

The Road to Enfranchisement: Chinese and Japanese in British Columbia

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In the wake of the Second World War, the legislature of British Columbia voted to give the long-denied franchise to citizens of Oriental descent. The granting of the vote symbolized a significant change in public attitudes toward the Chinese and Japanese. Moreover, enfranchisement reflected a change in prevailing conceptions of the nature of Canadian citizenship and political rights. The extended discussions and debates preceding the final step were shaped by the structure of B.C. politics and the relations of province and dominion.

The road to the enfranchisement of the Chinese in 1947 and the Japanese in 1949 led through a wartime experience which was a crucible for fears and hatreds on the one hand and ideals and aspirations on the other. The Chinese became allies, the Japanese enemies. Precipitated by wartime conditions, decisions on compulsory military training and on the relocation of the Japanese engendered discussion of the franchise. Liberals protested against the continued withholding of legal equality from Orientals; after the war, they fought successfully to prevent wholesale deportation of Japanese-Canadians. Canada's adherence to the United Nations Charter and her definition of a uniform status of Canadian citizenship highlighted the discrepancy between her stated ideals and her treatment of the Chinese and Japanese. Spokesmen for the old-line B.C. views gradually found themselves on the defensive. In 1947, the B.C. legislature gave the vote to the Chinese. Two years later it enfranchised the Japanese. Tracing the issue of Oriental enfranchisement from 1935 to 1949 permits an analysis of the events, trends, and concepts which eventually broke down the long-standing British Columbia hostility toward Orientals.

Denial of the vote was one of a galaxy of restrictions on Orientals. Antagonistic to Orientals on both racial and economic grounds, white British Columbians had gradually secured federal and provincial restrictions on Oriental immigration, economic activity, and political rights. Citizens of Chinese and Japanese ancestry, with the exception of a hand-

ful of Japanese-Canadian veterans of World War I, were not permitted to vote in provincial elections. Disfranchisement by the province also excluded Chinese- and Japanese-Canadians from the dominion franchise, political office, jury service, and entry into the professions of pharmacy and law.¹

In facing second-class citizenship, the Chinese and Japanese reacted in distinctly different ways. As a result of immigration restrictions, the Chinese population in the province was declining in numbers and consisted largely of adult males who did not intend to live permanently in Canada. They appeared contented with their low economic position, accepted the discrimination imposed upon them with almost no public protest, and made little effort to assimilate.² In contrast, the Japanese showed themselves to be formidable economic competitors who resented their inferior status. Their assertiveness, which made them respected, feared, and disliked, stemmed in part from national and racial pride and from a unified community. Perhaps the most important factor was that the majority had their families with them in Canada and regarded themselves as permanent settlers. In 1931, 48 per cent of the Japanese population in Canada were Canadian-born — the "Nisei". In the 1930s, the political consciousness of the Nisei generation found expression in youth groups, journals, and research projects. The movement stressed thorough Canadianization, the pursuit of Western education, and the rectification of injustice. For the Nisei, denial of the vote was an important symbol of

¹ Charles H. Young, Helen R. Y. Reid, and W. A. Carrothers, *The Japanese Canadians* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1938); Charles J. Woodsworth, *Canada and the Orient — A Study in International Relations* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1941); Arthur R. M. Lower, *Canada and the Far East, 1940* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1940); John Norris, *Strangers Entertained: A History of the Ethnic Groups of British Columbia* (Vancouver: B.C. Centennial '71 Committee, 1971); Canadian Institute of International Affairs, Study Group of the Winnipeg Branch, *Minorities of Oriental Race in Canada*, Eighth Conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations, December 1942; Patricia E. Roy, "Educating the 'East': British Columbia and the Oriental Question in the Interwar Years", *BC Studies*, no. 18 (Summer 1973), pp. 50-69; *Statutes of British Columbia, 1875*; *Revised Statutes of Canada, 1886*; *Statutes of British Columbia, 1895*; *Statutes of British Columbia, 1896*; *Cunningham v. Tomey Homma* (1903) Appeals Court 151; *Revised Statutes of Canada, 1906*; *Revised Statutes of British Columbia, 1936*; 10-11 George V, *Statutes of Canada*; Henry F. Angus, "Legal Status in British Columbia of Residents of Oriental Race and their Descendants", in *The Legal Status of Aliens in Pacific Countries*, ed. Norman MacKenzie (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), pp. 80-81.

² Woodsworth, pp. 137, 151; Young, Reid, and Carrothers, pp. xxi-xxii, 177-178, 212, 276-79; Lower, pp. 78, 85; *Minorities of Oriental Race*, p. 5; Canada, Special Committee on Orientals in British Columbia, *Report and Recommendations, December 1940*, p. 15; Reverend Andrew Lam, personal letter to author, 2 March 1975.

their inferior status and the central focus in their struggle for better treatment.³

The Oriental franchise question first entered the political arena in the mid-1930s, when enfranchisement gained the support of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation. Organized in 1932 by socialist, farmer, and labour groups, the CCF had made rapid strides and in 1933 became the official opposition party in the B.C. legislature. J. S. Woodsworth, CCF national chairman, revealed his party's position in favour of votes for Orientals during a 1934 debate in the Canadian House of Commons. The Liberal party seized upon the CCF position as the key to defeating the rising new party in B.C. In the 1935 federal election campaign, B.C. Liberals ran an emotionally pitched campaign appealing to B.C. race prejudice. "A vote for any CCF candidate is a vote to give the Chinaman and Japanese the same voting right that you have," Liberals warned. Conjuring up a spectre of Oriental domination of the province, the Liberals appealed to social prejudices as well as political fears and economic interests. Observers believed that the unexpectedly weak showing of the CCF — only three of B.C.'s fifteen seats — resulted at least in part from the use of the Oriental issue.⁴

In the next two years, the arguments for and against the enfranchisement of Orientals, particularly the Japanese-Canadians, were aired at the national level. In February 1936, the CCF provoked a heated debate in the House of Commons on the Oriental issue by proposing a resolution calling for either complete exclusion or equal citizenship rights for all. The resolution was defeated. Shortly thereafter, the formation of a special House committee to examine the elections and franchise acts raised hopes in the Japanese-Canadian community in B.C. They sent a four-person delegation to Ottawa to testify in favour of enfranchisement before the committee. After hearing the representatives on 22 May 1936, the com-

³ Lower, p. 82; Woodsworth, p. 137, 151-156; Young, Reid, and Carrothers, pp. xxviii-xxix, 169, 177-178; T. G. Norris, "Brief submitted on behalf of the Japanese Canadian Citizens' League", 12 May 1936 (mimeographed), pp. 17, 39-41; Special Committee on Elections and Franchise Acts, House of Commons, *Minutes and Proceedings*, 22 May 1936, p. 204.

⁴ Grace MacInnis, *J. S. Woodsworth — A Man to Remember* (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1953), pp. 210-211, 261-280, 288; House of Commons *Debates*, 20 February 1936, pp. 376-388; Roy, "Educating the East", pp. 62-63; House of Commons *Debates*, 27 February 1936, p. 573; *Vancouver Daily Province*, 7 October 1935; *Comox Argus*, 15 August 1935; Charles Lugin Shaw, "The Oriental Wants to Vote", *Maclean's Magazine*, April 1937, p. 44; Henry F. Angus, "Liberalism Stoops to Conquer", *Canadian Forum* 15 (December 1935), pp. 389-390; Special Committee on Elections and Franchise Acts, *Minutes and Proceedings*, 16 March 1937, pp. 237-238.

mittee postponed further consideration of the Oriental franchise until 1937. Receiving extensive opposing testimony from two Members of Parliament from B.C., the committee decided in 1937 to recommend no changes in the racial restrictions on the dominion franchise.⁵

The Japanese-Canadians and their allies argued that justice and democratic principles demanded their enfranchisement. They had adapted themselves to Canadian customs and ways of living, had made significant contributions to their communities, and had become desirable citizens well qualified to exercise the vote. They understood the workings of democracy, they claimed, and exemplified the virtues of "self-dependence and plain, old-fashioned Canadian grit". The removal of legally imposed disabilities would facilitate their economic and political assimilation. On the other hand, continued discrimination threatened to create an oppressed and dangerous minority, to the detriment of the wider community.

In rebuttal, opponents contended that the Japanese in Canada would always be Japanese, never true Canadians. They attended Japanese-language schools. Many of them held dual nationality, allegedly subjecting them to direction from the Japanese government. Even without the vote, they had been able "not only to prosper, but also to supersede Canadians and gradually obtain control in many lines of economic endeavour". By means of a phenomenal birth rate, they were proliferating rapidly. Granting of the dominion vote would lead to enfranchisement in the province. If the Japanese in B.C. gained the vote, opponents warned, the Japanese government would "have an active voice in Canada and so help to shape the policies of this country". Japanese legislators would remove immigration restrictions; B.C. would be overrun by Japanese.

This scenario was largely unfounded and unrealistic. An unspecified number of Canadian-born Japanese were registered with the Japanese government, but the practical significance of dual nationality status appears to have been minimal. Language schools and community unity characterized many immigrant groups; charges of cultural indoctrination were undocumented. Alarmist descriptions of the Japanese-Canadian birth rate disregarded the peculiar and temporary age composition of the group. Charges of economic domination by the Japanese, 23,000 in a

⁵ House of Commons *Debates*, 12 February 1936, pp. 151-152; 20 February 1936, pp. 373-390; 27 February 1936, p. 573; Special Committee on Elections and Franchise Acts, *Minutes and Proceedings*, 22 May 1936, pp. 199-220; 11 June 1936, p. 254; 11 March and 16 March 1937, pp. 201-242; Norris, "Brief submitted on behalf of the Japanese-Canadian Citizens' League", pp. 1-42; Shaw, "The Oriental Wants to Vote", pp. 44, 46; *Vancouver Province*, 14 November 1936.

B.C. population of 700,000, were exaggerated. Their concentration in certain sectors resulted directly from discrimination in other fields. Finally, the small number who might be enfranchised would probably lack the electoral impact to shape immigration or other policies.⁶

Despite the weakness of their arguments, opponents of Oriental enfranchisement represented majority sentiment in B.C. The passage of many years seemed likely before the franchise would be granted. But in 1937, a course of events had already begun which would give political rights to Orientals in B.C. within a dozen years.

International developments began to exert an increasing influence on the Oriental question. The full-scale Japanese invasion of China, which began in July 1937, provoked popular resentment of Japan and intensified British Columbians' mistrust of the Japanese-Canadians. In Ottawa, west coast representatives reflected agitation in B.C. by demanding an end to all Japanese immigration. A few extremists foreshadowed later hysteria by calling for removal of the Japanese from B.C. When Canada declared war against Germany in 1939, Japan's anti-Comintern pact with Hitler and Mussolini was used to justify the exclusion of the Canadian Japanese from the navy and air force and the discouragement of their entry into the army. This situation produced resentment among young Japanese-Canadians eager to prove their loyalty. Nevertheless, even before the formation of the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis in 1940, Professor H. F. Angus of the University of British Columbia found that the Canadian Japanese had already decided that they would fight, if the need arose, against Japan. The decision was not to be theirs.⁷

The issue of military service for Oriental Canadians was determined by the state of B.C. public opinion, formed in part by the franchise question. The precedent of enfranchisement had been set for Japanese-Canadians who had served in the war of 1914-1918. Prof. Angus observed that the doctrine, "if a man is good enough to fight, he is good enough to vote," was "cunningly converted into its ignoble inverse, 'if we do not allow a man to fight we are under no obligation to allow him to vote, whatever may be his achievements in other directions'". When Canada

⁶ Young, Reid, and Carrothers, pp. 138, 180-184; Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Eighth Census of Canada, 1941*; Norris, "Brief", appendix; Lower, pp. 86-87; *Japan Year Book, 1949-52* (Tokyo: Foreign Affairs Association of Japan, 1952), pp. 209-210.

⁷ Woodsworth, pp. 116-117, 156; Roy, pp. 63-69; H. F. Angus, "Effect of the War on Oriental Minorities in Canada", *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 7 (November 1941), p. 508; H. F. Angus, "Asiatics in Canada", *Pacific Affairs* 19 (December 1946), p. 402.

adopted conscription for home defence in June 1940, the Vancouver city council demanded that the Nisei not be called up lest it result in qualifying them for the vote, and provincial legislators declared that they would not recognize such a qualification. B.C. pressure convinced Prime Minister King and the cabinet not to call up Japanese- and Chinese-Canadians for training, a decision made at the end of September 1940. King expressed concern about the effect which such a call-up would have on opinion in B.C., "where the public was more conscious than elsewhere in Canada of the potential threat of Japan".⁸

On 3 October 1940 the cabinet announced the appointment of a Special Committee on Orientals in British Columbia, to examine and to report upon "the general problem of Japanese and Chinese in British Columbia from the point of view of internal security and with particular reference to the question of military training". The committee reported in December that economic rivalry, hostility to Japan, and political rhetoric had created a heightened state of anti-Japanese feeling. With only the slightest provocation, the white population "might suddenly resort to violence against Japanese individuals or groups". To reduce the likelihood of violent disturbances, the committee advocated certain military and police precautions, the compulsory registration of Japanese, circumspect behaviour by the Japanese community, and the discouragement of anti-Japanese propaganda in the press. "Reluctantly and not unanimously", the committee suggested that at least for the present, Canadians of Japanese race should not be called up for military training. Expressing sympathy for the desire of many Japanese-Canadians to serve, and admitting their right, as citizens, to do so, the group nevertheless stated a fear that Japanese-Canadians in the army might be in danger of violence from their less responsible comrades. Although the committee did not find the Chinese-Canadians a serious problem, it suggested that they also be excluded from the military call-up. However, B.C. Chinese would be permitted to volunteer.⁹

The attack on Pearl Harbor and the outbreak of war with Japan in December 1941 raised public fear and suspicion of the Japanese-Canadian

⁸ Angus, "Effect of War", p. 510; Forrest E. La Violette, *The Canadian Japanese and World War II: A Sociological and Psychological Account* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1948), pp. 13-14; Norris, *Strangers Entertained*, p. 226; *Vancouver Province*, 30 December 1940; J. W. Pickersgill, *The Mackenzie King Record*, 4 volumes (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960-1970), Vol. I, pp. 149-150 (26 September 1940).

⁹ Special Committee on Orientals, *Report and Recommendations*, pp. 7, 10-19; La Violette, p. 32.

population to fever pitch. Afraid of sabotage and invasion, British Columbians demanded that the federal government evacuate all residents of Japanese origin from the west coast. After moderate measures failed to allay public hysteria, the government acquiesced on 26 February 1942. This decision, Prime Minister King noted in his diary, was prompted both by fear of Japanese raids and by fear of civil disorder. The majority of evacuees were settled into ghost towns in B.C. beyond the Rocky Mountains; others went to work on sugar beet farms in the prairie provinces or in various occupations in Ontario. Demands for evacuation formed the logical outcome of prewar B.C. attitudes toward the Japanese-Canadians. The war offered an opportunity to expel them and to cut away their economic base in order to prevent their return.¹⁰

While the Japanese-Canadians were forced into camps in the interior and vilified as potential enemy agents, Canadians of Chinese descent benefited from identification with a wartime ally. Popular sympathy for China and respect for the Chinese people found a symbol in Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, who was lionized during her 1943 visit to North America. The Canadian Chinese further enhanced their public image by participating actively in the Canadian war effort. In every Victory Loan Drive, the Chinese community oversubscribed its quota, and the Vancouver Chinese achieved the distinction of contributing more per capita than any other group in Canada. Chinese-Canadians joined in Red Cross and other service work. Some young men volunteered for service overseas; others laboured in war industries or in research. In addition, Chinese-Canadian students gained a considerable amount of favourable publicity for academic achievement. Three members of a Vancouver Chinese family, the Quans, won recognition year after year by winning scholarships for outstanding performance in entrance examinations and at UBC. One sympathetic article on the Quan family conveyed an important theme — that the younger generation of Chinese was becoming Canadianized.¹¹

¹⁰ La Violette, pp. 34-50; Norris, pp. 225-227; Pickersgill, I, 354; Eric Nicol, *Vancouver* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1970), pp. 192-193; Pierre Berton, "They're Only Japs", *Macleans Magazine*, 1 February 1948, pp. 41-42; Angus, *Canada and the Far East, 1940-1953* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1953), p. 14.

¹¹ Stanislaw Andracki, "The Immigration of Orientals into Canada, with Special Reference to Chinese" (Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University, 1958), pp. 188-191; Chinese-Canadian Association, "Memorandum and Petition Submitted to The Honourable, The Premier of British Columbia, John Hart, Esq., and the Honourable Ministers of the Executive", 16 February 1945, pp. 1-5; House of Commons *Debates*, 16 June 1943, p. 3717; W. E. Willmott, "Approaches to the Study of the Chinese in British Columbia", *BC Studies*, no. 4 (Spring 1970), p. 50; Angus,

On the whole, discrimination against Chinese decreased in B.C. during the war and the Chinese made some advances in the economic sphere. Toward the end of the war, for the first time a college-educated Chinese-Canadian woman in Vancouver could obtain a job in an office rather than in a fruit and vegetable store. The residential concentration in Chinatown lessened somewhat as, with increasing prosperity, some inhabitants moved out to other districts. In late 1945, the Vancouver Parks Board ended its policy of racial segregation at the city-owned Crystal Pool after a unanimous protest by Vancouver high school principals. This gradual increase in good feeling had no immediate political results. However, the positive wartime shift in attitudes was a necessary prerequisite for later enfranchisement.¹²

Increasing acceptance of the Chinese-Canadians and the exile of the Japanese-Canadians did not end race-baiting in B.C. Looking to the future, some politicians and organizations demanded that the Japanese be "shipped back to their own country" rather than being permitted to return to B.C. after the war. Alex Paton, Conservative Member of the Legislative Assembly for Vancouver-Point Grey, Thomas Reid, Liberal MP for New Westminster, and the B.C. command of the Canadian Legion went on record in 1944 in favour of "repatriation". They argued that the Japanese-Canadians were controlled by the Japanese government and could never be truly Canadian. Arguments which had been made in the 1930s to forestall enfranchisement of the Canadian-born Japanese were now being used in an effort to exile them from the country of their birth.¹³

Rejecting these extremes and condemning racist attitudes, liberal and moderate opinion offered an alternative. *Saturday Night* branded Reid's concept of expulsion based on racial origin as "desperately dangerous"

Canada and the Far East, 1940-1953, p. 27; Reverend Andrew Lam, personal letter to author, 2 March 1975; *Vancouver Sun*, 21 July 1941; 13 May 1942; 21 July 1942; 12 May 1943; 15 July 1944; 9 May 1945; *Vancouver Province*, 21 July 1941; 13 May 1942; 21 July 1942; 15 July 1944; 9 May 1945; 31 May 1946; *Vancouver News-Herald*, 21 July 1942; 12 May 1943; 15 July 1944; Myrtle Patterson Gregory, "People at Home", *Vancouver Sun*, 15 May 1945.

¹² Alan Morley, *Vancouver: From Milltown to Metropolis* (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1961), pp. 191-192; Mary Lee, personal letter to author, 7 March 1975; W. E. Willmott, "Some Aspects of Chinese Communities in British Columbia Towns", *BC Studies*, no. 1 (Winter 1968-69), p. 33; *CCF News*, 8 November 1945.

¹³ *Peace River Block News*, 22 June 1944; *CCF News*, 8 June 1944; *CCF News*, 22 June 1944; Thomas Reid, Letter to the editor, "Japanese Canadians", *Saturday Night*, 8 July 1944, p. 2; J. A. Eaton, "Says Shinto Jap Can't Keep Oath of Loyalty to Canada", letter to the editor, *Saturday Night*, 22 July 1944, p. 2.

and "very, very Nazi". The CCF charged: "This is the same program as Hitler's." People born in Canada could not be "repatriated" to Japan; the process would constitute exile. UBC professor Norman F. Black, in an article in *Saturday Night* and in speeches before CCF groups, urged that the government foster permanent resettlement of the Japanese across Canada by means of a fair policy of financial help and compensation for property losses. Undue geographical concentration before the war had contributed to B.C.'s unreasoning prejudice, he argued; the rational cure was dispersal. Endorsing this policy, the CCF also reiterated its call for full citizenship rights for Oriental Canadians, including the vote.¹⁴

However, in June and July 1944, the immediate problem facing liberal sentiment was not to extend the right to vote but to prevent the extension of disfranchisement to Japanese-Canadians across Canada. In early June, the House of Commons passed Bill 135, whose main purpose was to make arrangements for voting in the next general election by Canadian soldiers overseas. Approved by a special committee, the measure gained very little attention until Clause 5 was discovered after the bill had been passed. Clause 5 disfranchised for the forthcoming dominion election "any person whose racial origin is that of a country at war with Canada" if members of his race were disqualified from voting in any Canadian province. Some observers suspected that the Liberal party wished to deprive the CCF of the votes of the 4,000 Japanese-Canadians of voting age, some of them evacuees, then residing outside British Columbia.¹⁵

Whatever the intentions behind Clause 5, its discovery provoked a vigorous campaign of opposition which offered to one commentator "one of the most encouraging evidences of the survival of a liberal spirit that the country has presented in a long time". Church groups, leading newspapers, civil liberties associations, the CCF party, YMCA organizations, Japanese-Canadians, and other bodies mobilized and organized public pressure. Opponents argued that removing political rights from Japanese-Canadians solely on racial grounds would set a dangerous precedent. They noted that the measure contradicted Canadian war aims and fur-

¹⁴ "Japanese Canadians", *Saturday Night*, 24 June 1944, p. 3; "Dual Citizenship", *Saturday Night*, 8 July 1944, pp. 1-3; *CCF News*, 13 July 1944; Norman Fergus Black, "The Problem of Japanese Canadians, and Solution", *Saturday Night*, 5 February 1944, p. 12; "Burrard CCF Hear Black on Japanese", *CCF News*, 1 June 1944; *CCF News*, 4 January 1945; Angus and Grace MacInnis, *Oriental Canadians — outcasts or citizens?* (Vancouver: Federationist Publishing Company, 1943), p. 11.

¹⁵ L. McL. Atkinson, "The Japanese Controversy is Reviving Liberalism", *Saturday Night*, 15 July 1944, pp. 6-7; "Japanese Canadians", *CCF News*, 29 June 1944; *La Violette*, pp. 189-190.

nished propaganda for Canada's enemies. Moreover, it obstructed the policy of dispersal by removing an incentive for Japanese-Canadians to settle in other provinces. "This undeserved disfranchisement of Canadian citizens," a National Inter-church Advisory Committee warned, "will reflect on the honour of Canada long after the war has been won."¹⁶

In the Senate, which debated the bill on June 28 and 30, Senators Bench and Lambert of Ontario led an unsuccessful fight to delete the disfranchisement clause. According to them, Clause 5 violated the principles of justice, democracy and citizenship. Embodying the Nazi principle of racial hatred, the disqualification was "out of sympathy with the democratic viewpoint of Canadians as a whole". On the other hand, those who supported the retention of the controversial provision argued that the Japanese were undesirable and unassimilable immigrants, incapable of understanding the principles of democratic government. They sought to hold the Canadian Japanese responsible for the actions of the Japanese government, including the mistreatment of Canadian prisoners. The dominion should follow the lead of B.C. in disfranchising all Japanese-Canadians, they urged. After extended debate, the Senate defeated a motion to strike Clause 5 by a vote of 9 to 13. The upper house did narrow the wording of the clause so that it applied only to Japanese-Canadians, not potentially to members of other "enemy races".¹⁷

Agitation continued against the Soldiers' Vote Bill, which required reconsideration in the House of Commons as amended. To a limited extent, the government was willing to retreat in the face of sustained public criticism. Taking the vote away from the scattered handful of Japanese-Canadians who had lived in the other provinces before the war disturbed the Liberal principles of Prime Minister King. A government-sponsored amendment introduced in the House provided for the disfranchisement only of those Canadians of Japanese origin who had resided in B.C. at the outbreak of the war — still the great majority of Japanese-Canadians.¹⁸

The vigorous debate in the House of Commons on July 17 showed the tripartite division which was to appear in later deliberations on the treat-

¹⁶ Atkinson, pp. 6-7, listing the individuals and groups in the ranks of the opposition; *La Violette*, p. 191; "A Cowardly Device", *Saturday Night*, 1 July 1944; "Japanese Canadians", *CCF News*, 29 June 1944; *CCF News*, 20 July 1944; "Will Canada Disfranchise Her Nisei Citizens?" *Christian Century* 61 (12 July 1944), p. 820.

¹⁷ Canada, Senate, *Official Report of Debates*, 28 June 1944, pp. 240-252; 30 June 1944, pp. 267-285; Atkinson, p. 7; *La Violette*, pp. 192-193; *CCF News*, 6 July 1944.

¹⁸ Pickersgill, II, pp. 53-54.

ment of the Japanese-Canadians. Prime Minister King and his cabinet took a position unfavourable to the minority group but defended it on ostensibly moderate grounds. King insisted that he was seeking to avoid both the racial discrimination of removing existing privileges and the "racial favouritism" of granting privileges not previously enjoyed. He contended that the bill as amended left the matter of voting by the Japanese "just where it would have been" but for temporary, war-induced changes in the place of residence of some of them. For dominion franchise purposes, the evacuated Japanese-Canadians remained citizens of B.C.

A second viewpoint in the debate came from the B.C. extremist faction, who used more intemperate rhetoric than King to defend the treatment of the Japanese-Canadians. "All this sob story about the poor Japanese being deprived of their rights is all bunk," charged A. W. Neill. "This is a white man's country, and we want it left a white man's country." He expressed regret that the head of his church "would squander our money in putting out Japanese propaganda" and wished that more weight had been given to the views of those who lived in B.C. and knew the Japanese problem well.

The race-baiters' traditional rival, the CCF, sought to delete the entire disfranchisement clause. Party members insisted that Clause 5 would deprive Japanese-Canadians of a right they would otherwise have enjoyed — the franchise in dominion elections outside of B.C. These decent, law-abiding citizens, completely innocent of Japanese government atrocities, should be given a fair chance to be good Canadians, CCF MPs maintained. "If you can disfranchise yellow men on racial grounds," one legislator warned, "other men may be disfranchised. If you keep that up, it will not be long before Canada will be Hitlerized." Although supported by a few Liberals, the CCF-sponsored motion was ruled out of order, the government version accepted, and the entire bill passed.¹⁹

Prime Minister King's statement of policy toward the Japanese-Canadian population, delivered in the House on 4 August 1944, was a typical attempt to reconcile divergent views. The cautious leader made some gestures toward both resettlement and repatriation. It was not to be expected that the government would "do other than deal justly with those who are guilty of no crime, or even of any ill intention," King promised. To do otherwise, he declared, would be "an acceptance of the standards of our enemies and the negation of the purposes for which we

¹⁹ House of Commons *Debates*, 17 July 1944 (daily edition), pp. 5015-5037, 5050; "Japanese Votes", *Saturday Night*, 22 July 1944, p. 1; *CCF News*, 27 July 1944; "Will of the People", *Saturday Night*, 15 July 1944, p. 3.

are fighting". If the loyal Japanese-Canadians wished to remain in Canada, they should be allowed to do so. However, they should not be allowed once more to concentrate in B.C. The best policy for the Japanese-Canadians themselves was to distribute their numbers as widely as possible throughout the country so that they would not create feelings of racial hostility. In addition, a quasi-judicial commission would be established to examine all persons of Japanese race in Canada to ascertain those who were not fit to be allowed to remain. The disloyal persons would be deported to Japan as soon as that was physically possible. There might also be some persons who would voluntarily indicate a desire to proceed to Japan. Whatever their national status, they would be "allowed and encouraged to go as soon as they can".²⁰

King's statement was too moderate for the B.C. members of his own party, who began to campaign in September 1944 for the expected fall general election. Tom Reid demanded that all Canadian residents of Japanese origin be deported to Japan. George Cruickshank, MP for Fraser Valley, asserted that the Japanese should be moved out of the country if possible, and failing that, must be kept east of the Rocky Mountains. Most vocal on the "Japanese problem" was Ian Mackenzie, MP for Vancouver Centre, minister of pensions and national health. He asked his fellow citizens to "serve notice on the rest of Canada that we will not have Japanese in this fair province". Using the slogan "Not a Jap between here and the Rockies," he also demanded that the Japanese-Canadians never be enfranchised. These, he declared, were the important issues of the campaign. If a single Japanese ever returned to the coast, he promised to resign.²¹

Although the Japanese-Canadian question was a highly salient one, the state of B.C. public opinion on the issue is difficult to determine. Election results reflected many other issues and concerns, not merely the race issue. Apparently, the persistent use of the racial appeal by experienced campaigners indicated their belief that waving the bloody shirt would contribute to victory. They need not have expected overt prejudice to appeal to a majority; as long as the issue attracted more ballots than it turned away, it would have been politically profitable. CCF leaders, the primary political targets, charged that Liberal politicians were forced to

²⁰ House of Commons *Debates*, 4 August 1944 (daily edition), pp. 6052-6053; *La Violette*, pp. 230-231.

²¹ "Political Dishonesty", *CCF News*, 7 September 1944; *CCF News*, 28 September 1944; *CCF News*, 19 October 1944; *Winnipeg Free Press*, 26 September 1944.

fan "the dying embers of race hatred" because they had no substantive planks to offer.²²

The problem of assessing public opinion is complicated by the existence of at least three separate issues — deportation from Canada, exclusion from the coast, and disfranchisement. In a Canadian Gallup Poll published on 16 February 1944, 80 per cent of the respondents believed that Japanese nationals should be repatriated, but 59 per cent agreed that Japanese-Canadians with Canadian citizenship should be allowed to remain. The results were based on a nationwide sample, but the analysis of the poll stated that views in B.C. varied in the same way as in the other provinces. However, a much higher percentage of British Columbians undoubtedly opposed the return of the evacuees west of the Rockies. Probably attitudes toward enfranchisement were correspondingly negative.²³

There was much less agitation about the franchise issue as it affected the Chinese-Canadians in B.C., but the issue came alive in the late summer of 1944 in connection with military service. In August, reversing a policy established in September 1940, the dominion government began to call up Chinese-Canadians in B.C. for compulsory military training. Perhaps the authorities changed their minds because of an acute manpower shortage; perhaps they assumed that B.C. sentiment no longer barred military service by Chinese-Canadians. The new policy evoked mixed feelings in the Chinese community. On the one hand, they were proud that, at last, they were being given an opportunity to show that they desired to fight for Canada. "We had begun to wonder," a spokesman said, "if we no longer were considered Canadians." On the other hand, the conscripts were bitter at their inability to cast a vote.²⁴

The military call-up spurred an active community effort to secure the vote for Canadian-born Chinese, a departure from their prewar condition of apathy. The movement centred on the newly formed Chinese-Canadian Association, one of whose leaders was the Reverend Andrew Lam. A young Anglican clergyman, rector of the Chinese Anglican Church in Vancouver, Rev. Andrew Lam began to speak in favour of enfranchisement before service clubs and church groups. In early 1945, Mr. Lam

²² *CCF News*, 16 November 1944; *CCF News*, 28 September 1944.

²³ *La Violette*, p. 154; House of Commons *Debates*, 4 August 1944, (daily edition), p. 6062; Jack Scott, "Why B.C. Draws the Color Line", *Maclean's Magazine*, 1 February 1948, pp. 17, 40.

²⁴ *CCF News*, 17 August 1944; 31 August 1944; *La Violette*, p. 32n.; Chinese-Canadian Association, "Memorandum and Petition", p. 4; Mary Lee, personal letter to author, 28 March 1975.

and the association arranged to present their case for the franchise to the B.C. cabinet, a coalition of Liberals and Conservatives.²⁵

Their brief expressed the dualism in the Chinese-Canadian attitude toward the vote. On the one hand, it was a right whose denial contradicted democratic principles. On the other hand, it was a privilege which the disfranchised group had now earned by cultural assimilation, loyalty, and contributions to the Canadian war effort. "The Chinese-Canadians feel strongly that since they bear, and bear gladly, full citizenship responsibilities, they should be entitled to all citizen rights," the brief contended. An accompanying letter to the premier stressed more practical considerations. The underprivileged position of Chinese-Canadians hindered the improvement of relations and the expansion of trade between Canada and China; it gave ammunition to the enemies of democracy in the Orient. Finally, enfranchisement would not be disruptive; Chinese-Canadians formed "a minority too small to exercise any significant effect upon the policies of our country".²⁶

Armed with a petition bearing 700 signatures, a delegation representing the Chinese-Canadian Association travelled to Victoria for an audience with Premier Hart and the cabinet on 16 February 1945. The group included Mr. Lam, an insurance salesman, a farmer, a housewife, an interpreter, a YWCA secretary, and the president of the Chinese Benevolent Association. They were presented by Mrs. Nancy Hodges, assembly member from Victoria who was sympathetic to their cause. "In a formal and cordial manner," the clergyman recalled, the cabinet heard him read the brief and petition and thanked the group for coming. They asked no questions and made no official comment.²⁷

During the 1945 session, the legislature made only a small concession on the Oriental franchise. An amendment to the Provincial Elections Act enfranchised Japanese, Chinese, Hindus and native Indians who had served in the Canadian armed forces in the current war and members of the latter three groups who had fought for Canada in the 1914-1918

²⁵ *Vancouver Province*, 21 November 1944; *Vancouver News-Herald*, 21 November 1944; Rev. Andrew Lam, personal letter to author, 2 March 1975. The following section on the Chinese-Canadian appeal for the franchise relies heavily on a personal letter from Mr. Lam to the author and on materials from his personal collection.

²⁶ Chinese-Canadian Association, "Memorandum and Petition", pp. 1-5; Letter to John Hart, Premier of B.C., "Regarding the franchise of Canadian citizens of Chinese descent", 15 February 1945.

²⁷ Rev. Andrew Lam, personal letter to author, 2 March 1975; *Vancouver News-Herald*, 16 February 1945; *Victoria Colonist*, 17 February 1945; *Vancouver Province*, 17 February 1945.

conflict. The measure apparently aroused no controversy. Foon Sien, president of the Chinese Benevolent Association, praised the change as "a move in the right direction". It gave the franchise to at least fifty Chinese veterans of the last war and approximately 400 B.C. Chinese then serving in the forces. Probably unwittingly, the measure also applied to the 150 or 160 Canadians of Japanese origin who had been admitted secretly into the armed services late in the war for special assignments.²⁸

The legislature refused to widen the franchise further. CCF members reiterated their commitment to the extension of full citizenship rights to all groups, but they lacked the votes to implement their principles. A bill to enfranchise the East Indians failed by a vote of 18 to 21. Although the East Indians' case was politically stronger than that of the Chinese and Japanese, because India was part of the British Empire, the B.C. government did not favour granting them the vote. With 50,000 British Columbians out of the country in the armed forces, the government contended, no sweeping changes should be made in the elections act. Other opponents of the measure claimed that the East Indians were subject to domination by group leaders and had hindered the improvement of living standards in the province.²⁹ Criticizing the franchise decisions made by the legislature, the *Vancouver Province* and the *CCF News* insisted upon a single, undifferentiated standard of citizenship. The vote should not be a reward for services rendered; citizenship should not be a flexible concept interpreted differently for various minority groups. "The basis of franchise should be citizenship and not military service," both papers agreed.³⁰

The lawmakers' reluctance to base the franchise on citizenship was probably related to the intensity of anti-Japanese agitation in the spring of 1945. The leading representatives of the Liberal and Conservative parties in B.C., the Federated Growers of British Columbia, the Union of B.C. Municipalities, the *B.C. Fisherman*, and the Native Brotherhood,

²⁸ *Statutes of British Columbia, 1945*; *Vancouver Province*, 27 March 1945; *Victoria Colonist*, 27 March 1945; *Vancouver News-Herald*, 28 March 1945; "The Chinese Canadian Association", memorandum from the personal collection of Rev. Andrew Lam; *CCF News*, 19 July 1945; *CCF News*, 29 November 1945, referring to House of Commons debates, 9 April 1945; *La Violette*, pp. 312, 13-14.

²⁹ *CCF News*, 8 March 1945; *Victoria Colonist*, 8 March 1945; *La Violette*, p. 9n; *Vancouver Province*, 29 March 1945; *Victoria Colonist*, 29 March 1945; *CCF News*, 22 March, 29 March, 5 April 1945; for background on the East Indian vote, *Vancouver News-Herald*, 16 February 1945; *CCF News*, 26 October, 7 December, 14 December 1944; 15 January 1945.

³⁰ "Votes and Citizenship", *Vancouver Province*, 28 March 1945; "Canadian Citizens", *Province*, 28 August 1945; "Canadian Citizenship", *CCF News*, 29 March 1945.

an Indian group, all supported measures to prevent the return of the Japanese-Canadians to the coast. The influential *Victoria Colonist* spoke for those who urged the deportation of the Japanese-Canadians. "East and West in Canada mean little," concluded one editorial, "compared with loyalty in the heart. Whom do these men serve? Why were they impounded in the first place? Have we forgotten?"³¹

The issues of exclusion and deportation played their part in the federal election campaign of 1945. B.C. Liberals and Conservatives again sought to discredit the CCF by associating the leftist party with an unpopular minority. The CCF tacitly admitted the potency of the racial issue by denouncing it as a diversion and by informing the voters that the old-line parties had been responsible for Japanese immigration. In the June 1945 general election, the CCF won four of B.C.'s sixteen seats; Mackenzie and Reid were re-elected.³²

Officially committed to dispersal of the Japanese-Canadians throughout Canada and to "repatriation" on a voluntary basis only, the government exerted indirect pressures on those in temporary camps in the B.C. interior to request a move to Japan. "Repatriation requests" signed before July 1945 covered 43 per cent of the Japanese in Canada, including minor children. Before V-J Day on September 2, a few hundred of the Japanese asked to revoke their requests; after that date, the number grew to more than 60 per cent. Labour Minister Humphrey Mitchell announced that Japanese nationals and naturalized Canadians changing their minds after September 1 would not be permitted to cancel. Only Canadian-born Japanese and naturalized citizens who had requested cancellation before V-J Day would be permitted to remain in Canada.³³

Gradually the inequities of this policy came to public attention and gave rise to sustained criticism. In late 1945 and in the first half of 1946, the champions of civil liberties and fair treatment for the Japanese-Canadians enlisted on their side a broad spectrum of Canadian opinion — a coalition similar to that which had emerged in the summer of 1944 to challenge the Soldiers' Vote Bill. Leadership in the drive came from

³¹ Norris, p. 227; *La Violette*, pp. 204, 236-240; *CCF News*, 8 February 1945, 1 March 1945; *Victoria Colonist*, 7 March 1945; 20 March 1945.

³² *CCF News*, 8 February, 22 February, 31 May, 7 June, 14 June 1945; *Peace River Block News*, 31 May 1945; *La Violette*, p. 236.

³³ *La Violette*, pp. 243, 251; *CCF News*, 19 July 1945; Edith Fowke and A. G. Watson, "Democracy and the Japanese Canadian", *Canadian Forum* 25 (July 1945), p. 89; Norris, p. 228; Department of Labour, *Report for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1946*, pp. 96-97.

the Toronto-based Cooperative Committee on Japanese-Canadians, representing more than forty community groups including religious, labour, academic, social work, and civil liberties organizations. Circumstances abetted the protest efforts. By the summer of 1945, war news no longer dominated the media, and Nazi atrocities committed in the name of racial superiority were being revealed. The defenders of Japanese-Canadians sought to link the opprobrium of Hitler's ideas to the threat to deport unoffending citizens on the ground of race. Their morally indignant campaign asked Canadians to examine the meanings of democracy, citizenship, civil liberties, wartime ideals, and the U.N. Charter, and to apply their principles to the Japanese-Canadians.

In October and November 1945, the protest coalition focused on proposed legislation which gave the cabinet summary power to control "exclusion and deportation, and revocation of nationality", permitting the government to implement its deportation policy. After a heated parliamentary debate, the government withdrew the objectionable legislation and tabled three orders-in-council under the War Measures Act which gave it the same authority. The cabinet's refusal to alter its policy gave renewed momentum to the waves of outrage. The Cooperative Committee challenged the validity of the orders-in-council before the Supreme Court of Canada. The justices upheld the main powers of the government under the War Measures Act but declared illegal the automatic banishment of woman and children along with heads of families. Several also considered the deportation of Canadian citizens to be *ultra vires*.³⁴

Lacking a clear-cut mandate and aware of the moral indignation of a significant segment of the Canadian public, the cabinet decided against further attempts to banish those Japanese-Canadians who did not wish to depart. Out of more than 10,000 originally covered by repatriation requests, 3,964 voluntarily left Canada for Japan. The focus of attention shifted back to the resettlement process. In the year ending on 31 March 1947, approximately 4,800 persons moved east of the Rockies, reducing

³⁴ Fowke and Watson, pp. 87-89; Norris, pp. 227-228; *Saturday Night*, 1 September 1945; 12 January 1946; 16 March 1946; Howard H. Sugimoto, "A Bibliographical Essay on the Wartime Evacuation of Japanese from West Coast Areas", in *East Across the Pacific*, ed. Hilary Conroy and T. Scott Miyakawa (Santa Barbara, Calif.: American Bibliographical Center, 1972), pp. 140-150; Angus, *Canada and the Far East, 1940-1953*, p. 24; La Violette, pp. 247-269; *CCF News*, 22 November, 29 November, 6 December, 13 December, 20 December 1945; 3 January, 10 January, 17 January, 31 January, 21 February 1946; *Kootenaiian*, 27 December 1945, cited in House of Commons *Debates*, 22 April 1947, p. 2326; Vancouver *Province*, 21 February 1946.

those still in B.C. to 33 per cent of the total Japanese-Canadian population. The restricted zone was maintained to facilitate dispersal.³⁵

In the House of Commons, B.C. representatives continued to insist that the people of the province would not permit the Japanese to return. Howard Green, Conservative MP for Vancouver South, indicated his unwillingness to apply general principles to the Japanese-Canadians. Discussing the Citizenship Act, which created the status of Canadian citizenship with no distinctions on the basis of race or national origin, Green demanded that the bill not be used "as an excuse for the Government to abandon its Japanese policy".³⁶

However, even within B.C., general principles of citizenship began to contend with ingrained mental habits of racial discrimination. On 19 July 1946, the Vancouver *News-Herald* contrasted Canada's reluctance to permit the Japanese-Canadians to serve in the armed forces unfavourably with American recruitment of a Nisei battalion. This discrepancy had made thinking people "wonder how it is that Canada and the United States look differently on citizenship". The editorial insisted that "in a new world, drawn from all races, birth should give first right of citizenship, no matter what the colour of the skin".³⁷

Seeking legislative recognition of these principles, representatives of the Chinese-Canadians and the East Indians appeared before a special elections act committee of the B.C. Legislature in early November 1946. Their plea for the franchise was supported by the testimony of an impressive array of community organizations, including the CCF party, service veterans, the Junior Board of Trade, the Trades and Labour Council, the United and Baptist Churches, the United Nations Society, and several civil liberties groups. The one discordant note was struck by J. H. Fletcher of the Japanese Repatriation League, who foresaw the country being flooded with hordes from Asia if Orientals were allowed to vote in B.C.³⁸

The committee's decision to recommend votes only for the Chinese and East Indians and not for the Japanese was shaped by B.C. government policy. Originally a majority of the committee favoured votes for all

³⁵ "Backstage in Ottawa", *Maclean's Magazine*, 15 April 1946, cited by La Violette, pp. 270-271; Canada, Department of Labour, *Report for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1947*, p. 89.

³⁶ La Violette, pp. 290-291; Angus, *Canada and the Far East*, p. 28; *CCF News Comment*, 15 April 1946, p. 4; *CCF News*, 11 April 1946.

³⁷ *Vancouver News-Herald*, 19 July 1946.

³⁸ *CCF News*, 7 November 1946.

British Columbians, including the Japanese. While approving the enfranchisement of the Chinese and the East Indians, Premier John Hart's government exerted pressure on the Coalition members of the committee to exclude the Japanese. As a result, the vote was four to three against recommending enfranchisement of the Japanese. Only one Coalition member joined the two CCF legislators on the losing side. Seeking a political explanation, the *Vancouver News-Herald* observed that the subject of the Japanese had been used so often by the political parties that Oriental enfranchisement had become one of the most politically embarrassing topics facing the government. "As a saw off", the analysis continued, the government believed that it could dispel the argument that there was racial prejudice in B.C. by giving the vote to citizens of Chinese and East Indian origin. It would then be able to claim that disfranchisement of the Japanese was based solely on economic grounds. In contrast, the *Vancouver Province* insisted that either racial or economic prejudice was disgraceful and that the Japanese should have been included. To treat Canadians of Japanese blood differently was "to make a mockery of the Citizenship Act which came into effect only three weeks ago".³⁹

The pending enfranchisement of the Chinese-Canadians in B.C., which would also give them the dominion vote, entered into the debate in the Canadian House of Commons on February 11 concerning the proposed repeal of the Chinese Immigration Act. Howard Green argued that the exclusion of Chinese immigrants had calmed public uneasiness and had permitted the steady growth of a "friendly feeling for the Chinese people". On behalf of the great majority of the people of B.C., he and his colleague James Sinclair, Liberal MP for Vancouver North, welcomed the granting of citizenship rights to the Chinese already in Canada. They warned, however, that "opening the gates to an influx" might "destroy this good relationship". In response, CCF spokesman Angus MacInnis claimed vindication for a long and lonely fight for Oriental enfranchisement, now partly won.⁴⁰

In the B.C. legislature during the 1947 session, the focus of controversy was not the enfranchisement of the Chinese but the non-enfranchisement of the Japanese. Those who defended the differentiation between the two

³⁹ John Hart to Mackenzie King, 9 January 1947, Hart Papers, cited by Margaret Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History* (Vancouver: The Macmillans in Canada, 1958), p. 492; *Vancouver News-Herald*, 23 January 1947; Martin Robin, *Pillars of Profit: The Company Province, 1934-1972* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1973), p. 97; *Victoria Colonist*, 23 January 1947; "The Elections Act", *Vancouver Province*, 23 January 1947.

⁴⁰ House of Commons *Debates*, 11 February 1947, pp. 311, 332-337.

groups saw the franchise as a privilege. The Chinese and the East Indians had "proved their claims through constructive participation in the development of this province", argued the *Victoria Daily Times*. The Japanese were still suspect. In debate, Coalition members resurrected the old spectres of allegiance to Japan, the obligation to return to Japan to do military service, and unfair competition on the fishing grounds. The war was too close to permit the Japanese to vote, asserted one MLA. Calling for the extension of the suffrage to the Japanese-Canadians, the CCF invoked the principles of British justice, democracy, Christianity, and the newly enacted Canadian Citizenship Act. "Surely we in B.C. are not going to allow a stigma to be placed against this province and this country," pleaded party leader Harold Winch. "Surely we are not going to follow the path of Hitler and Mussolini." Students at UBC and at the Union Theological College passed resolutions supporting the CCF position.⁴¹

In the waning hours of the session, the CCF's unrelenting efforts to add the Japanese-Canadians to the electorate met final defeat. The party pledged that "the fight must go on until our federal Citizenship Act is recognized in the statutes of British Columbia." The Chinese and East Indians celebrated their acceptance into the political process; the general population in B.C. apparently approved of the step. A public opinion poll broadcast over radio station CKWX explained that the new legislation would give the franchise to East Indians and Chinese, but not to Japanese. "Do you agree?" The response was 82 per cent "yes".⁴²

The acceptance of the Chinese-Canadians and the rejection of the Japanese-Canadians, symbolized by the decision on the vote, appeared clearly in the respective images of these groups presented by the daily newspapers and by the representatives of B.C. in Parliament. While war-time memories evoked reminders of bravery and endurance by the Chinese people, they produced indignation at Japanese atrocities. Dis-

⁴¹ *Victoria Daily Times*, 20 February, 21 February, 20 March, 28 March, 3 April 1947; *Vancouver Province*, 19 February, 20 February, 26 February, 1 March, 4 March, 6 March, 20 March, 26 March, 2 April, 3 April 1947; *CCF News*, 20 February, 27 February, 27 March, 3 April 1947; *New Westminster British Columbian*, 20 February, 20 March 1947; *Victoria Colonist*, 20 March, 3 April 1947; *British Columbia, Legislative Assembly, Journals, 1947*, pp. 16, 105, 120, 123, 131; *Statutes of British Columbia, 1947*.

⁴² *Legislative Assembly, Journals, 1947*, p. 133; *CCF News*, 10 April, 17 April 1947; *Peace River Block News*, 24 April 1947; Rev. Andrew Lam, personal letter to author, 2 March 1975; *Victoria Colonist*, 4 April 1947; Angus, *Canada and the Far East*, p. 28n.; *House of Commons Debates*, 24 April 1947, p. 2355; *Vancouver Province*, 2 April 1947.

crimination against Chinese citizens gave rise to concerted protest at the same time that B.C. opinion leaders insisted on continued restrictions on citizens of Japanese origin.

On the floor of the House of Commons, members reflected the dichotomy in the B.C. mind in 1947 between the two ethnic groups. According to Tom Reid, any British Columbian would "take the Chinaman any time against the Japanese". The Chinese in B.C., he claimed, had been found to be "people of honesty and integrity, which is something different from the Japanese". In another debate, James Sinclair told the House that "we have never had the feeling against the Chinese in B.C. that we have had against the Japanese." These remarks projected current differences in attitudes back into the past.⁴³

Less than two years after V-J Day, the sufferings of the Chinese nation during the war and the services of Chinese-Canadians to the war effort shaped the attitudes of British Columbians. Drawing on sympathy for China, the Canadian Aid to China Drive in early 1947 received generous support. At a gala Vancouver ceremony on February 20, seven young men and women representing more than 200 B.C. Chinese-Canadian war veterans were inducted into the new status of Canadian citizenship. Roman Catholic Archbishop W. M. Duke extolled the progress Chinese-Canadians had made "in education, their marvellous advance in business, and their ability to take care of themselves". Major-General Victor G. Odlum, former Canadian ambassador to China, foresaw a day when Chinese-Canadians would "not be distinguished from other Canadians". When the Greater Victoria School Board voted in March 1947 to cease buying vegetables from Chinese merchants, immediate protests forced the board to revoke its action. The Chinese community, several major B.C. newspapers, the Canadian Legion, and other citizens blasted the board's racial intolerance and extolled the virtues and achievements of Victoria's Chinese residents.⁴⁴

B.C. opponents of increased Chinese immigration, speaking in debate in the House of Commons on the proposed repeal of the Chinese exclusion act of 1923, felt themselves bound to deny that they were activated by racial hatred. They stressed their goodwill toward the Canadian

⁴³ House of Commons *Debates*, 11 February 1947, p. 318; 24 April 1947, p. 2373.

⁴⁴ Vancouver *Province*, 24 February, 26 February, 27 February, 20 February, 28 February, 15 March, 17 March, 21 March 1947; *Peace River Block News*, 9 January, 20 March, 3 April 1947; *Victoria Colonist*, 19 February 1947, 18 March, 20 March, 21 March 1947; *New Westminster British Columbian*, 19 March, 20 March 1947; *Victoria Daily Times*, 19 March, 21 March 1947; *CCF News*, 3 April 1947.

Chinese, and accepted the compromise devised by the Mackenzie King government. By repealing the act, Canada would remove a discriminatory measure which insulted a friendly nation. But, in order to avoid large-scale immigration by people who were difficult to assimilate, strict limitations on numbers would continue.⁴⁵

Stronger racial discrimination extended to Japanese-Canadians, who had been associated with a wartime enemy. In early 1947, reports of Japanese atrocities from war crimes courts in the Far East may have reinforced B.C. animosity against Japanese people. After the federal government relinquished its policy of large-scale deportation, many British Columbians continued to oppose the return of the Japanese-Canadians to the west coast. Attorney General Gordon Wismer stated that B.C. would be "satisfied" if Ottawa carried through a policy of dispersal, continued to prevent Japanese from entering the coastal zone, and prohibited them from fishing. In February 1947, the B.C. command of Army, Navy, and Air Force Veterans overwhelmingly endorsed a resolution calling for the extension of existing restrictive measures for ten years.⁴⁶

On the other hand, a substantial minority within B.C. championed the rights of the Japanese-Canadians. In March 1947, the Vancouver branch of the Civil Liberties Union and the Vancouver Consultative Council appealed to Prime Minister King to permit the Japanese-Canadians liberty of movement, the right to vote, compensation for losses in the forced sale of property, and restoration of citizenship to those who had lost it by being shipped to Japan. Leading church and university leaders and the CCF party spoke for the relief of the Japanese-Canadians. At UBC, a debate on whether the Nisei should be allowed in the coastal area had to be cancelled because no one could be found to uphold the negative. In the interior, where many Japanese-Canadians had been moved after evacuation, attitudes were apparently more favourable to them than on the coast. The CCF MP for Kootenay, H. W. Herridge, declared that "a

⁴⁵ House of Commons *Debates*, 11 February 1947, pp. 307-341; Pickersgill, IV, pp. 35-36; *New Westminster British Columbian*, 12 February, 13 February 1947; *Victoria Colonist*, 12 February 1947; *Vancouver Province*, 14 February 1947; *CCF News*, 20 February 1947; *CCF News Comment*, 1 March 1947; Canada Department of Labour, *Labour Gazette*, XLVII (September 1947), p. 1327; Andracki, pp. 199-200.

⁴⁶ *New Westminster British Columbian*, 13 February, 17 February 1947; *Vancouver Province*, 21 February, 10 March, 15 March, 21 March 1947; *Victoria Daily Times*, 17 March 1947; *CCF News*, 6 February 1947; *Saturday Night*, 1 February 1947; *Victoria Colonist*, 26 January 1947; Department of Labour, *Labour Gazette*, XLVI (1946), p. 1678; XLVII (February 1947), p. 122.

great majority of the people in the interior would like to see the Japanese treated as Canadian citizens."⁴⁷

In April 1947, when the House of Commons voted after a three-day debate to continue the west coast "defence zone" and other orders-in-council for another year, CCF attacks and Canadian conscience put the government and the B.C. extremists on the defensive. The CCF members, led by Ross Thatcher, MP for Moose Jaw, urged the government to relinquish its powers to control the movement of the Japanese-Canadians. With the war emergency over, the CCF charged, the order was being continued solely because of racial discrimination. The infringement of citizenship rights and civil liberties was a precedent dangerous to the freedom of all Canadians. On a standing vote of 105 to 31, the CCF amendment was defeated.

Insisting that the restrictions must be continued for at least another year to facilitate the dispersal program, Labour Minister Mitchell promised that the continuation would be strictly temporary. He explained that the orders were needed to prevent an immediate return *en masse* by the Japanese-Canadians to the west coast, which would revive the prewar animosity associated with excessive concentration. Dispersal and continued restrictions, he believed, were "in the best interests of the Japanese themselves".

The B.C. representatives continued to urge familiar arguments. They insisted, probably correctly, that a large majority of the people in B.C. did not wish the Japanese to return to the province. They pressed arguments based on national security and economic self-interest to urge that the Japanese be excluded from the coast. Yet the tone of the B.C. arguments seemed less strident, less uncompromising than in previous years. One shift in the B.C. litany was the dropping of demands for deportation to Japan. MP Howard Green conceded that, if a protected zone were maintained, some Japanese could be allowed on the coast by permit as long as there was no "congestion". CCF spokesman Stanley Knowles noted approvingly that one of the B.C. members was "not throwing out slogans or telling us hair-raising stories," as he had done in earlier years, "but was trying to make a reasoned basis for the position that he takes." Another CCF MP observed that the B.C. members had "moderated their opinions considerably".⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Vancouver *Province*, 26 March, 28 March, 7 April 1947; House of Commons *Debates*, 22 April 1947, pp. 2317-2318, 2326, 24 April 1947, p. 2367; *La Violette*, p. 309.

⁴⁸ House of Commons *Debates*, 22-24 April 1947, pp. 2309-2387; *Victoria Colonist*,

An editorial in the *Victoria Colonist*, one of the staunchest anti-Japanese voices in the war and postwar period, also contained a hint of change in its position. "Until sentiment changes in British Columbia," the newspaper advised, "the wartime exclusion of Japanese from this coast had better be retained." The province, it explained, needed time "to erase the memory of a danger that seemed real enough to its citizens". There was, then, some hope of a different attitude in the future.⁴⁹

In a special elections act committee of the House of Commons, discussion in May 1947 of granting the dominion vote to the Japanese-Canadians living in B.C. also showed that the B.C. opposition had become one of delay rather than of permanent prevention. Angus MacInnis of the CCF, who had fought for the Oriental franchise for more than a decade, moved to delete the provision in the Dominion Elections Act which disfranchised within a province any racial group disqualified under that province's electoral laws. The franchise, he insisted, should be based on citizenship; it should not be varied because of race or the dictates of a province. The major arguments used by B.C. members against MacInnis' motion were the opposition of the people of the province and the unsettled state of the disfranchised population. Howard Green argued that, with the entire policy toward the Japanese in a state of flux, it would be "the worst possible time to give them the vote and upset the whole thing". However, James Sinclair suggested, if the dispersal policy proved successful, in the "not too far distant future" it was possible that the franchise might be extended to persons of the Japanese race. To most of the committee members, opposed in principle to retaining racial discrimination in the federal franchise, the only question was one of timing. A majority decided that the time was not ripe. The only change made in the committee's draft bill was extending the exception to those who had served in the second world war as well as the first.⁵⁰

In the months following these decisions, active B.C. antipathy toward the Japanese-Canadians gradually abated as a result of the continued dispersal program of the dominion government. The conviction that the Japanese would not return to the coast in large numbers grew steadily.

23 April, 24 April, 25 April 1947; *CCF News*, 1 May 1947; *Victoria Daily Times*, 23 April, 24 April 1947.

⁴⁹ *Victoria Colonist*, 24 April 1947.

⁵⁰ Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, Special Committee on the Dominion Elections Act 1938, *Minutes and Proceedings of Evidence*, 22 May 1947, pp. 197-198; 29 May 1947, pp. 241-249; 17 June 1947, p. 391; Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, *Journals*, 1947, p. 620, Section 14, Subsection 2, Clause (i).

In early 1947, a public opinion poll taken by a Vancouver radio station revealed that 54.7 per cent of the respondents believed that the Japanese would be back. A year later, 72.5 per cent thought that the group would never return. While 83 per cent of those polled opposed their return, a *Maclean's Magazine* article reported, "most white citizens, whether pro- or anti-Japanese, regard it as a dead issue." Among "men in the street" interviewed in Vancouver, *Maclean's* reported, the general feeling was that any minority group should have full rights of citizenship — "but we don't want those Japs back."⁵¹

An episode in January 1948 showed the willingness of opinion leaders to apply principles of citizenship to the Japanese-Canadians. The B.C. government announced the reimposition of the policy, temporarily lifted during the war, excluding Japanese from employment in timber operations on Crown lands. The Vancouver *Province*, which had consistently held a liberal attitude on Japanese-Canadians, denounced "a rule to make Canadians blush". Referring to the racial and economic prejudice embodied in the policy, the *Province* asked: "How can that be tolerated by a people proud and jealous of their liberties?" Denouncing the measure as persecution of fellow citizens, the Vancouver *News-Herald* warned that similar restrictions had "given British Columbia a bad name" wherever human rights were respected. Seven hundred UBC students adopted a resolution demanding repeal of the policy. In addition, they called for giving the vote, freedom of movement, and equal employment opportunity to the Japanese.⁵²

The editorial protest from the Vancouver *Sun* embodied and explicitly mentioned the change of B.C. attitudes toward the Japanese-Canadians. Strongly anti-Japanese before, during, and after the war, the *Sun* had demanded deportation and rigid controls. Yet this newspaper published an editorial, in response to the timber lands order, entitled "These Japanese are Ours." British Columbia had "long since outgrown the kind of racism of which this order appears to be a reflection," the journal declared. "This is 1948." Conditions which promoted racial antagonism had changed since Pearl Harbor. Making an astonishing concession, the editorial continued that probably some of the Japanese-Canadians would return to Vancouver after the coastal security zone was abolished, but "British Columbia must be fair." The B.C. government responded to the protests by suspending the policy excluding Japanese workers from em-

⁵¹ Scott, "Why B.C. Draws the Color Line", pp. 17, 40.

⁵² *Victoria Colonist*, 31 January 1948; House of Commons *Debates*, 15 March 1948, pp. 2225-2228; Toronto *Daily Star* (editorial), 5 February 1948.

ployment on the timber leases. Perhaps the protest was not entirely altruistic. Many people on the coast, the *Victoria Colonist* reported, were relieved because they feared the return of the Japanese to the fishing and truck garden industries.⁵³

Feeling on the coast continued to oppose the return *en masse* of the evacuees. On 30 January 1948, conferring with Prime Minister King, B.C.'s premier Byron Johnson expressed his strong opposition to repeal of the orders-in-council preventing the movement of Japanese-Canadians into the coastal zone. He foresaw "great trouble" if the orders were removed within a year; he also warned that repeal would cause Liberal defeats in two upcoming by-elections.⁵⁴

The orders were continued for another year. Largely moved by B.C. electoral considerations, King convinced the cabinet against repeal. "It was necessary to have fundamental principles," King admonished a discontented faction in the Liberal party caucus, "but their application in relation to both time and space was of the essence of politics." When the CCF moved, on 15 March 1948, to terminate the restrictions against the return of the Japanese-Canadians to the coast, they were defeated 73 to 23. Members held their perennial debate on the resettlement policy and the rights of citizens. B.C. members stressed the attitudes of their constituents, somewhat decreased in hostility but still shaped by bitter recollections. Citing the recent protest over the logging question, Angus MacInnis for the CCF argued that B.C. opinion had changed. The government once again took the middle ground. Labour Minister Mitchell insisted that it was in the interests of the nation and of the Japanese-Canadians to continue the orders-in-council for another year, to "afford additional time to ensure stability of resettlement elsewhere in Canada". He promised that the controls would lapse on 31 March 1949. Predictably, the liberal press deplored the continuation of controls as a measure of racial tyranny.⁵⁵

In the 1948 legislative session, the Japanese-Canadians and the CCF made unsuccessful efforts to gain removal of all discriminatory provisions in B.C. law. Two lobbyists for the Japanese-Canadian Citizens' Association conferred with Premier Byron Johnson and Attorney-General Gordon

⁵³ *Vancouver Sun*, cited in House of Commons *Debates*, 15 March 1948, p. 2226; *Victoria Colonist*, 31 January 1948; Norris, p. 229.

⁵⁴ *Vancouver Province*, 6 April 1948; Pickersgill, IV, p. 233.

⁵⁵ Pickersgill, IV, pp. 233-236; House of Commons *Debates*, 15 March 1948, pp. 2217-2239; *Vancouver Province*, 16 March 1948; *Victoria Colonist*, 16 March 1948; *CCF News*, 25 March 1948; *Winnipeg Free Press*, 22 March 1948; "Second Class Citizens", *Canadian Forum* 28 (April 1948), pp. 4-5.

Wismer and presented a five-page brief to all members of the cabinet. Japanese-Canadians had an outstanding record of good citizenship, the submission pointed out, yet continuation of legal discrimination prevented them from making their full contribution to the life of the country. The proposals of the JCCA — enfranchisement and a “bill of rights” — were championed in the assembly by the CCF party. The time had come for all citizens of B.C. to enjoy equal rights, declared leader Harold Winch. B.C. opinion had changed, and the federal Citizenship Act had become law. He advanced a resolution urging the end of discrimination “either by law or by contract, against any Canadian citizen because of colour, religion, or land of racial origin.” Later in the session, he suggested a bill of rights guaranteeing a wide range of political, economic, and educational rights. The CCF also sought enfranchisement for Japanese-Canadians.⁵⁶

Rejecting the CCF proposals, the legislature made extremely limited concessions. Lands and Forests Minister E. T. Kenney stated bluntly: “If we give the Japs full rights, it will be a detriment to our own people.” On the grounds that federal controls still regulated the Japanese, Attorney-General Wismer opposed a full guarantee of rights. His substitute merely removed prohibitory clauses from government contracts with respect to that portion of B.C. where Japanese-Canadians were permitted to reside. One minor change in the elections act extended the vote to those Japanese-Canadians who had served in the armed forces of other Commonwealth nations. This provision affected a small number who had been permitted to serve in the British Army for special work in the Far East. Another new section gave the franchise to the wives of all registered voters, regardless of race, if otherwise qualified. Approximately 100 Japanese-Canadian women, the wives of veterans or non-Japanese men, gained the vote. Most Japanese-Canadians remained disfranchised.⁵⁷

In June 1948, the Canadian Parliament hastened the end of B.C.’s disfranchisement of Japanese-Canadians. On June 8, the reconvened Special Committee on the Dominion Elections Act voted to recommend the repeal of Section 14(2)(i), which disfranchised in dominion elections those who were disqualified on grounds of race in provincial balloting. The effective date of the repeal was delayed until 31 March 1949,

⁵⁶ *Vancouver Province*, 5 April 1948; *Victoria Daily Times*, 14 April 1948; *CCF News*, 11 March, 25 March, 15 April 1948.

⁵⁷ *Vancouver Province*, 21 April, 22 April, 28 April 1947; *Victoria Daily Times*, 21 April, 22 April, 27 April 1947; *Victoria Colonist*, 6 April, 21 April, 22 April, 27 April 1947; *CCF News*, 8 April, 29 April 1947; *Winnipeg Free Press*, 19 April 1948; B.C. Legislative Assembly, *Journals, 1948*, pp. 60, 122, 125, 128-29, 136, 140, 143, 151; *Statutes of British Columbia, 1948*.

in order to coincide with the removal of governmental restrictions on the movement of the Japanese-Canadians. A week later, on June 15, the enfranchising provision received cursory attention and approval on the floor of the House of Commons. One B.C. member objected that the amendment ignored provincial standards, but he gained no support. The following week, the bill gained the approval of the Senate, several senators expressing their pleasure at an act of justice that had been "too long delayed". Editorial reaction to the advance showed the accuracy of earlier predictions that dominion enfranchisement would serve as the "entering wedge" for the step in B.C. The *Victoria Daily Times* applauded the measure as a constructive one which should greatly facilitate the assimilation of the Japanese-Canadians and should pave the way for their vote in B.C. "Perhaps," the *CCF News* suggested, "the change in public opinion and the action of the federal government may shame Victoria into amending its election regulations at last."⁵⁸

Between June 1948 and the opening of the B.C. legislature in February 1949, the federal government's dispersal program proceeded toward completion. According to the Department of Labour's annual report, the Japanese were re-establishing themselves satisfactorily and without incident in their new homes and prospering in various lines of endeavour. Seiji Homma, spokesman for the 1,000 Japanese-Canadians in the B.C. interior town of Greenwood, told a reporter that the people in the interior were "more friendly than on the coast" and encouraged the Japanese-Canadians to take an active part in community life. "We think that if we went back to the coast now we would be lost, after seven years," he continued. "Why should we risk our futures again by going back?"⁵⁹

When the B.C. legislature convened in March 1949, advocates of enfranchisement stressed the success of Japanese resettlement and the unlikelihood of their return to the coast in large numbers. "These people will never return," predicted George Tanaka, executive secretary of the Japanese-Canadian Citizens' Association. "They know that the feeling here cannot be removed by legislation." He contrasted the "deep-rooted" prejudice on the coast to the situation elsewhere in Canada, where Cana-

⁵⁸ Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, Special Committee on the Dominion Elections Act, 1938, *Minutes of Evidence*, 8 June 1948, pp. 39-42; House of Commons *Debates*, 15 June 1948, p. 5258; Senate *Debates*, 22 June 1948, pp. 618, 623, 627; *Victoria Daily Times*, 16 June 1948; *CCF News*, 24 June 1948.

⁵⁹ Canada, Department of Labour, *Report for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1949*, p. 88; Berton, pp. 16, 17, 41, 42; *Victoria Colonist*, 27 February 1949; Jorgen Dahlie, "The Japanese in B.C.: Lost Opportunity? Some Aspects of the Education of Minorities", *BC Studies*, no. 8 (Winter 1970-71), p. 6.

dian Japanese had been welcomed into the professions, the skilled trades, and other fields. Speaking in the assembly on March 7, T. A. Love, Coalition member for Grand Forks-Greenwood, urged, "These Canadians should be given the vote and they should get it promptly." In his community, the new residents had won their way into positions which represented education and ability and found themselves "readily accepted into society". Many of them would remain in the district and have happier and more contented lives than they had had on the coast, he predicted.⁶⁰

Shortly after Tanaka's petition and Love's speech on March 7, Premier Johnson introduced a bill granting the vote to the Japanese and the native Indians. Culminating many years of controversy, the decision gained the commendation of the major newspapers as an "honest and forthright action", a major step toward the elimination of all racial discrimination, and a sign of political evolution. It removed difficulties which had become difficult to explain, noted one editorial. "Now it has come, I'm too overcome with joy to find the right words to say," declared Tanaka.⁶¹

Editorials pointed to the changes which had made the advance possible. The *Province* attributed former prejudice to over-concentration and the "purging" of prejudice to the admirable conduct of the relocated Japanese in the interior. The *Daily Times* also stressed the importance of dispersal, which had given the Japanese-Canadians "a better appreciation of Canadian ways" and had removed the danger of dual loyalties. "The Dominion enfranchised Japanese Canadians a year ago," the *Victoria Colonist* noted, "and British Columbians could hardly fail to follow suit." The widening of the franchise marked "the end of a long and uphill struggle for the cause of civil liberty", the *CCF News* observed. Its editorial gave first credit to the Japanese-Canadians, whose hard work, dignity, and self-control during the past difficult years had won the admiration of many Canadians. In addition, it claimed a victory for the CCF, which had fought unflinchingly for equality throughout the years.⁶²

Introduced by the government and supported by the CCF, the amendments to the Provincial Elections Act faced no opposition in the legislature. Outside the assembly, the only anti-Japanese voices came from the

⁶⁰ *Victoria Colonist*, 8 March 1949; *Vancouver Province*, 7 March 1949; *Victoria Daily Times*, 8 March 1949; *New Westminster British Columbian*, 8 March 1949.

⁶¹ *Vancouver Province*, 8 March 1949; *New Westminster British Columbian*, 8 March 1949; *Victoria Colonist*, 8 March 1949; *Victoria Daily Times*, 8 March 1949; *CCF News*, 9 March 1949.

⁶² *Victoria Colonist*, 9 March, 23 March 1949; *Vancouver Province*, 9 March 1949; *Victoria Daily Times*, 8 March 1949; *CCF News*, 9 March 1949.

Native Brotherhood, a group of native Indians who feared renewed Japanese competition in the fishing industry, from other fishermen's spokesmen, and from the Maple Ridge Board of Trade. The Fort Langley and District Board of Trade refused to emulate its neighbour, one member declaring that "there are bigger and better things to do than stir up race hatred". On 24 March 1949, the enfranchisement of Japanese-Canadians in B.C. elections gained royal assent and became law.⁶³

The spring of 1949 also saw the demise of other legal restrictions on Oriental Canadians. Disabilities which had been based on exclusion from the provincial franchise — including exclusion from public office and the practice of law — came to an end. In accord with resolutions by the Union of B.C. Municipalities and the Vancouver City Council, the 1949 session of the legislature removed the disqualifications of Chinese and Japanese from the Municipal Elections Act. On 1 April 1949, Canadians of Japanese ancestry regained the freedom to travel, reside, and work in the coastal area. In the histories of both Chinese and Japanese in B.C., the removal of legal discriminations in the 1940s marked the beginning of a new era.⁶⁴

The progress of Canadians of Chinese and Japanese ancestry from 1935 to 1949 invites a general consideration of the variables affecting the relationship of these racial minorities to the wider community, of the evolution and salience of the concepts of democracy and citizenship, and finally of the institutional mechanisms in Canada which facilitated and hindered the path to enfranchisement.

Already differentiated before the outbreak of war in the Far East in

⁶³ Norris, p. 229; Harold Winch, personal letter to author, 4 February 1975; *Vancouver Province*, 8 March, 16 March, 23 March, 24 March 1949; *Victoria Colonist*, 24 March 1949; *Victoria Daily Times*, 24 March 1949; *Peace River Block News*, 31 March 1949; B.C. Legislative Assembly *Journals*, 1949, p. 119; *Statutes of British Columbia*, 1949; Angus, "Correspondence, May 1949", *Pacific Affairs* 22 (September 1949), pp. 276-277.

⁶⁴ Municipal vote: *Vancouver Province*, 9 September 1948, 12 January, 23 March 1949; *Victoria Colonist*, 23 March 1949; *Saturday Night*, 25 September 1948; *Vancouver Province*, 17 January 1949; *CCF News*, 19 January 1949; Norris, p. 229; Orders-in-council, return to B.C.: Canada, Department of Labour, *Labour Gazette*, XLIX (May 1949), p. 531; *Victoria Daily Times*, 16 March, 1 April 1949; *Vancouver Province*, 16 March, 1 April 1949; *Victoria Colonist*, 1 April 1949. New era: Norris, pp. 209, 217-219; Rev. Andrew Lam, personal letter to author, 2 March 1975; Canada, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Canadian Citizenship Branch, *Notes on the Canadian Family Tree* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1960), pp. 10-17, 82-83; F. Q. Quo, "Ethnic Origin and Political Attitudes: The Case of Orientals", *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 3 (December 1971), pp. 119-138.

1937, the Chinese and Japanese in Canada were even more strongly distinguished during the 1940s. Identified with an allied nation widely admired by Canadians for bravery and steadfastness, the Chinese slowly improved their position and gained respect by their wartime contributions and achievements. On the other hand, the Japanese-Canadians, already disliked for their economic aggressiveness and threatening because of their birth rate, became the focus for intensified hostility. B.C. pressure forced a mass evacuation, urged postwar deportation, and discouraged any return to the coast. Ironically, this extreme antipathy made possible the conditions for its own abatement. By the late 1940s, no longer threatened by masses of Japanese-Canadians, British Columbians were willing to protest against certain economic discriminations and to grant them the vote. Thus the Japanese, by a far more difficult route, arrived at the same end as the Chinese — enfranchisement and the removal of restrictions — only two years later.

The sociological problems of inter-racial relations intersected with the political question of defining and applying Canadian ideals. Because of her position within the British Empire, Canada had no distinct status of citizenship until after the Second World War. Unlike the United States, Canada had no written guarantees of equal rights to stand as a measure of action. In this fluid situation, citizenship rights — including the franchise — were extended differently to various groups. Military service, a generally accepted qualification for the franchise, overrode racial disabilities. However, the determination of who would be permitted to serve was itself affected by racial considerations.

Challenging this piecemeal treatment, liberals and civil liberties organizations pressed for a uniform definition of the rights and duties of citizenship. At first they made slow progress against the status quo — the disfranchisement of Orientals — reinforced as it was by traditional prejudices. The Second World War, fought against nations which committed atrocities in the name of racial inequality, furnished strong ammunition for those who demanded respect for a single legal concept of Canadian nationality. The ideals of the U.N. and the principles underlying the Canadian Citizenship Act of 1946 turned back the threat to deport a helpless minority and strengthened efforts to repeal existing political discriminations. The ideal of eliminating second-class citizenship came closer to fruition as the Oriental soldiers of the Second World War, the Chinese and the East Indians, the wives of Oriental soldiers, and finally the Japanese were successively enfranchised.

These changing concepts and attitudes were shaped by the institutional

framework in which they found expression: the Canadian federal structure and the parliamentary system. B.C. and the dominion government both formed policies and programs which affected Chinese- and Japanese-Canadians. The crucial areas of immigration, military service and war-time relocation fell within the national domain and produced intensive efforts by B.C. politicians to determine the direction of Ottawa's policy. They claimed that B.C. had developed a special understanding of the "Oriental problem". Prime Minister Mackenzie King's government listened to B.C. spokesmen and calculated the electoral effect of decisions concerning Orientals, but moderated the more extreme demands and used more temperate rhetoric.

Victoria and Ottawa each had the authority to define their respective electorates, but the linkage clause of the Dominion Elections Act gave B.C. the power to exclude Chinese- and Japanese-Canadians from voting in dominion as well as provincial elections. Its gradual extensions of the provincial suffrage in 1945, 1947 and 1948 simultaneously extended it on the federal level. In 1948, the dominion parliament seized the initiative in granting its own franchise to the Japanese-Canadians; this move was an important force behind B.C.'s concession the following year.

In both B.C. legislature and dominion parliament, the CCF consistently championed the extension of rights to the Chinese- and Japanese-Canadians. In B.C., the leftist party undoubtedly lost votes because of its position on the "Oriental question". Inflaming anti-Oriental sentiment against the CCF was standard fare in election campaigns, most notably those of 1935 and 1945. CCF effectiveness in B.C. in improving the lot of the Orientals is difficult to assess. Never powerful enough to carry any measures on its own, the CCF insisted that its continued fight awakened the consciences of the old-line parties. In the end the Liberal-Conservative coalition did co-opt the CCF position by enfranchising the Chinese and Japanese. However, in the long years between 1935 and 1947, CCF advocacy of Oriental rights may simply have served to intensify the anti-Oriental rhetoric of the other side. On the national level, the CCF position played a definite role in shaping government decisions. Again, the party lacked numerical strength. However, it served as a counterweight to vocal and extreme B.C. demands, especially in the fight over treatment of the Japanese-Canadians during and after the Second World War.

Allied with the CCF in the fight for civil liberties and fundamental rights was an active coalition of concerned citizens, led by the liberal press, religious leaders, and community organizations. They sought to influence decisions by the Cabinet and the House of Commons by mobil-

izing public opinion. For the most part, their achievements were negative rather than positive. Unable to achieve gains for the Japanese-Canadians, in 1944 and 1946 they forced retreats by those who wished to deprive them of further rights.

Ultimately, the divergent but interrelated stories of the Chinese and Japanese in B.C. focus on the dominant white group and its changing attitudes. A politically powerless minority, the Orientals depended upon the mediation of other groups to secure new rights or to prevent the violation of old ones. Therefore, decisions on whether and to what extent to grant the vote to the Orientals proved to be an accurate reflection of their status in public opinion.