

REPORT OF THE DELEGATES OF THE KHALSA DIWAN SOCIETY

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Before submitting our report, allow us to express our gratitude for electing us to make representation on behalf of the Community on matters concerning immigration problems. We appreciate and are deeply grateful for the confidence which you have shown in us in entrusting this extremely important matter in our hands.

However, we would like to make some observations with regard to the shortcomings and obvious limitations on our mission even before we proceeded to Ottawa. The hasty decision of sending this delegation to Ottawa did not accord us much opportunity to thoroughly prepare our case for presentation to the Canadian Government. Consequently, certain organizational work was left undone. By the time we arrived at Ottawa, the Session was in its last stages and some of the Members of Parliament had gone home, while others were preparing to leave. However, with the generous co-operation of Mr. James Sinclair, Mr. Arthur Laing and Mr. Howard Green, we managed to see a number of Members of Parliament, including:

Hon. Walter Harris, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.
Hon. R. Mayhew, Minister of Fisheries.
Hon. James Sinclair, Special Assistant to the Finance Minister, Mr. Abbott.
Hon. Jack Gibson, an independent Liberal Member of Parliament.
Hon. Arthur Laing.
Hon. George Cruickshank.
Hon. Applewaite (Prince George).
Hon. George Drew, Leader of the Conservative Party.
Hon. Howard Green, (Vancouver).
Hon. David Fulton, (Kamloops).
Hon. John Diefenbaker.
Hon. M.J. Coldwell, Leader of the C.C.F. Party.
Hon. Jones.
Hon. Solon Low, Leader of the Social Credit Party, and a number of

other Members of Parliament from different parts of the country.

We formally presented and discussed our briefs to all the above-mentioned Members of the House; generally speaking they were all very sympathetic and realized the importance of solving our problem but, nevertheless, some Members raised certain questions in discussing the brief. They stated that they do not see Canada opening her gates to Asiatic immigration in any foreseeable future. Some wanted to find out if our request was granted, then, what would be the total number of immigrants from India? They also expressed their deep concern with regard to the assimilation question. The past record, of small minority groups, demonstrates the tendency to settle in their own small colonies.

Further, to remove the barrier on Asiatic Immigration from the statute books, would mean a large influx of Japanese and Chinese immigration, since the Canadian Citizenship Act also permits Japanese and Chinese to become Canadian citizens.

The unpleasant wartime experience when the Government had to remove the entire Japanese population from the West Coast to the interior of the country is still remembered, and since the East Indians are mainly concentrated in British Columbia, this raises certain doubts whether or not the East Indian community will ever desire to settle in other parts of this great country.

These objections were raised insofar as our arguments to become first-class citizens were concerned. But when we pointed out the fact that our country of birth is a member of the Commonwealth Nations, and Canadian citizens from other commonwealth countries have certain concessions, we, therefore, also deserve those concessions. To this, the reaction of the Conservative Members was remarkable, and they agreed that there could be no

such discrimination among the British Commonwealth of Nations, and that we should be granted the same rights and privileges as any other citizen from Commonwealth Countries. The Hon. George Drew stated that he was willing to support us on any question pertaining to immigration problems.

We further pointed out that under the present Immigration Act, an East Indian employer could recommend a relative of Canadian citizen from any of the European countries, and on the basis of that recommendation the immigrant could be permitted to land here, but he cannot recommend his own kith and kin from India because of the restrictions that are imposed under this Act.

As far as the assimilation problem is concerned, to remain in isolation is not an odd thing to the East Indian Community alone. The same is true of other communities who have settled in Canada in the early days, yet the fact remains that the younger generation is adapting itself to the conditions of this country very fast and are taking an active part in the Canadian community life. This argument was supported by numerous excellent examples. We contended that the continuation of such restrictions and discrimination does not help us to be assimilated. On the contrary, it tends to keep us isolated from the rest of the Canadian communities.

We made it perfectly clear that we had no intention of requesting the authorities to open their gates to Asiatic immigration. What we are interested in, is that we should be allowed to bring our blood relatives as any other citizen of Canada from the Commonwealth countries, provided the immigrant meets the Immigration Regulations and requirements, such as medical tests, and so on.

More specifically, we asked the Members that Provisions 4 and 6

of P.C. 2743 should also apply to India, a member of the Commonwealth of Nations. This amendment to P.C. 2743 if passed by the House of Commons would mean that the following class of persons would be eligible to enter Canada in addition to the number allowed under the Quota arrangement between the Governments of India and Canada:

- (1) The husband or wife; the son; daughter; brother or sister, together with husband or wife and unmarried children; the father or mother; the orphan nephew or niece under 21 years of age; of any person legally resident in Canada who is in a position to receive and care for such relatives. The term "orphan" referred to in this section means a child bereaved of both parents.
- (2) A person entering Canada to marry a legal resident thereof; provided the prospective husband is able to maintain his intended wife.

To this proposed amendment the Honourable George Drew, Howard Green and Dave Fulton agreed to give their full support, stating that such measures would strengthen the bond between the Commonwealth of Nations and develop friendship between the peoples of India and Canada at this critical time. The Leader of the C.C.F. Party, the Hon. M.J. Coldwell reiterated that his Party has always stood against racial discrimination in any shape or form and he would give us his full support when this question is raised in the House. The Hon. Selon Low, Leader of the Social Credit Party stated that "I have never approved of racial discrimination of any kind and I do not see why we should close the door of this country to your blood relatives".

Originally, we did not anticipate that this matter would be discussed in the House of Commons, but the spontaneous response to our appeal from all parties brought it up on the floor. The complete text of this debate in the House of Commons is attached hereto.

In order to remove confusion and misunderstandings as to the number and method of selecting the applications submitted under the Quota, we raised the question with the Minister of Immigration and Citizenship, and he explained that his Department is supposed to handle such applications in strict chronological order, but at the same time taking into consideration the degree of relationship between the applicant and the proposed immigrant and that the settlement arrangement was also an important consideration. To be more explicit, the application of a brother would have priority over the application of a nephew; moreover, passionate cases were to be given priority also.

When we pointed out that in actual practice this policy is not being adhered to by the Department, the Minister asked us to furnish the names and relationships of the applications which had been submitted, but so far not attended to and assured us that upon receipt of such information he would investigate.

The Minister then arranged for us to see the Immigration Officer-in-Charge in order to obtain further clarification on this point. The Immigration Officer-in-Charge also insisted that if in our opinion the announced policy of the department is not being carried out, we should substantiate with fact and the department would endeavour to rectify this situation.

On June 26th, we contacted the Secretary of the Khalsa Diwan Society of Vancouver, and asked him to send us, as many as possible, the names of applicants, approximate date of application submitted, and the relationship of the proposed immigrant.

On June 28th, the Secretary, after having held two meetings, advised us of their decision that they were unable to comply with this request, and instructed us not to interfere with the departmental affairs, and let them carry on in the manner they saw fit, our main job being to fight for the entry of our relatives.

On June 30th, the President of Khalsa Diwan Society, Mr. Grawal, advised us that they were in a position to forward us the required information and that it would take at least three or four days. In the meantime, we had already explained to the Department that the required facts were not forthcoming.

We could have submitted some cases as evidence where the department had not dealt with the applications in chronological order. Had we done this, the department might have reviewed and approved these cases on their merits; nevertheless, we would have been open to criticism for taking up individual cases. Since we are the representatives of the whole community, we decided not to press the matter further.

The Minister of Immigration also stated that the Quota of 150 people per year was over and above the existing considerations. The same belief was expressed by the Hon. Robert Mayhew, Minister of Fisheries. This, in fact, means that the application of a prospective wife or husband would be considered outside of the Quota; but the Immigration Department insisted that such applications are included in the Quota, a concession which had been granted before the Quota came into being.

Upon discussing this matter further with the Minister, he agreed to investigate it, and advise us accordingly. The High Commissioner for India in Canada, Hon. Skesena, was also of the opinion that the applications of intended husband and wife were to be dealt with out of the Quota.

and assured us that he would take this matter up with the proper authorities.

In conclusion, we feel that our trip to Ottawa was not in vain. We are of the opinion that we are well on our way to achieve our goal in the near future provided we make a concerted effort to press forward this matter in an organized way. We recommend that a strong representation be made to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association which meets at Ottawa on September 7th, 1952. Secondly, we again present our case before the Parliament in the forthcoming session. Finally, the success of our undertaking mainly depends upon our united efforts. Therefore, we strongly appeal to each individual East Indian in British Columbia for his fullest co-operation.

This report is respectfully submitted by the undersigned:

Kuldeep Singh.

R. Mattu.

Vancouver, B.C.

July 13, 1952.