PLANNED TO SHANGHAI HINDUS ABOARD EMPRESS

Mr. Stevens Suggested Quick Method of Getting Rid of New Arrivals, by Shipping Them All Away for Japan This Morning.

BUT GOVERNMENT DECLINED TO PUT O. K. ON SCHEME

Premier Borden's Vigorous Denial that Hindus Will Land—Hearing of "Test Case" Is Now Going On.

Ottawa, June 25 (2 p.m.)—"The story is absolutely unfounded and wholly contrary to the facts. The provisions of the law in regard to the Hindus will be strictly enforced."

This statement was made by Premier Borden this afternoon in regard to the despatch sent to the Liberal press that the government had decided to allow the Hindus to land. The story, which was evidently sent out with a view to encouraging the Hindus and so cause trouble for the government, caused great excitement at the Coast and the wires were kept hot last night asking in regard to the truth of the story. It was plainly intimated that if the Hindus landed there would be riots. The government from the first took the stand that the law must be strictly enforced. These were the instructions which were sent to the immigration officials at the Coast, and which they have been endeavoring to carry out.

It is understood the mandamus proceedings have been dropped and the immigration enquiry board will proceed with its investigation. It is expected that decisions will be given at once. If the Hindus are ordered deported it is possible the boat may be towed out beyond the three-mile limit. The case may get before the courts despite the efforts of the government, however, but even if it does, it is understood that [illegible]

Ottawa, June 25.—The Hindu situation in Vancouver is continuing to give the government much worry. Yesterday a statement appeared in Liberal papers here and in other Canadian cities to the effect that owing to pressure from the Imperial Government the Hindus now aboard the Komagata Maru in Vancouver harbor were to be allowed to land. An official denial of this intention of the government was given last evening by Hon. Martin Burrell and also by Mr. Blount, secretary to the Premier. Sir Robert Borden was out of the city yesterday.

The late evening was not without its developments. Mr. H. H. Stevens, M.P., has been keeping the wires to Ottawa quite hot during the last few days and yesterday was no exception to the rule. He sent a proposal which had been apparently agreed upon between himself and Mr. Reid, the superintendent for the immigration service in Vancouver, to ship the entire party away by the Empress liner which was to leave Vancouver today. The proposition was virtually to shanghai the 350 odd men now aboard the Komagata Maru on board the Empress of India and the Japanese vessel could then be allowed to go about her business.

Wanted the Ticket Money.

Mr. Stevens and Mr. Reid apparently had the plan pretty well matured, for it was suggested in telegrams received from them that they would attend to all the details if the government would authorize the expenditure of $18,000 necessary for tickets for the party aboard the Empress. It was not definitely stated just how the Hindus were to be placed on board, but it is understood that the officials planned that the C. P. R. liner should leave her wharf at the usual time of departure and then draw up alongside the Komagata Maru where she lay at anchor. There was to be a large enough force on hand to effect the transfer of the unwilling passengers and by this means it was expected that the Hindus would be well off Cape Flattery on their way home across the Pacific by tonight.

Two Opinions in Vancouver.

This forenoon Premier Borden and officials of the department carefully considered the matter. They had been earlier advised that the lawyers representing the crown and the Hindus had been in conference and had arranged to submit to the courts a test case as to the validity of the regulations. It is quite apparent from the messages received last evening that Mr. Stevens and Mr. Reid, whether they were or were not consulted in the making of this arrangement, are probably not altogether in sympathy with it. This is not considered remarkable in view of Mr. Stevens' rather strong remarks at a mass meeting in Vancouver where he is quoted as having said that resort to the courts would not be so objectionable if the courts could be depended on to give a fair decision.

No official intimation of the instructions sent to Vancouver was announced. It was learned, however, that Mr. Stevens' plan was not adopted and the government will not seek to detain the Empress to carry away the much-discussed immigrants.

That "Test" Enquiry.

In Vancouver today the Hindu situation has undergone very little change since the announcement made in The Province yesterday that counsel for both sides had agreed to hold a test case. The Empress left shortly before noon today and she did not stop to take aboard any Hindus.

It is stated that Mr. J. E. Bird, counsel for the Hindus, and Mr. Ladner, for the government, held a conference yesterday afternoon with a view to selecting perhaps three likely candidates from the Komagata Maru for the pleasant job of being the "test case." It was partly arranged that the board should convene this morning at immigration headquarters. The programme was that the test case should be disposed of this morning, and tomorrow the habeas corpus application would come before the Supreme Court. Then the appeal could be taken to the highest court in British Columbia at Victoria for a decision next week.

"What time is the board going to convene for the test case?" asked The Province this morning over the phone to Mr. Reid.

"Oh, the one the lawyers are talking about?" asked Mr. Reid innocently, in reply.

"Yes."

"Well, there is some talk of one at 11 o'clock," said Mr. Reid.

At noon Mr. Reid was asked again on the phone about the board of enquiry.

"We may go on with it right away," he replied.

It was learned later that one "test" case was proceeded with at 12:30 o'clock. At 1 the enquiry adjourned until 2:30 this afternoon, when further testimony would be submitted. If a decision is announced tonight the habeas corpus proceedings will probably come tomorrow before the court Friday morning.

Denial Sent Mr. Stevens.

The following telegram was received this morning by Mr. Stevens from Sir Robert Borden:

"Your telegram of yesterday reached me on my return to Ottawa this morning. The statements in the despatch which you quote are absolutely unfounded and wholly contrary to the facts. The provisions of the law will be strictly enforced."

Mr. Stevens called the attention of The Province to the fact that the "test case," so called was not really a test case in the popular meaning of the term. He said that one case was now being heard, but that it had been specifically agreed between counsel on both sides that it was not to be binding on any of the other 354 cases still remaining.

"This case will have no bearing on the others at all in that all the others can be fought out on their own basis," said Mr. Stevens. "No decision in this case, for instance, can be used to prevent the officials from holding an inquiry into each separate case and to consider the individual evidence in each case."

Hindus Short of Water.

The Hindus aboard the Komagata Maru are short of water. This morning the leader, Gurdit Singh, sent a request ashore to Mr. C. Gardner Johnson for one hundred tons of water. Mr. Johnson replied that as soon as Gurdit or his friends put up one hundred dollars the water would be dispatched. If the money is not forthcoming the Hindus will get no water, as far as the agent is concerned.

This development gives an idea of the complications which the presence of the Hindus is causing. The charter party distinctly provides that the charterer Gurdit Singh, must provide the passengers with the necessaries of life and the Japanese owners of the Komagata Maru, who are represented here by C. Gardner Johnson, are absolutely absolved from any responsibility in this respect.

The owners of the steamer have already been put to great inconvenience and expense by the delay of the vessel here and they care nothing if the Hindus starve or die of thirst because they only chartered the ship to Gurdit Singh. If he does not care to feed his countrymen that is his lookout.

Up to Rahim.

The Hindus ashore, headed by Rahim Singh, have taken over the charter and, with it, the responsibility of feeding the men out in the stream. The ship is now covered for redelivery at Hongkong six months from March 27 and, strictly speaking, Rahim Singh, who took over the charter, is now the man who must supply the men on the Komagata Maru with food and water.

Mr. C. Gardner Johnson sent off a long letter to the owners by the Empress of India this morning and expects a cabled answer on July 11, when the liner will arrive at Kobe.

It is now quite evident that the question of feeding the Hindus will have to be met. It is stated that the Vancouver Hindus are getting a bit tired of puting up the grub-stake for the men held on the steamer and if the cases are to be traversed through the various courts as far as the Privy Council a very nice tangle will result. It is not up to the owners of the steamer to feed them. That is clearly set out in the charter party.

While the various negotiations have been proceeding this week, Inspector Hopkinson, of Mr. Reid's staff, has been quietly engaged in making the preliminary examinations of a large number of men aboard the ship. It is stated unofficially that he has examined more than one hundred and of all these eighty per cent. are practically penniless. Some say they have deposits to their credit with Gurdit Singh but he has refused to admit that they have anything and if they have he will not give it up. Some of the men have a dollar or two with them, but four out of every five are alleged to be probable candidates for public charity if they should happen to land.