parade to draw public attention to the existence of the organization. Two days before in Bellingham, U.S.A., an attack had been made on the Hindus and on September 6 several hundred of the Indians from Bellingham crossed the border into British Columbia. It was reported that nine hundred more were to arrive by steamer in a few days. To heighten the tension, on the morning of September 7 the steamship *Charmer* arrived at Vancouver with a load of Japanese immigrants. A contingent of Americans, including the man who had led the Bellingham attack, arrived to take part in the parade. The numbers who turned out on that unusually hot September evening were too great to be accommodated in the hall. A. E. Fowler, Secretary of the Seattle League, harangued the crowd in the square by the light of the burning effigy of Lieutenant-Governor Dunsmuir. There is no evidence that violence was planned, but the meeting was near Chinatown and a stone thrown through a store window sparked off a mob reaction. The crowd surged through the Chinese and then the Japanese quarters breaking windows and damaging property but appar-

²⁹ Grey to Elgin, December 25, 1906, Grey Papers. Grey to Bryce, November 20, 1907, Bryce Papers.

³⁰ F. A. Acland, "Current Events," *The Canadian Magazine*, November 1907, 75.

³¹ Details of the riot are taken from Wynne, "Reaction to the Chinese," Woodsworth, *Canada and the Orient*, and McInnes Report.

ently doing little looting. The small police force could not prevent the damage but made several arrests. The Japanese beat off the mob with every weapon they could improvise and finally the unruly citizens tired and went home. For the next two or three days the Chinese and Japanese citizens lived in fear. Their stores remained closed and almost every Chinese servant in the city forsook his post. The Japanese bought arms and were prepared to defend their lives and property but there were no further serious outbreaks except an unsuccessful attempt to burn down a Japanese primary school. City officials and responsible citizens were horrified at what had occurred but no opportunity was lost to point out that such regrettable incidents were inevitable unless the central government acted to prevent oriental immigration.

The news of the riot reached Ottawa in exaggerated reports which caused much concern. Both Grey and Laurier feared for the safety of the nine hundred Hindus reported to be arriving from the United States on the steamship *Monteagle*. Grey was anxious that these refugees "fleeing from persecution" in the United States should realize "the advantages of being on British soil." He assumed that the federal government would provide food and shelter for them. Laurier replied that there was no appropriation to cover such expense, but he sent the Hon. R. W. Scott, Secretary of State, to Vancouver to investigate the state of the Hindus and the oriental situation generally. Unknown to Grey a special agent was also sent by the Department of the Interior to do an undercover investigation. A telegram to the mayor of Vancouver signed by Laurier expressed the regret of the Governor General "at learning of the indignities and cruelties of which certain subjects of the Emperor of Japan, a friend and ally of His Majesty the King had been the victims" but the government made no official statement.³²

Grey was disappointed that Laurier did not take a more positive stand. In the telegram to the mayor, Laurier had "sheltered himself behind the Governor-General," Grey told Elgin. In urging bolder action on Laurier, Grey failed to appreciate Laurier's difficulties with his British Columbia members. Two ministers, William Templeman of Victoria, Minister of Inland Revenue, and an Albertan, Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior, publicly announced their opposition to oriental immigration. In the first instance Grey condoled with Laurier on having such a "silly and mischievous colleague." In the second case expressing rather strongly his annoyance with Oliver's speech he wrote to Laurier:

³² Grey to Laurier, September 9, 1907, Laurier to Grey enclosing telegram, September 9, 1907, Grey Papers. Grey to Colonial Office, September 24, 1907, C.O. 42/913/35389.

I do not believe that either of these gentlemen have ever realized that the fact that the British fleet keeps Canada immune from punishment does not justify any Canadian — least of all one of His Majesty's responsible ministers — taking advantage of that protection for the purpose of insulting Canada's allies in a way that would be viewed very differently by the people if that protection were non-existent and if they were compelled to face single-handed their dangers and responsibilities.³³

Grey never lost an opportunity to remind Canadians of the existence of the British navy.

Grey was pleased when Laurier submitted to him the draft of a letter which he wished to send to the Emperor of Japan through the British Ambassador in Tokyo. The letter, apologetic in tone, vaguely promised restitution to Japanese who had lost property and assured the Emperor that Canada desired to adhere to the treaty of 1906.³⁴ Although Grey thought the letter an excellent one, he felt that it must be submitted to the Foreign Office for approval. As he explained to Elgin, "I cannot see any objection to its going, so far as this immediate transaction is concerned, but from the thin edge of the wedge point of view I am opposed to sending any communication for His Majesty's Canadian Government to a Foreign Power without the knowledge and approval of the Foreign Office."³⁵ With this sentiment Elgin heartily agreed. Although Laurier considered it unnecessary to consult the Foreign Office, he made no objection to Grey's procedure and the letter was cabled home.

Before the Foreign Office approval was received, Laurier submitted a second draft to Grey. This draft is interesting because of its modifications. A sentence which said that the hostility in British Columbia was directed more against "some other races from the Orient" than against the Japanese was removed. The clause which suggested that compensation was due to the Japanese merchants was no longer included and there was substituted a promise of future protection "as far as possible."³⁶ Grey made no official objections to the new draft which was sent to Japan immediately on receipt of the Foreign Office's permission.

Laurier explained to Grey that the changed draft was the result of "unexpected opposition" in Council. Some of the cabinet had objected to sending a letter at all, but eventually had agreed to the new draft. "Some of my friends," remarked Laurier, "are excessively timid on the

³³ Grey to Laurier, September 17, 20, 1907, Grey Papers.

³⁴ Laurier to Grey, enclosing draft, September 20, 1907, *ibid.*

³⁵ Grey to Elgin, September 23, 1907, Elgin to Grey, October 2, 1907, *ibid.*

³⁶ Laurier to Grey enclosing second draft, September 25, 1907, *ibid.*

question and I have in some degree to defer to their sentiments." Laurier had been reminded that any apparent catering to the Japanese would be politically dangerous to the Liberal party in British Columbia. Grey's view that the people had only to be reminded of the folly of doing anything which would shut British Columbia out of the oriental market did not seem to be realistic. Laurier reminded the British Columbia Liberals that they had to face the issue of the treaty when he wrote to a Vancouver Liberal:

With regard to the Japanese there is a very easy way of coming to a solution, it is to denounce the treaty, to withdraw the subsidy to the Canadian Pacific boats, to proclaim nonintercourse with Japan and to give up the trade which we opened with them. Is B.C. prepared to do that? If it is I would like to have it in unmistakable terms.³⁷

Even if British Columbia had approved such a course the government would not have adopted it. British Columbia had seven members in the federal house. Inevitably they carried less weight with the government than the Eastern Canadian industrialists who favoured the treaty. Speaking to the Canadian Manufacturers Association on September 26, Laurier assured his audience that no hasty action would be taken despite the resolution of the Trades and Labour Congress which demanded that the Japanese treaty be abrogated immediately.³⁸

Further proof of the government's determination to remain on good terms with Japan was the appointment of W. L. Mackenzie King, Deputy Minister of Labour, as a commissioner to assess the damages done to Japanese property and make awards to the victims. Despite expressions of shocked disbelief from Grey the Chinese were not to be included in the awards.³⁹ Laurier maintained that the Japanese were entitled to special treatment because of the treaty. Not until the spring of 1908, after repeated requests from the Colonial Office for consideration of the Chinese claims, did Laurier agree to send King to Vancouver to settle the Chinese losses. This suggests that the government put trade with Japan rather high on its list of priorities.

Despite the efforts to placate Japan the Canadian government had decided that oriental immigration must cease or at least be severely restricted. Grey, too, had come to this view. He now accepted the contention that the Japanese were a menace to Canadian security. In a letter to

³⁷ Laurier to Macdonald, September 20, 1907, Laurier Papers.

³⁸ Resolution of Trades and Labour Congress of Canada. Report of Laurier's speech from Toronto *Globe*, September 27, 1907, C.O. 42/913/36233.

³⁹ Grey to Laurier, November 16, 1907, Grey Papers.

Rodolphe Lemieux, the Postmaster General, he expressed his fears that the Japanese might "seize the rich unoccupied islands" which lay off the British Columbia coast.⁴⁰ Mackenzie King's report that he had discovered some evidence that the Japanese government had been involved in the evasion of the immigration understanding, strengthened this opinion.⁴¹ With these fears in mind he welcomed the news that Laurier was going to send a mission to Japan to discuss immigration with the Japanese government. Grey put forward Mackenzie King as the best emissary but when Laurier decided upon Lemieux and Pope, Grey told Sir Claude Macdonald, the British Ambassador in Tokyo, that the Canadian government could not have made a better choice. "Mr. Lemieux," he wrote, "is a clever talker and natural orator" and "Pope is the incarnation of loyalty and discretion, a great Imperialist, an official of the old School."⁴²

Although the Canadian government merely informed the British Colonial Secretary that Lemieux and Pope were being sent to Japan the lack of consultation did not seem to unduly disturb the Colonial or Foreign Office. Apparently the commissioners were able to work in complete harmony with the British Ambassador although they, or rather their colleagues back home, were reluctant to accept the terms which Sir Claude Macdonald thought were very favourable. The government did not decide to accept until after Lemieux had returned to Canada to explain the agreement.⁴³ Terms were agreed to and notes exchanged between the Japanese Minister and the British Ambassador. The Japanese agreed to prohibit all labour emigration except resident Japanese returning to Canada, bona-fide domestic servants for resident Japanese only, emigrants brought in under contract (said contract to be approved in each case by the Canadian government), and agricultural labourers for work on farms owned by Japanese at the rate of five to ten for every hundred acres. The Japanese government also stated that they would not object to prohibition of Japanese entering Canada from Hawaii. They could not agree publicly to limit emigration to a certain number but privately guaranteed that the

⁴⁰ Grey to Lemieux, October 23, 1907, *ibid.*

⁴¹ Ormsby, *British Columbia*, 352. Report of W. L. Mackenzie King Commissioner Appointed to Inquire into the Methods by which Oriental Labourers Have Been Induced to come to Canada, n.d. (1908), Governor-General's Files 332, Vol. 2 (a).

⁴² Grey to Sir Claude Macdonald, October 23, 1907, Grey Papers.

⁴³ Grey told Laurier quite bluntly that Canada could not refuse Japan's "hand of friendship." He reminded him that Canada's only security against possible aggression was "the present superior strength of the British navy." Grey to Laurier, December 29, 1907, Grey Papers.

number of agricultural labourers and domestic servants would not exceed four hundred annually.⁴⁴

The terms of the agreement were not published but in January 1908, they were presented in general form to the House of Commons. Laurier hoped that British Columbia would be satisfied with the agreement reached but the exclusionists maintained that no faith could be put in such an agreement. The federal government, they said, had placed control of immigration in the hands of the Japanese. In the months that followed they found support for their contention in the fairly large numbers of Japanese who continued to enter the province. The federal government, too, feared that Japan was not living up to its agreement but Macdonald assured them that the Japanese government was sincere and that the influx of immigrants was temporary, the result of passports issued before the agreement and not hitherto used.⁴⁵ To avoid further difficulties the Japanese government took control of emigration out of the hands of provincial officers and emigration of the restricted classes was kept well within the quota. Since wives and children of resident Japanese were not included in the quotas, the actual numbers entering Canada continued to exceed four hundred a year. When in February 1908, the British Columbia government passed another Immigration Act, the federal government immediately informed the British Ambassador in Tokyo that he could assure the Japanese government that the act would be disallowed.⁴⁶

Grey was still deeply concerned about the plight of the Hindus in British Columbia and the possible effects on imperial solidarity of any prejudice against them. Although the Hindus had not been victims of the riot, this was merely because they had no property readily available to be damaged by the mob. The increase in arrivals of Hindus from India and the presence in Vancouver of the refugees from the United States had been partially responsible for the riot. Grey pressed Laurier to provide for the Hindus coming from the United States, but he intended this as a temporary measure only and agreed that the immigration must stop. Grey was most impressed by the report submitted by the government's special agent in Vancouver, T. R. E. McInnes. His first report was submitted on October 2, 1907, and Grey was most annoyed that he did not

⁴⁴ Macdonald to the Foreign Office, December 24, 1907, C.O. 42/922/3808.

⁴⁵ Ormsby, *British Columbia*, 352-3. Macdonald to Grey, March 5, 1908, C.O. 42/918/12196. Macdonald to Foreign Office, March 17, 1908, C.O. 42/923/486.

⁴⁶ Grey to British Ambassador, Tokyo, February 8, 1908, enclosed with letter Grey to Elgin, February 17, 1908, C.O. 42/918/7435.

see it until more than a month later.⁴⁷ McInnes's account of the poverty and unemployment among the Hindus and the bitterness of the feeling against them reinforced Grey's conviction that they should be prevented from entering the country. The main consideration, Grey believed, was to avoid any step detrimental to imperial unity. Grey urged, therefore, that renewed efforts be made to reach with India an agreement similar to that which had been reached with Japan. Laurier, judging from past attempts, was doubtful that such an understanding could be arrived at and decided to try other methods.

In January 1908 the dominion government passed an Order-in-Council prohibiting the landing of any immigrant who had not come from the country of his birth or citizenship by continuous journey on a through ticket purchased before starting. This prevented the landing not only of the Hindus who could not buy through tickets but also of the Japanese who arrived from Hawaii. When the Order-in-Council was thrown out by the courts the government amended the Immigration Act to include this regulation. Despite the regulation Hindus continued to arrive and since deportation created a difficult problem the government urged on by the governor-general determined to make another representation to the Indian government. In the spring of 1908, they sent Mackenzie King to discuss the matter with members of the British government. Lord Morley, Sir Edward Grey and Lord Elgin were all impressed with the arguments he advanced and with Canada's desire to act in conjunction with the Indian government. However, once again the government of India declared that conditions in India made it impossible to limit emigration by any means other than advising the Indian people that emigration to Canada was unwise. They recognized that the mood of British Columbia made it inevitable that the Canadian government would limit immigration but hoped that Canadian restrictions would not be openly discriminatory.⁴⁸

After King's London trip he was sent to Vancouver to settle the Chinese claims arising from the riot. During the visit to the West he became aware of the anti-British agitation among the British Columbia Hindus. His reports were supported by similar accounts sent by W. C. Hopkinson, a lawyer who had spent a few years in India and understood the language spoken by some of the immigrants. Both reported that certain Hindus were raising money to assist the Indian nationalists, spreading discontent among

⁴⁷ Grey to Laurier, November 16, 1907; Grey to Elgin, November 14, 1907, Grey Papers.

⁴⁸ Morley to Minto, March 25, 1908, C.O. 886/1.

the Hindus, talking treason against Britain, and even manufacturing bombs to send to India. A newspaper, the *Free Hindusthan* was disseminating propaganda. King concluded his report with the words: "It will be fully apparent that persons desiring to use any city of part of Canada as headquarters for seditious propaganda in India, are not a desirable class of immigrant to have in this country. It supplies an additional reason for the careful supervision of all immigrants from India to Canada."⁴⁹ Grey was naturally much incensed at this "anti-imperialism" being propagated on Canadian soil, but he stressed the need for caution. Open attacks on Hindus and discriminatory legislation would only create propaganda for the Indian nationalists. When Frank Oliver stated publicly during the election campaign of 1908 that steps would be taken to prevent the entry of Hindus into Canada, Grey was indignant and suggested that Laurier lecture his ministers on the responsibility of a Minister of the Crown to be circumspect. Laurier, too, was annoyed at Oliver's speech because he had planned to attack Robert Borden during the first session of the new parliament for the anti-Asiatic campaign which the Conservative party had waged in British Columbia.⁵⁰

The extent of British Columbia's dissatisfaction with Laurier's immigration policy showed up clearly in the results of the 1908 federal election. Although immigration was only a minor issue in the rest of Canada, it was the prime if not the only issue in British Columbia.⁵¹ Even Liberal candidates (except for Templeman, the Minister of Mines and Inland Revenue running in Victoria) did not support the government's Asiatic policy. The Conservative party charged that the Liberal government cared so little for British Columbia that it was handing it over to the Asiatics. With the Conservatives in power Asiatic immigration would cease and, if necessary, the Japanese treaty would be abrogated. At the close of the campaign the *Victoria Colonist* printed a telegram from Robert Borden which said: "The Conservative party stands for a white Canada, the protection of white labour, and the absolute exclusion of Asiatics." The last phrase, it was revealed after the election, was a forgery, but the telegram may have been responsible for the defeat of Templeman who lost in Victoria by a few votes, the only cabinet minister to be defeated. Before the election the party standings in British Columbia were Liberals seven, Conservatives none; after the election Liberals two, Conservatives five.

⁴⁹ Grey to Crewe, July 27, 1908, enclosing confidential memorandum by W. M. L. King, no date, C.O. 42/920/29488.

⁵⁰ Laurier to Grey, November 17, 1908, *ibid.*

⁵¹ Smith, "Sir Robert McBride," Chapter VI.

The failure of the province to get better financial terms from the federal Liberal government, the strength of McBride's provincial machine, and his own popularity, and division within the Liberal party, all these factors played their part in the reversal. Asiatic immigration, however, was the most effective cry against the Liberals, and this despite the fact that a new Order-in-Council of June 1908 requiring every Asiatic not covered by special arrangements or regulations to have \$200 in his possession had, with the continuous voyage order, effectively stopped Hindu immigration, and that the Japanese arrangement was, by the time of the election, drastically reducing Japanese entries.⁵² These effects were not evident soon enough to assist the Liberals in their campaign.

After the election Grey became enthusiastic about a new plan devised, with the approval of the Colonial Office, for relieving the tension in British Columbia by removing the Hindus. J. B. Harkin, of the Immigration Office of the Department of the Interior, took two Hindus to British Honduras to investigate the situation there. These men were chosen at a public meeting so that there could be no repudiation of the delegation later as government tools. At the end of the trip Harkin reported enthusiastically to Ottawa that the delegates had been pleased with what they had seen, although they thought wages were too low. The Honduras government was making arrangements for employment of one thousand and would afford them every protection. The Hindu delegates refused to sign a written report expressing their approval, although Harkin, and W. C. Hopkinson who went with the mission as interpreter, stated later that the Hindus gave no indication of disapproval of the scheme but said that they would advise their countrymen to accept employment in British Honduras.⁵³ However, on their return to Vancouver their attitude changed.

Teja Singh, the Indian nationalist leader in British Columbia, met the delegates on their return and soon issued reports that the conditions in British Honduras were unbearable. All would die of malaria while working under conditions tantamount to slavery. The delegates, he asserted, had been offered bribes to sign a favourable report, but they had nobly refused and brought a true report to their countrymen. Public meetings

⁵² Woodsworth, *Canada and the Orient*, 94. Grey to Elgin, May 26, 1908, C.O. 42/919/19204.

⁵³ Memorandum by W. W. Cory, Deputy Minister of the interior; J. B. Harkin to W. W. Cory, November 6, 1908, W. Hopkinson to W. W. Cory, November 23, 1908, sent by Grey to Colonial Office, C.O. 42/921/234.

were held and white men were begged to prevent the forcible deportation of Hindus to British Honduras.⁵⁴

It is difficult to obtain a clear picture of the incident. Neither Grey nor the Canadian government had any intention of forcibly shipping Hindus to British Honduras but the government did plan to put before the unemployed the alternatives of deportation to India or voluntary emigration to British Honduras.⁵⁵ They hoped, of course, to persuade not only the unemployed but also others of the Hindu community to emigrate. Hopkinson stated that the bribe story was nonsense but he may well have used inducements to get a written report signed by the delegates because he feared that they would be influenced by the Indian nationalists when they reached Vancouver. While conditions in British Honduras were probably not as desirable as Harkin reported, it is difficult to believe that his report was a complete lie as Teja Singh maintained. Reading between the lines it would seem that the Hindus were being asked to exchange the possibility of good wages in Vancouver for the certainty of three years labour for very low wages on the plantations with a vague promise of land at the end of that time.

In January 1909, Colonel Swayne, the Governor of British Honduras, visited British Columbia to see whether labour could be recruited. His report ended the scheme for good.⁵⁶ He found that there were few unemployed and no public charges among the Hindus. This does not mean that the reports of five hundred to eight hundred unemployed in 1908 were untrue but that Teja Singh had worked hard to find at least temporary employment for his countrymen and had arranged for relief from a Hindu association for those who were unemployed.⁵⁷ However, Colonel Swayne declared that reports of ill health among the Hindus were unfounded and that they were quite able to stand the climate. Those who had found employment were given good reports by their employers. He found no desire among the Hindus to go to British Honduras and stated that the whole plan would have to be dropped. Swayne believed that the agitation against the scheme was caused by a desire to put the Canadian government in the wrong — to create another instance for use in India of British Indians being misused in the Empire — and a desire on the part of the

⁵⁴ Clipping Vancouver *Province*, November 23, 1908, C.O. 42/930/218.

⁵⁵ W. W. Cory Memorandum, 5-6.

⁵⁶ Colonel Swayne's report on conditions of Hindus in Vancouver, enclosed with letter Grey to Elgin, January 7, 1909, C.O. 42/930/2112.

⁵⁷ Hopkinson to Department of the Interior, April 15, 1909, C.O. 42/930/16477.

Hindu priests and leaders to keep in Canada the Hindus who provided their living.

The Canadian government considered themselves badly treated and were, of course, disappointed that such a splendid solution for their problem had fallen through. Grey was startled to discover that Swayne, whose judgment he respected, found that the Hindus presently in Vancouver were not so badly off as Grey had been led to believe and that they were quite capable of coping with the Canadian climate. The report, however, emphasized the desirability of preventing any further immigration because of the resentment against them, the resulting difficulty they had in obtaining jobs and housing, and their inability to fit into the Canadian way of life. Therefore, Mackenzie King, newly elected to parliament, was, as a result of Grey's persistent prodding of the government, sent as a delegate to an opium convention in Shanghai with the additional task of consulting both the Indian government and the Chinese government in an attempt to reach an agreement on the immigration question.⁵⁸

During the summer of 1908 the number of Chinese immigrants had risen sharply. There was still a five hundred dollar tax on Chinese entering Canada but wages had risen so that it had become a good investment to lend the money to would-be immigrants. The demand for the Chinese as domestic servants was so great that the elimination of competition put the Chinese servants in an enviable position. The Canadian government hoped that China, like Japan, would wish to limit emigration voluntarily as the Chinese government had always objected strongly to the discrimination involved in the tax on Chinese immigrants which was not placed on others.

Grey also urged King to put forward during his trip a plan about which Grey was very enthusiastic.⁵⁹ It was to call a conference of all the powers concerned to discuss the immigration problem and to arrange to keep their labourers at home. Grey was sure that all people would agree that each race should keep to its own zone. Tourists, students, and professional men should be allowed to travel freely in all countries, but racial prejudice and conflict was inevitable if labourers of an alien race were allowed to compete with the nationals of any country.⁶⁰ King found little support for the plan. Lord Morley, King reported to Grey, "had doubts as to the wisdom

⁵⁸ Grey to Laurier, December 2, 7, 14, 1908; Grey to Crewe, December 8, 1908, Grey Papers.

⁵⁹ R. MacGregor Dawson, *William Lyon Mackenzie King* (Toronto, 1958), 193.

⁶⁰ Presumably his plans did not include prohibition of white immigration to Africa but he did not mention this as a problem.

of a conference, as he feared it would necessitate too outspoken an attitude on the part of certain parts of the Empire against the natives of India, and he doubted if the Japanese would see wherein any arrangement restricting labourers would be reciprocal in the truest sense." Sir Edward Grey thought that a "formal conference might occasion embarrassment."⁶¹ In India, King found that Canada's attitude had created a favourable impression. He reported to Grey that "the action of South Africa appears to have been so different from that of Canada, that our policy of negotiation and conciliation has received an emphasis in contrast which it would not otherwise have gained."⁶² Nevertheless, the Indian government still found it impossible to agree to restrict emigration. In China, after considerable negotiation, King seemed to have had more success, but no agreement was signed and the negotiations which continued after King's departure, came to an end when revolution broke out in China.⁶³ Chinese immigrants continued to enter Canada at the rate of several thousand a year.

In a reversal of his earlier views Grey had become concerned about the dominance of the Japanese in the fishing industry of British Columbia. Not only did this provide the Japanese with an opportunity to know intimately the coast of British Columbia, but it discouraged white British Columbians from entering the fishing occupation. Without a fishing fleet as the training ground, Grey argued, Canada would have no source of manpower for the Canadian navy. He urged Premier McBride to take steps to see that licenses went to British rather than Japanese fishermen and he formulated plans for bringing fishermen of British stock to the British Columbian coast.⁶⁴ Grey's attitude toward the value of oriental labour to Canadian progress had changed decidedly during his years in Canada, although he still believed that Orientals should be brought in as domestic servants.

Grey looked at the question of oriental immigration to British Columbia as it affected imperial unity but, as usual, he perceived that Canada's interests and the empire's coincided. It was in the empire's interest and Canada's interest to promote trade and friendship with Japan. On the other hand, when he became convinced that there was a possible danger from Japan, he seized the opportunity both to promote the need for a Canadian navy and remind Canadians of their dependence on the power of the British navy. His concern for the Hindus was almost entirely on

⁶¹ King to Grey, January 1, 1909, King Papers.

⁶² King to Grey, January 31, 1909, *ibid.*

⁶³ J. N. Jordin, British Ambassador, Peking, to Foreign Office, C.O. 42/933/13685.

⁶⁴ Grey to McBride, November 29, 1909, July 29, 1910, Grey Papers.

imperial grounds. He was anxious that Canada's treatment of them should not cause trouble for Britain in India but seems to have taken the prejudice against them for granted. Whether promoting bakeshops in Japan, protection for Hindus, or importation of domestic servants for prospective fruit farmers Grey proceeded with his usual enthusiasm and persistence. In this particular case, since his aims coincided for the most part with those of the dominion government, he was able to exercise more influence than in many of his other endeavours as governor-general.