

Oriental Immigration Commission
July 11, 1908

INTRODUCTORY.

Proceedings of Commission—Witnesses examined—Province of British Columbia and City of Vancouver represented by Counsel—Asiatic Exclusion League also represented—Searching nature of inquiry—Extent of evidence—Main divisions of report—Statistical table setting forth, by nationalities, extent of immigration of Orientals.

THE notification of my appointment as commissioner was received by wire at Vancouver on the fifth day of November, at which date I was engaged under Royal Commission in an inquiry into the losses and damages sustained by the Japanese population resident in Vancouver on the occasion of the anti-Asiatic riots during the month of September. The hearing of evidence in connection with that inquiry having been completed on the day of receipt of this notification, the remainder of the week was occupied in assessing the damages under the first commission, and on Monday, the eleventh of November, I entered upon the duties of the present commission. From that date sittings of the commission were held continuously until Saturday, the thirteenth of November, during which time one hundred and one witnesses in all were examined, including twenty-seven Japanese, fifteen Hindus, thirty-five Chinese, and twenty-four other persons. Sessions were conducted in both the cities of Vancouver and Victoria. Besides the sittings held in the regular places of meeting, witnesses were also examined at the detention shed, Vancouver, the freight shed at Victoria, and on board the steamships *Princess Victoria* and *Kumeric*. A number of the immigrants on the latter ship were examined on their arrival from the Orient, and before communication had been held by them with any persons on this side.

Personal visits were also paid to the offices of the Nippon Supply Company and the several employment agencies in the city of Vancouver; and interviews had with a large number of persons representing various interests and different points of view. By means of this personal investigation, the commission obtained a mass of valuable documentary evidence which otherwise would not have been disclosed. The fact that many of the documents had to be translated and were required for immediate use in the examination of witnesses and that the services of interpreters were necessary, rendered the duties more onerous than they otherwise would have been, and occasioned, in order that the inquiry might be prosecuted with every diligence, the carrying on of the work of the commission at night as well as by day. In this connection, I desire to record my appreciation of the splendid assistance rendered by Mr. F. W. Giddens, the secretary of the commission, but for whose faithful and efficient service the inquiry would have been materially prolonged.

Mr. Charles W. Wilson, K.C., ex-Attorney General of the province of British Columbia, appeared before the Commission on behalf of the government of that province, and Mr. George R. Cowan, city solicitor, appeared on behalf of the city of Vancouver.

Mr. Harry Cowan was appointed by the Asiatic Exclusion League of Vancouver to appear before the commission on behalf of the League. Mr. Cowan was present at all the sittings of the commission and assisted counsel, but did not take part in the examination of witnesses.

The direct examination of the witnesses was conducted by the Commissioner, the witnesses being also examined by counsel for the government of British Columbia and counsel for the city of Vancouver, who were accorded the right of questioning all witnesses and of having any persons called whom they desired to have appear before the commission.

I made it plain at the outset of the inquiry that it was my desire to make the investigation as thorough and searching as possible, and that to this end I would welcome suggestions and assistance from any source. The presence of able counsel on behalf of the province of British Columbia and the municipality of Vancouver warrants me in asserting that no phase of the subject, which, by reason of local conditions or other considerations may have been of special significance to either the province or the city, failed of due publicity.

It is quite true that the nature of the inquiry being what it was, there might have been a seeming justification in increasing considerably the number of witnesses and somewhat prolonging the investigation. As it is, the extended evidence covers over eight hundred typewritten foolscap pages, exclusive of exhibits. Counsel for the province of British Columbia agreed on the last day of the inquiry that the calling of additional witnesses was unnecessary. I am convinced that such further evidence as might have been obtained would have served only to corroborate the facts as disclosed, and that, having regard for economy of time and money, an important consideration in the discharge of public business, the calling of additional witnesses would not have been justified.

The subject of inquiry being the methods by which Oriental labourers have been induced to come to Canada during the past year, it may further an understanding of the problem if this report is divided into three parts dealing respectively with the immigration from Japan, India, and China, and if the detailed analysis of the causes which have brought about this immigration is preceded by a statement setting forth the extent of the immigration from the beginning of the year up to the beginning of the month in which the commission was issued. The following table, based upon the evidence given before the commission by Dr. Munro, medical inspector and immigration agent at Vancouver; Dr. G. L. Milne, medical inspector and immigration agent at Victoria; Mr. Roff, assistant to Dr. Milne at Victoria, and statistics furnished by courtesy of the officials of the Interior Department at Ottawa, will afford this information in the most concise and convenient form.

TABLE showing arrivals of Orientals at Canadian Ports on the Pacific Coast during ten months ending October 31, 1907.

Month.	JAPANESE.		CHINESE.		HINDUS.		TOTAL BY PORTS OF ARRIVAL.		Grand Total by Months.
	Van-couver.	Vic-toria.	Van-couver.	Vic-toria.	Van-couver.	Vic-toria.	Van-couver.	Vic-toria.	
January	2	273	4	2	0	21	6	296	302
February	57	277	15	5	11	0	83	282	365
March	136	239	15	0	44	6	195	245	440
April	447	310	52	38	47	51	546	399	945
May	154	525	61	51	84	6	299	582	881
June	43	784	794	44	102	6	239	834	1,073
July	1,483	841	102	65	37	17	1,622	923	2,545
August	308	386	119	72	145	15	572	473	1,045
September	327	981	104	59	901	0	1,332	1,040	2,372
October	4	548	218	146	517	39	739	733	1,472
Total by ports of arrival.	2,961	5,164	784	482	1,888	161	5,633	5,807	11,440
Total by Nationalities ..	8,125		1,266		2,047		11,440		

From the above table it will be seen that during the ten months ending October, 1907, the steamships of the Pacific brought to our shores in all 11,440 Orientals, of whom 8,125 were Japanese, 2,047 Hindus and 1,266 Chinese.* These are the totals. They embrace all who were brought, including such as were not allowed to land, some who were subsequently deported, some who were former residents, and those who came via Canada and gained admission later into the United States. These totals are, of course, greatly in excess of the number of actual immigrants, and should not be confounded with them.

It is the purpose of this report to disclose what number of those who have been permitted to land have remained in Canada, and what were the motives and the methods by which they were induced to come to this country.

*No mention is made in this report of immigrants from the Orient other than such as have landed at ports on the Pacific ocean.

THE IMMIGRATION FROM INDIA.

Beginnings of immigration and number of immigrants—Alleged causes of recent influx—The real causes—Testimony of natives—Advertisements of steamship agencies—Representations concerning Canada—Exorbitant interest charges—Individuuls engaged in promoting immigration—Need for supervision of immigration from India, to prevent injustice and for other reasons.

Of immigration from the Orient, that from India is the most recent. Until the year 1905 immigration from India was practically unknown. Such natives of India as visited Canada prior to that time were not immigrants; they were, for the most part, tourists. The returns of the Immigration Department show that arrivals from India to Canada have been as follows:—

From June 30, 1904, to June 30, 1905..	45
“ June 30, 1905, to June 30, 1906..	587
“ June 30 1906, to March 31, 1907..	2,124
“ March 31, 1907, to March 31, 1908....	2,623
Total..	5,179

Of this number, many were in transit for the United States.

Mr. David E. Brown, general superintendent of the Trans-Pacific Service of the Canadian Pacific Railway, who lived for fourteen years in Hong Kong, and had charge of the company's business in the Orient, when asked before the Commission if he could suggest what had brought the Hindus to Canada in such numbers within the past year, stated in reply that he would say that the movement had had its origin in the visit of the soldiers of the different colonies of the Empire to London, at the time of the Queen's Jubilee; that the Indian troops who had returned home via Canada had been made much of, and were impressed by the country and its opportunities; that Indians were employed very largely as police in Hong Kong, and that it was from among their number that the movement had started in the first instance. Asked what year that would be, Mr. Brown replied 'five or six years ago, possibly three or four, it was about a year after, or two years after the Queen's Jubilee.' When it was pointed out that the Queen's Jubilee was in 1897, Mr. Brown said: 'Well, say five or six years after they would get back home. As satisfactory reports were sent back by these men on this side, others would be induced to come.'

There are some, doubtless, who share Mr. Brown's view, which at least, is an agreeable one, creating, as it does, the impression that immigration from India had its beginnings from a cause essentially imperial and patriotic. On the other hand, the evidence of the Indians who testified before the Commission indicates pretty clearly that the immigration from India which has been a matter of concern to the people of British Columbia, owes its origin to aims and methods which were anything but imperial or patriotic; that, in fact the influx of recent years has not been spon-

taneous, but owes its existence in the main to (1) the activity of certain steamship companies, and agents desirous of selling transportation and profiting by the commissions; (2) the distribution throughout some of the rural districts of India, of literature concerning Canada, and the opportunities of fortune-making in the province of British Columbia; and (3) the representations of a few individuals in the province of British Columbia, among the number a Brahmin named Davichand, and certain of his relatives, who induced a number of the natives of India to come to Canada under actual or verbal agreements to work for hire, the purpose being that of assisting one or two industrial concerns to obtain a class of unskilled labour at a price below the current rate, and at the same time, of exploiting their fellow-subjects to their own advantage. Some of the natives may have emigrated to Canada of their own accord or because of the advice or desire of relatives who had come to this country, but had the influences here mentioned not been exerted, it is certain that their numbers would not have been appreciable.

The following admissions made by Mr. Brown during the course of his testimony, throw some light on the part played by the steamship agents in inducing this emigration. Mr. Brown stated that the Canadian Pacific Railway Company had on several occasions been obliged to notify agents in India to stop booking further passengers from Calcutta, as the company had not accommodation for them on its ships from Hong-Kong to Canada; also that as the result of what had been said to him by the Governor of Hong-Kong, concerning the number of Indians to whom tickets were being sold in Calcutta for passage to Canada, the company had issued instructions to its agents not to do anything in the way of inducing these people to come to Canada.

'Q. When you issued that regulation, did you think they might be using methods to induce emigration?—A. Well, of course, I thought they might; I did not know them as I would our own salaried men, and I wanted to safeguard our position.

'Q. They might have adopted methods for the purpose of selling tickets and getting commissions?—A. It might be.

* * * * *

'Q. Receiving commission on tickets, these agents would have every reason to sell as many tickets as they could?—A. Naturally.

'Q. And they would use such methods as they thought best to secure emigrants?—A. Well, I don't know what they would do; I know that so far as the traffic by us goes, we had other interests to take care of, and this is a new movement which surprises us as much as anybody.

'Q. And they filled you up to the limit?—A. At times, yes. Sometimes we had to hold—at least, they would get in a little bit late, or some could not be accommodated, and they would have to be held over in Hong-Kong, but they seemed so anxious to get to this country that they did not seem deterred; they would wait in Hong-Kong and pay their own expenses.'

A glance at the testimony of the several witnesses who appeared before the Commission, and who were selected without any prior knowledge of their circumstances or condition from among several hundred immigrants newly arrived during the fall of last year, will give a fair idea of the causes of the immigration and the methods at work.

Witness No. 1 was a man sixty-six years of age, decrepit, and deaf in one ear. He had heard of Canada through some man in this country, as a place where money could be easily made, and having learned that others were coming out for the same

purpose had mortgaged his land for a loan of 200 rupees to pay his passage, and was paying to the usurer fifteen per cent on the money borrowed. He had been a farmer residing in the district of Hushiapore. He had no intention of remaining in Canada, and had come for the sake of making money, which he understood could be easily earned. Having seen conditions in Canada he was glad to go back.

Witness No. 2 had also come with the hopes of making money. He had been advised to come by a man residing in Port Moody, in British Columbia, who had written him saying there was plenty of money and plenty of work, and had promised to secure him work. It had cost him 280 rupees to come here, and to raise this amount he had sold horses, cows and other possessions.

Witness No. 3 exhibited an advertisement of a steamship company, which he translated as follows:—

‘Men who are coming to Vancouver.

‘Those who wish to go to Vancouver, they can get their tickets from Jardine, Matheson & Co., Calcutta to Hong-Kong, R.M.S. No. 8, Calcutta.

‘When you get off first at Vancouver, you will be examined by the doctor, and have to pass the Canadian doctor’s examination when you arrive at Vancouver. If you are sick, or are suffering from any ailment, you will not be allowed to land, and will be sent back to your country. To prevent this trouble or inconvenience the company have so arranged that all those who are coming, or wish to buy tickets in Calcutta, when they get their tickets, they will be examined by a doctor without expense. The doctor will have a look at you, and if the doctor in Calcutta should forbid anybody going, his ticket money will be returned in full. When the men have made the arrangements for Hong-Kong they will have to make arrangements there for their catering and food. Every person who lands in Vancouver must have not less than \$10, equivalent of 50 rupees, and he will have to satisfy the inspector that he is not a beggar. The price of the ticket is this: From Calcutta to Hong-Kong, outside of feeding expenses, 45 rupees, 156 rupees from Hong-Kong to Vancouver. Agent of R.M.S., Calcutta, 15th of April, 1907.’

The witness stated that a large number of circulars had been distributed in his district, as well as small notices, that they had been posted up in villages on the walls, and at the police station. He had been induced to come to Canada through reading these notices, along with the information he had received from others, and accounts in the papers in India about British Columbia.

The following is a translation of a similar poster brought by one of the immigrants from India, and at present filed with the documents pertaining to the Commission.

‘Emigration to Vancouver.

‘Men wishing to proceed to Vancouver. Those who wish to proceed to Vancouver can purchase their tickets at the office of Messrs. Gillander, Arbuthnot & Company, agents for the Canadian Pacific Railway and R.M.S. No. 8, Clive St., Calcutta.

‘On arrival at Vancouver, a medical examination will have to be passed, and those who are weak and in any way ailing will not be allowed to land, but be sent back to Hindustan.

‘To prevent the returning of any man from Vancouver, Gillander, Arbuthnot & Co. will have the men examined before embarkation.

‘If the medical officer should fail any intending emigrant who has paid his fare, the amount paid will be refunded him.

‘Those passed by the medical officer will have to make their own arrangements during the voyage across.

‘Those proceeding to Vancouver must have on their person the sum of money to the value of Rs. 50 (Rupees 50).

'The undermentioned are the fares to Vancouver:—

- (a) Calcutta to Hong-Kong with food, Rs. 45.
- (b) Calcutta to Hong-Kong without food, Rs. 35.
- (c) Hong-Kong to Vancouver with food, Rs. 156.

GILLANDER, ARBUTHNOT & Co.,
Agents Canadian Pacific Railway and R.M.S.

'Dated 15th April, 1907.'

Witness No. 4 was from the District of Ferozepore. He had received letters from fellow-countrymen in Canada, among them a brother who had been induced to come to Canada by a letter from Davichand. Davichand, he said, had sent tickets from Vancouver to India. He thought that about 45 persons had come on information sent them by Davichand. He had in his possession an aluminum token, bearing the words, 'Frank Narsey, Millside, B.C., It was there that his brother worked. (It might be mentioned that the foreman at the Millside mills is one Uday Ram, who is a nephew of Davichand. Uday Ram appears to have control of the employing of men, and they are paid their wages through him.)

Witness No. 4 was from the district of Julinga. His occupation had been that of an agriculturist. His brother, who was working in one of the mills, had written him to come, and had sent a statement of the wages which he was earning. He could not read, but had come to make money.

Witness No. 5 produced a notice which had been given him by a servant of a steamship company in Calcutta, and which was similar to those above set forth. This man said that similar notices had been distributed in his village, and that some of the papers in India contained articles saying there was plenty of money to be made in Vancouver; that Vancouver was a fine country; that men would make from \$1.25 to \$2 a day, whereas in India they would earn only 8 annas a day (anna=3 cents). He thought many persons had read these articles which had appeared at different times in the papers, and had been induced to come through them.

Witness No. 6 was from the district of Gulundra. He was a farmer who owned his own farm, and had come to Canada in consequence of a letter telling him of opportunities in this country.

Witness No. 7 was from the district of Luduhundra. He had a brother working at Port Moody, who had written him to come. Other men from his own village had come, having been encouraged by Davichand. He had sold family jewels to raise the money. Four brothers working in the fields in India would make from 300 to 400 rupees in a year, together (\$100 to \$133).

Witness No. 8 was from Hochipore district. He had been in the cavalry for two years, and had received 31 rupees per month for the first year's services in the army, having to board himself and keep a horse and mule on this amount. It cost 15 rupees to keep the horse and mule; of the remaining 16 he spent 10 for food and drink; sometimes he was able to save a rupee or two a month. A letter received from a friend in Canada had induced him to come.

Witness No. 9 stated that the foreman at one of the mills had promised to give work to those who came, and 200 or 300 men had come from his part of the country. They were all from the Punjab. Davichand had written in the first instance to five or six men in the village and said it was a good country and place to work. It was

Davichand who had promised to secure him work at Millside. Davichand had sent three tickets.

Witness No. 10 was from the district of Julundra, Punjab. He had mortgaged his lands to get money. He was paying twenty per cent interest to a professional money lender for the loan. He could neither read nor write, but had heard of Canada through notices which some of the head men in his village had received and had read aloud. These notices had stated that persons coming to Canada would get \$2 a day. 'That the country was good, the work good and everything good.' He was unable to say where these notices had come from. Some of the notices stated what was the amount of the fare from Calcutta to Hong-Kong and the fare from Hong-Kong to Canada. He had seen these notices both in Calcutta and in his native village. He would not have come had he not been informed of the contents of these papers. No one had written him from Canada. He had simply come as a result of what he had heard. All the men in his party were in the same position, they had come because they heard the country was good. When he left India there were about 300 all buying tickets at the same time. They had been examined by the doctor at Calcutta, some rejected, and they had taken two or three different steamers to Hong-Kong, where they were examined again and others rejected. Those who were accepted had all come to Canada by the one steamer from Hong-Kong. The notices distributed in the village had stated when the ship would sail and where to buy tickets.

Witness No. 11 was from Julundra district, Punjab. He was a farmer, and owned his own fields in India. He brought his son with him, and when starting had 650 rupees. A couple of hundred were his own, he had borrowed about 250 and had sold cattle and other things to raise the balance. He was paying 15 per cent interest on the borrowed money. He had given a note for the amount, and if this note was not paid, his household effects would be sold. If a man were strong he would earn about 6 annas a day in the fields, and if not very strong, about 4. Twelve men had come from his village. They had heard about this country. One or two of them had received letters from friends. All of them had worked in the fields. An uncle here in America had written him about this country.

Witness No. 12 was also from the Julundra district, Punjab. He also was a farmer, who had mortgaged his fields to raise enough money to pay his passage. He was accustomed to pay men who worked for him two rupees a month and food; sometimes he gave them a few clothes. He had heard about Canada at the police station in his village where he had seen the notices. A friend in Canada had also sent him a letter, giving an address at which he could find his friend who had come to this country. The notice at the police station stated that Vancouver was a very good town, and that a man could earn from two to three dollars a day. It stated that tickets were bought in Calcutta. Three men had come from his village. He was married, and had left his wife and children in India.

Witness No. 13 was also from the Julundra district. He was a farmer, who owned his own fields, and had found, on counting up his earnings for six months, that he had been able to save about eight annas a day out of his fields. He had supplemented his savings by selling some cattle to raise sufficient money to come. He had come to Canada because of what he had heard read by the head men of the village from notices which had been sent about this country. It stated that if men were

strong they could get two dollars a day and that was why he came. Forty men had come from his village within the last two years. About ten had come with him.

Witness No. 14 was from Partapara, Phillour district, Punjab. He, too, was a farmer, who owned his own land. He estimated that he would be able to save 4 annas a day if he did not have to buy any cattle or make any other purchases. When he himself hired men he paid them 2 annas a day and food. Persons working for the government got about 4 annas a day. It cost a man about 3 annas a day to board himself. The witness was paying 18 per cent on 300 rupees he had borrowed. Asked how long it would take him to make enough money to pay back the loan and the interest in India, he replied: 'If I go back he will take my land, and I will die. If I do not give him the money he can take my land.' This witness was married and had three children. He had heard from friends who had been in Canada before, about the country. Work had been promised in one of the mills.

The Brahmin, Davichand, to whom reference is made in these statements, having left Canada a short time ago, it was not possible to have him appear before the Commission. His father-in-law and nephew, both employed in the Millside mills, were called as witnesses. The former said that he was from Ferozepore, Punjab. He had been in the country about a year. His son-in-law, Davichand, had written him to come and had sent him a ticket, the money for which he had paid back after securing employment at Millside. It was on the strength of Davichand's letter and ticket that he had come. He had been met at Victoria by Davichand, who had taken him to Millside. Davichand had also sent a ticket to his nephew, Uday Ram. This witness said that he had received \$1.50 a day at the outset, but that the wages had recently been cut down to \$1.25. There were 150 Hindus employed at the mills where he worked, and between 20 and 30 white men.

Uday Ram, nephew of Davichand, stated that he was foreman and interpreter of the Hindus at the Fraser River saw mills. The wages at the mills had been cut down 25 cents because the numbers of Orientals applying for employment were increasing. He had been in the country a little over two years. His uncle, Davichand, who had come to Canada a year before he did, had written him to come. Davichand, he said, was a Brahmin physician and as such exercised a considerable influence over men of the lower caste in India; he had, before coming to Canada, been in Australia for five years. Uday Ram said he owned a store at Millside, and that most of the Hindus bought their food and such supplies as they required from him. It was part of his duty, also, to endorse all cheques given in payment of wages. This, he alleged, was only to prevent the possibility of mistakes, and payment to the wrong person.

It will be apparent from the brief review here given of a part of the evidence, that the immigration from India, and the methods by which it has been carried on, besides occasioning unrest in the province of British Columbia, has resulted in great hardship and injustice to many of the Indians themselves. Apart altogether from the question of whether or not they are suited to this country, it is clear that without some supervision on the part of the authorities which will protect the natives from false representations, it is within the power of a few individuals to create a situation not only prejudicial to the lives and fortunes of hundreds of well-meaning and innocent persons, but of grave concern to the British Empire itself.

CONCLUSION.

The inquiry into the methods by which Oriental labourers have been induced to come to Canada, while it has been concerned first with the immigration from Japan, second, with immigration from China, and third, with immigration from India, has revealed one circumstance of like application to all, and that is the necessity, if movements of this kind are to be properly regulated and controlled, of having in each of the countries of the Orient, a representative of the Dominion, whose duty it would be to keep the Canadian Government informed of matters affecting Canadian interests along other than merely commercial lines. Such representatives should be persons familiar with conditions in Canada, and Canadian affairs, and who might be expected to keep in touch with the official classes of the countries to which they are sent, and advise as to political or other policies of concern to the Dominion. A notification of what was happening in India or Japan, followed by intimations at the proper moment to the parties concerned, as to probable consequences, might have avoided much of the trouble of the past year, which, if it has any significance, bespeaks a growing intimacy in our relations with the East, and the beginning of a class of problems which Canada hitherto has not been obliged to face.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

(Sgd.) W. L. MACKENZIE KING,

Commissioner.

OTTAWA, July 11, 1908.