

# Educating the "East": British Columbia and the Oriental Question in the Interwar Years

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The people here are very much wrought up; they look upon it as a menace. If the Eastern provinces had the same percentage of their population Orientals as had the Province of British Columbia, and if they had the Orientals asserting themselves in every line of endeavor, and controlling for instance, market gardening — controlling the output, and so forth, with their lower standards of living, they would indeed be very much aroused. The question is not fully understood there.

Thus, Premier T. D. Pattullo explained his recommendation to the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations that "Oriental immigration into Canada should be prohibited upon grounds of ethnological differences of race, and as many Orientals as possible should be returned to the land from which they came." When the Commission's chairman, N. W. Rowell, ruled that Oriental immigration was outside the Commission's jurisdiction, Pattullo did not press the issue. He was anxious to get on to financial matters and he had accomplished his goal of demonstrating that he was as interested as any British Columbia politician in "educating the east" about the Oriental problem.<sup>1</sup>

The Oriental question was very much a political matter. Yet, the politicians usually had to strain to make it a partisan issue. Liberals and Conservatives shared the same general attitudes towards Orientals and disagreed only on the strategy of solving the problem. In Ottawa, they usually spoke as British Columbians rather than as party members on this subject which was unique to their province. On topics such as freight rates British Columbia could share her resentment of central Canada with the Prairies; on this issue she was alone. Indeed, the Oriental question reinforced British Columbia's sense of isolation from the rest of Canada. This article does not seek to explain why British Columbians

<sup>1</sup> Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations, Report of Proceedings, pp. 4858-9. (Mimeographed). B.C.'s submission was printed as *British Columbia, British Columbia in the Canadian Confederation*, Victoria, King's Printer, 1938. The Commission refused to hear the submission of The White Canada Research Committee.

opposed Oriental immigration or to assess the validity of their arguments. Rather, it aims to suggest why Pattullo considered it necessary to raise the matter in 1938, to explain how British Columbians had endeavoured to “educate the East” rather than “fight Ottawa” during the previous two decades and to show how the Oriental question contributed to British Columbia’s sense of isolation.

Before World War I, British Columbia had a long history of anti-Oriental legislation which the federal government had promptly disallowed. The Oriental question was a staple argument in the traditional provincial political trick of “fighting Ottawa.” After the war, however, British Columbia politicians, on this matter at least, chose to concentrate on “educating the East” rather than fighting it. The only case of disallowance — that of a statute relating to the employment of Orientals on crown lands — was really a left-over from an earlier period and was not a significant source of conflict. The Liberal government rejected a Conservative motion linking the regulation of Oriental activities with provincial rights. As a substitute, the Legislature merely requested the federal government not to subscribe to any treaty limiting the regulation of Oriental activities and to seek an amendment to the British North America Act to give British Columbia, “at present most affected,” and the other provinces the power to prohibit Asiatics from ownership or employment in agriculture or industry.<sup>2</sup>

Publicly, Premier John Oliver declared this proposal to be “the only logical way to get the matter settled for all time and to prevent the peaceful penetration of Asiatics into British Columbia.” Recognizing that the province had exhausted its legislative powers on the subject, he simply informed Prime Minister King of the resolution and deliberately played down the possibility of conflict with the senior government. A Liberal handbook prepared for the 1924 provincial election included the opinion of the deputy attorney-general that the Legislature had no power to limit the rights of Orientals to hold or acquire land or property within the province. During the campaign, scant mention was made of the Oriental question or disallowance.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> British Columbia, Legislative Assembly, *Votes and Proceedings*, November 29, 1922, p. 10; December 4, 1922, p. 4; November 16, 1922, p. 10; December 5, 1922, p. 4.

The cases relating to the disallowance of 1922 are cited in H. F. Angus, “The Legal Status in British Columbia of Residents of Oriental Race and Their Descendants,” *The Canadian Bar Review*, vol. IX (January 1931), p. 6, n. 34 and 35.

<sup>3</sup> *Vancouver Daily World*, December 6, 1922, p. 1; *New Westminster British Columbian*, January 30, 1923, p. 21 (weekly edition); a copy of the handbook may be found in the T. D. Pattullo Papers, Provincial Archives of British Columbia (hereafter PABC).

The provincial Liberals, who were reluctant to embarrass their federal counterparts, realized that the King government was generally sympathetic to British Columbia's feelings on the Oriental question. The federal government, for example, had quickly adopted a recommendation of the Royal Commission on Pacific Coast Fisheries to reduce the number of fishing licences issued to Japanese "with a view to placing the entire industry in the hands of white British subjects and Canadian Indians."<sup>4</sup> Restricting the occupational activities of Orientals, however, was only a palliative. When Orientals were forced out of one industry, they were likely to compete in another. To solve the problem, it was essential to end the Oriental "menace" at its source and to halt all Oriental immigration. Thus, immigration laws became the major concern of provincial politicians and publicists.

Public agitation against Orientals had been relatively light during the war years. By 1921, however, the Asiatic Exclusion League, and a variety of journalists including J. S. Cowper of the *Vancouver Daily World*, the publishers of *Danger: The Anti-Asiatic Weekly* and the novelist, Mrs. H. Glynn-Ward had rekindled hostility.<sup>5</sup> As well as describing the Oriental "menace," many publicists observed that eastern Canada did not understand the problem. In one of his articles on "The Rising Tide of Asiatics in British Columbia," Cowper quoted with approbation a remark of Lord Northcliffe that "the most amazing thing about the Oriental absorption of British Columbia is the apathy of Eastern Canada about it." When the *Canadian Horticulturist* reported that the number of Chinese market gardeners in the Toronto area was increasing, the *B.C. United Farmer* gleefully observed: "One of these days (or years) Ontario will be awakened from that slumber by the Chinese nightmare of peril that is developing right now within her own doors. Perhaps, then, she will be a little more concerned and vastly more sympathetic respecting the cry for assistance from the west."<sup>6</sup>

During the 1921 federal election campaign, almost every candidate in British Columbia — be he Conservative, Liberal or Progressive — referred to the harmful effects of Oriental competition and promised, if elected, to restrict Oriental immigration. Liberals and Conservatives debated the

<sup>4</sup> Canada, Department of Marine and Fisheries, *Annual Report of the Fisheries Branch, 1925-6*, Ottawa, King's Printer, 1926, p. 53.

<sup>5</sup> For further details, see my paper, "The 'Oriental Menace' to British Columbia," in S. M. Trofimenkoff, ed. *The Twenties in Western Canada*, Ottawa, National Museum of Man, 1972, pp. 243-258.

<sup>6</sup> *World*, August 6, 1921, p. 1; *B.C. United Farmer*, October 15, 1921, p. 15; *Columbian*, February 24, 1922, p. 4.

question on the basis of their past records.<sup>7</sup> Candidates of both parties expressed the idea that the "East" did not understand British Columbia and had sacrificed the province's interests for national or imperial reasons. R. H. Gale, the Liberal candidate in Vancouver Centre, declared, "the Easterners were not face to face with the problem as British Columbians were and it was only by determined fighting on the part of the British Columbia members that the immigration act would be amended." A Conservative incumbent, J. A. MacKelvie of Yale, told Okanagan audiences that he had "found the mind of the average Easterner a blank on the question." British Columbia's politicians had combined two traditional prejudices, fear of the Oriental and resentment of the "East" into one issue.<sup>8</sup>

The British Columbia politicians continued to think as one after the election. An excellent example of this unity occurred in parliament on May 8, 1922 when the Conservative member for New Westminster, W. G. McQuarrie, introduced a resolution:

That in the opinion of this House, the immigration of oriental aliens and their rapid multiplication is becoming a serious menace to living conditions, particularly on the Pacific Coast and to the future of the country in general, and the Government should take immediate action with a view to securing the exclusion of future immigration of this type.<sup>9</sup>

Subsequently, every one of British Columbia's thirteen members spoke in support of the motion. They repeated the traditional arguments about the Orientals' unassimilability, their unfair economic competition, their low standard of living, their role in causing unemployment, their involvement in the illegal drug trade, their possible takeover of British Columbia's industries and their threat to the future of the white race and white civilization. Their speeches were so well co-ordinated that there was little repetition of the details of the arguments.

Throughout the thirteen speeches, one theme did recur. It was a warning that if Canada as a whole did not act quickly, the Oriental "menace" would soon spread eastward across the Rockies. This theme was foreshadowed in the circular letter McQuarrie sent to all members reminding them of the impending debate:

<sup>7</sup> A handy summary of the party arguments may be found in a Conservative advertisement in *The Vancouver Sun*, December 4, 1921, p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> *World*, November 17, 1921, p. 11; December 2, 1921, p. 19; *Okanagan Commoner* [Enderby], August 25, 1921, p. 1; *Penticton Herald*, November 16, 1921, p. 1; *Kelowna Courier and Okanagan Orchardist*, December 1, 1921, p. 8.

<sup>9</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, May 8, 1922, p. 1509.

This matter has passed the stage when it was merely a British Columbia question. The Oriental menace is rapidly spreading over the whole Dominion, and, if drastic action is not immediately taken to stop the influx of these unassimilable people, a most alarming situation for Canada is bound to result. It is a great National question which goes to the very root of our future progress and prosperity. Already there are in Ottawa alone 65 laundries and 21 restaurants operated by Orientals. Similar conditions prevail in other cities in Eastern Canada, and on the Prairies the Orientals have secured a firm foothold.<sup>10</sup>

In case eastern members did not clearly understand the problem, E. A. Munro (Liberal, Fraser Valley), perhaps somewhat facetiously, suggested a possible amendment to the Immigration Act whereby all new Oriental immigrants would

be taken in bond to the province of Ontario where they and their offspring shall permanently reside, so long as they remain in Canada or until such time as the oriental population of Ontario stands in the same ratio to the white population of Ontario as prevails in the province of British Columbia, after which another province may be substituted for that of Ontario.<sup>11</sup>

While British Columbia's M.P.'s sought national sympathy in parliament, other British Columbians, particularly journalists, solicited national support from the public at large. One writer, Lukin Johnston, vividly expressed the province's feelings when he told readers of *The Canadian Magazine*: "The man from eastern Canada who rarely sees a Japanese or a Chinaman in the streets of his home town, is inclined to regard as a crank the British Columbian who suggests that Canada has an Oriental problem of its own."<sup>12</sup> When prominent British Columbians had an opportunity to address groups outside the province, they often spoke on the Oriental question. The Anglican bishop of New Westminster, in a classic appeal to racial prejudice, told the Canadian Club of Hamilton that Canada should admit no more Orientals than could be Canadianized unless Canadians were willing to have their children marry them. At conventions of national trade organizations, labour groups and patriotic societies British Columbia delegates frequently asked for the endorsement of

<sup>10</sup> W. G. McQuarrie to Members of the House of Commons, May 4, 1922. (Copy in Department of Immigration Records, RG 76, Accn 70/47, File 815661 in the Public Archives of Canada [hereafter PAC]).

<sup>11</sup> *Debates*, p. 1538.

<sup>12</sup> Lukin Johnston, "The Case of the Oriental in B.C.," *The Canadian Magazine*, vol. LVII (August 1929), p. 315; See also John Nelson, "Will Canada be Yellow?" *MacLean's Magazine*, October 15, 1921, pp. 15-17, 40, 42-44; November 1, 1921, pp. 11-12, 45-47.

resolutions favouring Oriental exclusion. Such resolutions poured into Ottawa from bodies as diverse as the Trades and Labour Congress and the United Farmers of Alberta; the Railway Brotherhoods and the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire; the Great War Veterans' Association and the Retail Merchants Association of Canada. The Retail Merchants were particularly effective in lobbying for parliamentary support for McQuarrie's resolution and in carrying on "a Dominion-wide campaign particularly in the East."<sup>13</sup>

In spite of Premier Oliver's reluctance to embarrass the federal government, the provincial administration also pressed for Oriental exclusion. At its second 1921 session, the Legislature asked the senior government to amend the Immigration Act "so, as near as possible, to totally restrict the immigration of Asiatics . . . keeping in view the wishes of the people of British Columbia that this Province be reserved for people of European race." The provincial Liberals at their September 1922 convention endorsed a similar resolution. On the opening day of the 1922 session, William Sloan, the Minister of Mines, called on the federal government to amend the Immigration Act "as is necessary to completely prohibit Asiatic immigration into Canada." His motion passed unanimously.<sup>14</sup>

The unity of British Columbians, coupled with the extra-provincial support for Oriental exclusion, impressed the prime minister. He was obviously sympathetic to British Columbia's sensitivities but he had to concern himself with possible international reactions. For diplomatic reasons he insisted on substituting the less offensive phrase, "effective restriction" for the "total exclusion" of McQuarrie's proposal. Fearing trade and imperial complications, he would accept specific legislation only against the Chinese.<sup>15</sup>

Although the Chinese Immigration Act was virtually a Chinese exclusion act, it did not satisfy British Columbians. They feared "loopholes" in the definitions of "merchants" and "students," they distrusted the effectiveness of "effective restriction" and they worried about illegal immigrants. British Columbians at Ottawa still felt that their problem was not fully understood. A Conservative senator, R. F. Green of Kootenay, expressed a common British Columbia belief when he declared: "if you want these people in eastern Canada, bring them here [Ottawa]; we do

<sup>13</sup> *World*, August 23, 1922, p. 1; January 22, 1923, p. 2; *Calgary Herald*, January 7, 1922; *British Columbian*, August 27, 1921, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> British Columbia, Legislative Assembly, *Votes and Proceedings*, November 1, 1921, p. 2; November 20, 1922, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Debates*, April 30, 1923, p. 2312.

not want them in British Columbia, and we will not have them there.”<sup>16</sup> Despite the apprehension of British Columbians, the Chinese Immigration Act did work. Only eight Chinese immigrants entered Canada between 1925 and 1940.<sup>17</sup> Because very few of the Chinese already in the province were women, the Chinese birth rate was very low. As elderly Chinese died or returned to China, the Chinese population of British Columbia declined.

Nevertheless, British Columbia’s campaign for a white Canada had not been wholly successful. Only Chinese had been excluded and, as of 1925, there were still approximately 25,000 of them in the province. The campaign continued — its intensity slightly decreased — and concentrated on the Japanese who seemed a far more serious threat to British Columbia’s future as a white province than the Chinese had ever been.

Japanese immigration to Canada had been limited to four hundred domestic servants and agricultural labourers per year by the Lemieux or “Gentlemen’s Agreement” of 1907. The terms of this secret arrangement were never clearly understood in British Columbia where many people believed that Japan was not honouring them. The decision of the United States to exclude Japanese immigrants after July 1, 1924 briefly frightened some British Columbians who expected that “the scene of the Japanese invasion will shift to Vancouver and Canada.”<sup>18</sup> The Japanese population was already increasing rapidly. A high proportion of Japanese immigrants were women and the Japanese birth rate was approximately three times that of the rest of the population in British Columbia. In trade, industry and agriculture, the Japanese were more aggressive competitors than the Chinese. And, there was considerable doubt about the loyalty of the Japanese who still owed allegiance to their Emperor.

In agitating against Japanese immigration, British Columbians used well-tried techniques. Through their members of parliament, national organizations and national journals, they continued to educate the “east” about the Oriental problem. John Nelson of the *World*, one of the most prolific writers on the subject, reported in *MacLean’s Magazine* that

British Columbia is one of the last frontiers of the white race against yellow and brown . . . [It] stands in the sea gate on the northwest Pacific, and holds it for Saxon civilization.

The Oriental question, he concluded, “is easily the greatest problem of

<sup>16</sup> Canada, Senate, *Debates*, June 26, 1923, pp. 1122-1123.

<sup>17</sup> C. J. Woodsworth, *Canada and the Orient*, Toronto, Macmillan, 1941, p. 288.

<sup>18</sup> *Vancouver Star*, June 3, 1924, p. 1.

British Columbia. Eastern Canadian opinion is nebulous on the subject, and hence governmental action limps and lags."<sup>19</sup>

Within the province, agitation against Oriental competition in trade and agriculture culminated with the publication by the Legislative Assembly in 1927 on a *Report on Oriental Activities within the Province*.<sup>20</sup> This report provided detailed statistical evidence of the rapid inroads of Orientals into certain branches of trade and agriculture and of the high Japanese birth rate. It noted that over eighty per cent of the Chinese and ninety per cent of the Japanese who had come to Canada in the previous twenty years had settled in British Columbia and it asserted that one of every twelve British Columbians was an Oriental. This official government document seemed to confirm the suspicion that Orientals were rapidly taking over the province. Through articles in Vancouver newspapers and in *The Oriental Occupation of British Columbia*, Tom MacInnes publicized the *Report's* findings. Although his newspaper articles were designed for local consumption, his book was aimed at a wider audience. He complained that indifference "whether east or west, to the danger of racial deterioration in the population of British Columbia because of Oriental occupation" is "not the way to KEEP CANADA CANADIAN."<sup>21</sup>

With some effort, Prime Minister King managed to keep the Oriental question from being more than a minor issue in the federal elections of 1925 and 1926. Privately, he advised A. W. Neill, the Independent M.P. for Comox-Alberni and one of the chief anti-Oriental spokesmen in parliament, that Japan had already made some concessions during the slow negotiations on the revision of the Gentlemen's Agreement. King suggested that a threat of "total exclusion" would not lead Japan to make further concessions and might harm British interests in the Far East. While he was corresponding with Neill, King advised the Japanese Consul-General to hasten negotiations lest the matter become a political issue.<sup>22</sup> True to form, King was trying to placate British Columbia without causing an international incident.

<sup>19</sup> Also published in John Nelson, *The Canadian Provinces*, Toronto, Musson, 1924, pp. 171-172. See also Charles Lugrin Shaw, "Canada's Oriental Problem," *The Canadian Magazine*, vol. LXIII (October 1924), pp. 334-338; J. K. Unsworth, "Asia in British Columbia," *The New Outlook*, January 11, 1928, p. 26.

<sup>20</sup> British Columbia, Legislative Assembly, *Report on Oriental Activities within the Province*, Victoria, King's Printer, 1927.

<sup>21</sup> Tom MacInnes, *Oriental Occupation of British Columbia*, Vancouver, Sun Publishing, 1927, pp. 88-89.

<sup>22</sup> O. D. Skelton to A. W. Neill, October 2, 1925, W. L. M. King Papers, vol. 125, Nos. 106563-106565 (PAC); Interview between the Prime Minister and the

British Columbians, however, were becoming exasperated with the lack of federal action. They now began to demand that Orientals already in the province should be deported. Early in 1927, Premier Oliver warned:

The situation has reached a point at which, it seems to me, it is the duty of the Dominion Government to grapple with it. The longer the facing the issue is postponed, the more difficult will it be to deal with. The stopping of Oriental immigration entirely is urgently necessary, but that in itself will not suffice, since it leaves us with our present large Oriental population and their prolific birth rate. Our government feels that the Dominion Government should go further, and by deportation or other legitimate means, seek to bring about the reduction and final elimination of this menace to the well being of the white population of this province.<sup>23</sup>

The scheme of deportation, or repatriation, was not added solely for effect. The idea of Attorney-General A. M. Manson, had found unanimous support in the Legislature. Outside the Legislature, it was endorsed by a number of prominent Vancouver businessmen and the Advisory Board of the Farmers' Institutes as well as by such obviously anti-Oriental groups as the Vancouver Klan No. 1 of the Ku Klux Klan and the Oriental Exclusion League.

Oliver was not alone in his belief that the federal government should do something to help British Columbia. A Conservative M.L.A., C. F. Davie (Cowichan-Newcastle), declared that "the federal government had allowed British Columbia to become the dumping ground for Asiatics in Canada." Davie realized that his proposal to restrict Oriental activities in industry and to keep them off the land was *ultra vires* but he urged the Legislature to pass his bill to demonstrate British Columbia's determination to keep Orientals from dominating the province. Though unwilling to confront the federal government with *ultra vires* legislation, Attorney-General Manson agreed that "all possible pressure should be imposed on the federal government 'to keep B.C. white'," and repeated his suggestion that Orientals should be repatriated. The debate revealed that the Oriental problem was still "one of constant irritation." In explaining this to the prime minister, Premier Oliver specifically noted indications that the

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Japanese Consul-General, Mr. Matsunaga, April 2, 1925, King Papers, vol. 80, File 634, No. C6128-6130. Again in 1926, the Canadian government warned that if Japan did not make concessions, a bill for "total exclusion" might be passed.

<sup>23</sup> John Oliver to W. L. M. King, January 21, 1927, King Papers, vol. 147, no. 124777. The letter is an almost verbatim copy of A. M. Manson to John Oliver, December 10, 1926, Attorney-General's Papers, 1918-17-2060, (PABC).

Oriental problem was "spreading to other Provinces and will in time become Dominion wide."<sup>24</sup>

At the Dominion-Provincial Conference in the fall of 1827, Manson placed the Oriental problem first on the list of subjects affecting British Columbia. For "imperial reasons," the official report of the conference only tersely recorded that "Mr. Manson dealt briefly with the Oriental problem from the standpoint of his province and the Dominion. He advised consideration of this by the Federal Government." Manson later explained that he had warned the other provincial representatives that the time was coming when British Columbia "would be nothing more than a British-Oriental community, and that they must expect the yellow races to cross the Rockies and invade the provinces in the East as they have done on the Coast." The attorney-general claimed to have brought the problem home to the other provinces by asking: "Were they willing to have their daughters marry Chinese or Japanese?"<sup>25</sup>

Despite Manson's pronouncements of success in educating the other provinces, the provincial Conservatives endeavoured to make political capital by forcing the provincial Liberals to repudiate Mackenzie King's Oriental policies. At the Conservative national convention in October 1927, the British Columbia delegates successfully argued that an Oriental exclusion plank was necessary if the Conservatives were not to say "good-bye to British Columbia so far as practical politics were concerned." "Exclusion" was of course much stronger than King's "effective restriction." Provincially, C. F. Davie demanded that the provincial government "stand four-square for the West, if necessary against the East in support of the claims of the common people of British Columbia who are being forced out of the country because they cannot compete with the Orientals."<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *Vancouver Daily Province*, February 11, 1927, p. 12; February 18, 1927, p. 17; March 15, 1927, p. 24; *Vancouver Evening Sun*, February 11, 1927, p. 11; February 25, 1927, p. 1; John Oliver to W. L. M. King, March 14, 1927, King Papers, vol. 147, no. 124782.

William Sloan, the Minister of Mines and Provincial Secretary, introduced an alternate resolution — almost a carbon copy of one passed in 1924 — asking the Dominion government to refrain from adhering to any international obligation which would limit the authority of the Legislature to regulate social and industrial activities within the province and to take action to denounce any treaties which limited Canada's power to regulate, control and prohibit immigration. When Sloan took ill, his resolution died on the order paper.

<sup>25</sup> *Canada, Dominion-Provincial Conference, 1927, Precis of Discussions*, Ottawa, King's Printer, 1928, November 10, 1927, p. 36. *Ottawa Citizen*, November 9, 1927; *Province*, February 2, 1928, p. 1; *The Daily Colonist* (Victoria), February 2, 1928, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> *Province*, October 18, 1927, p. 20; February 4, 1928, p. 20.

Manson, an adroit politician, agreed with opposition members that eastern Canadians had never understood the Oriental question. With some prompting from Ottawa, however, he pointed out that Mackenzie King was doing something to solve the problem. Although his government was facing an election, Manson was unwilling to embarrass the federal party. He called on all members to assist him informally in drafting a resolution asking parliament "to halt Oriental penetration into British Columbia." The resulting statement cited evidence of Oriental penetration and outlined the province's frustrations with the rest of Canada. It proposed negotiations with China and Japan to restrict immigration, the repatriation of Chinese and Japanese and the revision of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1911 to give British Columbia full powers to enact laws relating to property and civil rights. The resolution, introduced by a Conservative and seconded by a Liberal, passed unanimously.<sup>27</sup>

During the provincial election held in the summer of 1928, the Oriental question was scarcely mentioned. Both parties put their Oriental planks second from the bottom on their platforms. The Conservatives declared that they stood for "Total Exclusion"; the Liberals advertised that the premier, Dr. J. D. MacLean, had "already succeeded in persuading the Ottawa Government to negotiate a treaty with Japan to restrict Japanese immigration. From now on no more than 150 Japanese a year may enter B.C." This was a reference to the new Gentlemen's Agreement which limited Japanese immigrants to specified classes and stipulated that not more than half were to be female. The new agreement, said Manson, was "not a solution of our situation but it is in the right direction. British Columbia must continue her education of the East."<sup>28</sup>

With the advent of the depression of the 1930's, anti-Oriental agitation ceased to capture the attention of most white British Columbians. Moreover, by educating the "East" rather than confronting Ottawa, they had virtually got their way in matters relating to Oriental immigration. Even the New Westminster *British Columbian*, a Conservative paper which vigorously opposed the Oriental, admitted that there are "no more Orientals coming to Canada. The problem will be to a large extent solved."<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, a few British Columbians continued to "educate the East." The most active was Charles E. Hope, the honorary secretary of

<sup>27</sup> Dr. J. H. King, British Columbia's representative in the federal cabinet had asked Premier MacLean to remind the people of the prime minister's efforts to solve the Oriental question. *Province*, March 1, 1928, p. 12; *Colonist*, March 1, 1928, p. 1. British Columbia, Legislative Assembly, *Votes and Proceedings*, March 14, 1928, p. 9.

<sup>28</sup> *Victoria Daily Times*, June 13, 1928, p. 1.

the White Canada Association. In articles in national magazines, he explained:

If B.C. is to continue to be a part of Canada, then Canada will have to take up this question seriously and make it Canada's problem, . . . if this is not done we will, sooner or later, have a racial problem in Canada infinitely more difficult than the negro problem in the United States, to say nothing of the economic problem that will go with it.

Hope's efforts received little attention. His many letters to the Department of Immigration got little more than polite acknowledgements. Provincially, the new Conservative administration rejected his proposals for restricting Oriental land holding as *ultra vires*, refused to aid the Association financially, and would not permit any cabinet minister to be officially connected with it lest federal and imperial authorities be embarrassed. In parliament, during the Bennett administration, only Thomas Reid (Liberal, New Westminster) did more than ask routine questions about immigration statistics and complain about the use of Chinese seamen on subsidized trans-Pacific ships.<sup>30</sup>

Within the province there was a realization that the nature of the Oriental problem was changing. With the virtual cessation of immigration, an increasing proportion of the Orientals in British Columbia were Canadian-born. The editor of the *Vancouver Star* commented:

It is all very well to say that they shall not be taken to our hearts and homes. No one is proposing anything of the kind. But unless conditions are to be created such as obtain in the Southern States; unless they are to be told that nothing but the most minimal employment is to be open to them; and unless they are to be regarded as "untouchables," they must be allowed to take such part in the communal life as their abilities and education justify.

The logical extension of such sentiments was the granting of the franchise to Orientals. At its 1931 session, the Legislature, by a one vote margin, accepted a Canadian Legion request to give the provincial franchise to Japanese who had served with the Canadian forces during World War I. This was not a major concession — only about eighty individuals were

<sup>29</sup> August 13, 1930, p. 4. The *Columbian* expected that the new Conservative government would enforce total exclusion.

<sup>30</sup> Charles E. Hope, "Canada's Oriental Province," *The Country Guide*, November 1, 1930 (reprinted by the White Canada Association, Vancouver, 1930, p. 3). See also C. E. Hope, "British Columbia's Racial Problem," *MacLean's*, February 1, 1930, pp. 3-4, 62-63 and February 15, 1930, pp. 8, 45-46, 48; C. E. Hope and W. K. Earle, "The Oriental Threat," *MacLean's*, May 1, 1933, pp. 12, 54-55.

involved — but it represented a marked change in the attitudes of white British Columbians.<sup>31</sup>

This measure and the absence of any large-scale campaign against Orientals may have indicated a growing sense of tolerance but the traditional prejudices of white British Columbians had not disappeared. When Professor H. F. Angus of the University of British Columbia suggested that Canadian-born Japanese should be enfranchised, he encountered much hostility. The Native Sons of British Columbia declared their irrevocable opposition to the idea “as it has been proven beyond any question of a doubt that people of Oriental extraction cannot be assimilated by Anglo-Saxon peoples.” The B.C. Trollers’ Association went further and called on the university to dismiss Professor Angus.<sup>32</sup>

J. S. Woodsworth stimulated a greater storm of protest and put the Oriental question back into the political arena when he told the House of Commons in 1934: “I am in favour of enfranchising orientals in British Columbia.” Members of the C.C.F. were divided on the matter. Conservatives and Liberals quickly seized on the issue for electoral purposes during the 1935 federal campaign. C.C.F. candidates suggested the problem was an economic one which forced voters to decide “whether you prefer an Oriental with a vote who will have to come up to your standard of living or an Oriental without a vote who can be used to break down your unions and your working conditions.” Conservatives and Liberals appealed to traditional sentiments. A Conservative warned, “give them the vote. The next thing you know they will elect a member to the Legislature. They will be running your government.” A Liberal speaker reminded radio audiences of the need to “educate the East”:

Those residing east of the Rocky Mountains do not realize the economic and social menace that the Oriental is proving to British Columbia and its white population. If you send to Ottawa, C.C.F. or any other candidates having votes for Orientals as part of their program, the big majority of Canadians will consider that we Canadians on the Pacific Coast approve of the penetration into our business and social life of these little yellow people.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *Vancouver Star*, April 17, 1930, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> *Province*, March 27, 1934, p. 7; *Vancouver News-Herald*, March 27, 1934, p. 8.

<sup>33</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, June 22, 1934, p. 4206. Woodsworth repeated his stand in Vancouver, *Province*, November 9, 1934, p. 1; *The Commonwealth*, November 15, 1934, p. 3.

On division within the C.C.F. see *The Commonwealth*, August 16, 1934, p. 6; August 23, 1934, p. 9; September 6, 1934, p. 2.

Typescript of a radio address by Angus MacInnis, August 20, 1935 (Copy in Angus MacInnis Collection, Box 17 [in the Library of the University of British

Despite the fact that the C.C.F. won only three of the province's fifteen seats, Angus MacInnis (C.C.F., Vancouver East) introduced a cleverly phrased motion on the franchise to parliament. It forced those who voted against the franchise to imply that they favoured continued Oriental immigration. Believing that the denial of the franchise was a bastion against any change in immigration laws, the majority of British Columbia's M.P.'s helped to defeat the bill.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, both Liberals and Conservatives continued to use the franchise question against the C.C.F. in a federal by-election and in the provincial general election of 1937.

By 1937, agitation against the Orientals had been gradually increasing in intensity for about two years. White potato growers complained that Chinese growers and wholesalers were ignoring marketing laws. In the cities there were occasional outbursts against Oriental merchants who did not obey early closing and similar by-laws. Indeed, an organization, the White B.C. League, had briefly published the *Weekly Examiner* devoted to educating and inducing the "white population to buy all merchandise from White Merchants and Manufacturers." And, in March 1937, six "all-Canadian" societies, including the Native Sons of British Columbia, formed The Congress of Canadian Organizations to Combat the Penetration of Orientals into British Columbia.<sup>35</sup>

The main targets of hostility were the Japanese, particularly after reports of Japan's military activities in China reached British Columbia. Not only were there attempts to boycott trade with Japan but concern about illegal Japanese immigrants intensified, the ulterior motives of Japanese investors in British Columbia's logging and mining industries were suspect, and rumours of Japanese fishermen acting as spies appeared more frequently. Mayor G. G. McGeer of Vancouver told a Toronto audience that his city was "Canada's front seat of tomorrow's greatest theatre of conflict."<sup>36</sup>

Paradoxically, it was an eastern Canadian, Archdeacon F. G. Scott of Quebec City, who acted as a catalyst in setting off a new round of anti-Japanese agitation in the fall of 1937. Archdeacon Scott told the *Toronto Star* that he had learned that Japanese naval officers were living in dis-

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Columbia]); Nanaimo *Daily Free Press*, October 12, 1935, p. 2; J. Edward Sears, "Orientals and the C.C.F.," Radio Address, October 4, 1935 (published, Vancouver, 1935). For an analysis of the role of the Oriental franchise in the election see H. F. Angus, "Liberalism Stoops to Conquer," *Canadian Forum*, December 1935, pp. 389-390.

<sup>34</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, February 27, 1936, pp. 573-576.

<sup>35</sup> *White B.C. League Weekly Examiner*, vol. 1, no. 2 (March 11, 1935), p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> *News-Herald*, April 9, 1936, p. 1.

guise in "so-called Japanese fishing villages in British Columbia." Several B.C. editors declared that such reports were much exaggerated but they used the occasion to remark on the inadequate defences of the coast.<sup>37</sup>

Within a week of Archdeacon Scott's "revelations," a Conservative M.L.A., Captain MacGregor Macintosh, told the Legislature that Scott was "telling the truth, even if it was in scare headlines" and that the "Oriental penetration into British Columbia industry was a real fact, and one which Eastern Canada should be brought to realize without further delay, because no solution could apply short of a national one."<sup>38</sup> Macintosh persisted in his anti-Japanese campaign and particularly stressed illegal immigration. He proposed to solve the problem of the Japanese, who could never become "white Britishers, white Canadians," by encouraging them to emigrate "to other lands where they would doubtless be more welcome than they are here." Through addresses to Conservative riding associations, service clubs, boards of trade and patriotic societies, Macintosh called for a special census of Japanese "to bring to light the actual increase" in their number and to determine the full extent of illegal immigration and Oriental penetration. He urged that this information be used as "educational publicity in eastern Canada to 'shock' Ottawa."<sup>39</sup> By February 1938, the Vancouver *Sun* warned that Macintosh's disclosures had so provoked anti-Japanese feeling that "violent reprisals" against Japanese in the province were possible.<sup>40</sup>

The agitation against the Japanese had been further stimulated by the release of new information. Many British Columbians interpreted statistics prepared by Dr. W. A. Carrothers, the chairman of the provincial economic council, to prove an "alarming" Oriental penetration of the economy and a "dangerous" rise in the Japanese birth rate and to predict that there would be over 200,000 Japanese in the province by the end of the century.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Nanaimo *Free Press*, November 17, 1937, p. 1; November 18, 1937, p. 2; Prince Rupert *Daily News*, November 23, 1937, p. 2; *Cowichan Leader*, November 25, 1937, p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> *Colonist*, November 24, 1937, p. 3; *Province*, November 24, 1937, p. 24.

<sup>39</sup> *Province*, November 24, 1937, p. 24; January 19, 1938, p. 1; March 23, 1938, p. 11; "The Oriental Problem in British Columbia," *The McGill News*, Autumn 1938, pp. 25-27, 39.

<sup>40</sup> *Sun*, February 12, 1938, p. 4.

<sup>41</sup> These statistics were gathered by him privately as part of a research project for the Canadian Institute of International Affairs and the Institute of Pacific Relations. They were later published as part of C. H. Young, Helen R. Y. Reid and W. A. Carrothers, *The Japanese Canadians*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1938. For an example of interpretations see Bruce Hutchison, "Log of the House," *Province*, January 29, 1938, p. 4.

In Vancouver, where almost half the Orientals in the province resided, Alderman Halford Wilson suggested transferring part of the Oriental population to other provinces. He persuaded the City Council to refuse to grant trade licences to Orientals in the belief that they would leave voluntarily if they could not earn a living. This measure, however, required an amendment to the city charter. When the Private Bills Committee of the Legislature rejected the request as *ultra vires*, its chairman, H. G. T. Perry suggested that if we "substitute 'Jewish' for the word 'Oriental' . . . [we are doing] . . . just what Hitler is doing in Germany." The *Province* agreed but argued that passing such an unjust amendment might be "one way, where every other way seems to have failed, to bring to the attention of an apathetic Parliament, the urgency and seriousness of the Oriental menace to British Columbia."<sup>42</sup>

If parliament was apathetic, British Columbians were not to blame. They "bombarded" Ottawa with resolutions calling for the abrogation of the Gentlemen's Agreement and for the investigation of illegal immigration. Organizations such as the Canadian Legion and the British Columbia Junior Board of Trade asked their national conventions to endorse resolutions against Japanese immigration. Publicists placed articles in mass circulation magazines such as the *Star Weekly* and *Liberty*. Whenever they had the opportunity, British Columbians visiting eastern Canada followed the practice of Senator J. W. de B. Farris who told the Toronto Board of Trade, "no man from British Columbia is entitled to speak to a Canadian audience and gloss over the Oriental question."<sup>43</sup>

In parliament, A. W. Neill led the campaign against Japanese immigration. He proposed a bill which would effectively abrogate the Gentlemen's Agreement and apply the Chinese Immigration Act to the Japanese. Ending Japanese immigration would not stop their high birth rate, he explained, but would "stop adult immigrants coming in to add to the vicious circle." He advised eastern members, "your line of defence against fatally cheap labour is not in Montreal or Toronto; it is in British Columbia." Eight British Columbia M.P.'s representing all three parties, spoke in support of the resolution. They warned that the matter of Oriental immigration "eventually will be of importance to the whole of the dominion." Both R. B. Bennett, the Leader of the Opposition, and Prime

<sup>42</sup> *Province*, August 15, 1939, p. 24; September 10, 1938, p. 1; November 15, 1938, p. 1; November 19, 1938, p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> *Sun*, February 14, 1938, p. 1; *Province*, February 22, 1938, p. 6; Culver Jones, "Rising Sun Over B.C.," *Star Weekly*, October 1, 1938; Charles Lugin Shaw, "The Rising Sun's Dark Shadow over Canada," *Liberty*, November 11, 1939, pp. 14-17.

Minister King expressed sympathy for British Columbia's plight but Mr. King, maintaining his concern for possible international repercussions, opposed the passage of an exclusion act against Japan which had been "perfectly loyal" to the existing agreement.<sup>44</sup> Neill's bill was defeated.

The newspapers in British Columbia expressed bitter resentment at the prime minister's attitude. In a series of editorials, the *Sun*, nominally a Liberal paper, concluded:

The Prime Minister is a stranger in British Columbia. His visits to this coast have been for election purposes and election purposes only. Together with many of his eastern colleagues he is acquiring something of the viewpoint of that eminent premier of Quebec who never in his lifetime ventured west of Toronto. . . .

It is not that they do not care. They simply do not know.

A more telling expression of these feelings appeared in the Conservative paper, the *Province*. It was a cartoon headed, "Contentment 3000 Miles Away." At the centre of the drawing was a paunchy tycoon, relaxing in an executive chair, resting his feet on a desk, labelled "Down East," and saying between puffs on his cigar, "it doesn't bother me." His back was to a window through which could be seen in the distance, storm clouds, "B.C.'s Japanese Problem," rising beyond the mountains. Such sentiments, however, were not confined to the coast. In Penticton where there was a long history of anti-Orientalism, the *Herald* complained that a Japanese expeditionary force "would probably have to be as far inland as the Rockies before it would be possible to get an adequate vote for national defence through Parliament." Further east, in Trail where the Oriental question was rarely mentioned, the *Daily Times* agreed with Neill's prediction that Oriental competition would "ultimately have an effect in the East as well as in the West."<sup>45</sup>

Premier Pattullo was well aware of the political dangers in the situation. Knowing that the province could do nothing by itself, he had written to the prime minister while public agitation was just beginning to develop. The opposition, he reported, "is endeavouring to make political capital of the situation and in view of the activities of Japan public feeling is becoming very much aroused." Pattullo asked the senior government to allay public fears by initiating a survey of all Japanese in the

<sup>44</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, February 1, 1938, p. 67; February 17, 1938, pp. 550-574; February 18, 1938, pp. 605-608.

<sup>45</sup> *Sun*, February 28, 1938, p. 4; *Province*, February 28, 1938, p. 4; *Trail Daily Times*, March 3, 1938, p. 4; *Penticton Herald*, March 10, 1938, p. 3.

province. At the same time he indicated that when he visited Ottawa two months' hence he would like to discuss the matter and propose that "no Japs be allowed admission." His simultaneous statement to the people of British Columbia was deliberately guarded to avoid saying "anything that will embarrass the national situation." The premier merely advised the public that he would discuss the matter in Ottawa and commented that the mistake had been to let the Orientals into the province in the first place. He made no mention of the possibility of exclusion. King answered that he was prepared to discuss the matter and was already considering means of determining the extent of illegal immigration.<sup>46</sup>

While waiting for the prime minister's reply, Pattullo had refused to comment on the Oriental question. After receiving an answer, he admitted having asked for an investigation of the "bootlegging" of Japanese. On March 4, 1938, the prime minister told the House of Commons that an existing interdepartmental committee would re-examine the situation in British Columbia and that a special Board of Review would investigate illegal immigration.<sup>47</sup> Prime Minister King was obviously anxious to relieve British Columbia's fears and to avoid any incidents which might have political or international repercussions.

Although King's announcement temporarily reduced agitation about illegal immigration, it did not satisfy British Columbia. Provincial resentment was still bitter over the rejection of Neill's exclusion idea two weeks earlier. It was this feeling which Pattullo reflected when he appeared before the Rowell Commission on March 15, 1938. There, the press reported, for the first time, he came out "definitely for exclusion of Orientals and repatriation of those now in Canada." Exclusion and repatriation were not new ideas but it is significant that Pattullo publicly endorsed them. His willingness to deal in a moderate way with King on this issue had been overridden by local considerations. The public was demanding that something be done. Liberal associations were sending him resolutions favouring the prohibition of Oriental immigration. When the provincial Liberals convened during the summer, Pattullo himself prepared a resolution repeating in essence his recommendation to the Rowell Commission.

<sup>46</sup> T. D. Pattullo to W. L. M. King, January 26, 1938; W. L. M. King to T. D. Pattullo, February 10, 1938, Pattullo Papers. The Department of External Affairs was actively considering means of controlling Japanese immigration at the time.

<sup>47</sup> *Province*, February 2, 1938, p. 21; February 15, 1938, p. 1; *Sun*, February 12, 1938, p. 1. Canada, Board of Review [Immigration], *Report*, Ottawa, King's Printer, 1939.

Any local political advantage, however, was negated a month later when the Conservative convention passed a similar resolution.<sup>48</sup>

When the Legislature met in the fall of 1938, it seemed that the old slogan of "fight Ottawa" might be revived. Early in the session, G. W. Murray (Liberal, Lillooet) called for "total exclusion" of the Japanese. Expressing concern about Japanese competition from within and without, he declared, "I do not want to sound any false alarms but the East of Canada does not perhaps appreciate the importance of the problem in Asia." It remained for Captain Macintosh to urge "further immediate representations to the Federal Government" for the abrogation of the Gentlemen's Agreement. Such a proposal conflicted with the policy of the federal government. Pattullo still did not want to embarrass the prime minister. In debating the motion, he "intimated that his friend Prime Minister Mackenzie King was doing a great deal about the question, but this was a shush, shush subject, not fit for the ears of the House in view of present international complications." Eventually, the Liberal majority amended the Conservative motion so it merely expressed opposition "to the immigration of any Japanese or Chinese" into the province and commended the actions of the provincial government "in making representations to the Ottawa Government to this end." While such a resolution was not completely in keeping with King's policy, it was less overtly hostile than the Conservative motion.<sup>49</sup>

What might have been an occasion to resurrect the "fight Ottawa" spirit passed. Pattullo knew that on the Oriental question, the federal government had the upper hand; that persuasion was more likely to succeed than confrontation. He also recognized that Prime Minister King was acutely aware of the situation. Once agitation against illegal immigration had developed, the senior government had quickly appointed a Board of Review to investigate. Although Pattullo had little faith in the Board of Review, it was at least an indication of Ottawa's concern.<sup>50</sup>

British Columbia had not solved her Oriental problem but she had

<sup>48</sup> *Sun*, March 16, 1938, p. 1; *Province*, March 29, 1938, p. 18; September 26, 1938, p. 3. Resolution for B.C. Liberal Convention, August 8, 1938 (in pencil, "Prepared by Premier"), Pattullo Papers.

<sup>49</sup> *Province*, October 29, 1938, p. 20; November 17, 1938, p. 6; British Columbia, Legislative Assembly, *Votes and Proceedings*, December 9, 1938, p. 9.

<sup>50</sup> King's subsequent acts such as the appointment of a Special Committee on Orientals in British Columbia on October 1, 1940 and his actions in evacuating the Japanese in 1942 confirm his awareness of the problem in British Columbia.

convinced the "East" that she had one.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, the sense of isolation that British Columbians felt on this subject was thoroughly ingrained. In its abortive submission to the Royal Commission, the White Canada Research Committee proposed that any amendment to the B.N.A. Act should make provision to "do away with as far as possible with the handicap from which the outlying Provinces suffer owing to their distance from Ottawa." More telling is the title of a Victoria writer's diary of the first few months of the Pacific war, *A Million Miles from Ottawa*.<sup>52</sup> In "educating the East," the politicians and publicists had simultaneously confirmed British Columbians in their sense of isolation.

<sup>51</sup> An example of this occurred in the summer of 1939 when both Premier Mitchell Hepburn and the Leader of the Opposition, George Drew, of Ontario made anti-Japanese statements. *Province*, July 20, 1939, p. 3; July 28, 1939, p. 6.

<sup>52</sup> The White Canada Research Committee, *Submissions to the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations*, Vancouver, March 9, 1938; Gwen Cash, *A Million Miles from Ottawa*, Toronto, Macmillan, 1942.