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Immigration Branch

WCH/DMcN.

Department of the Interior
Canada

153 W.C. Hopkinson to W.W. Coan

Vancouver, B.C. 27th May 1914.

Sir,

Referring to my letter of the 9th April last advising you that of a rumour in this City and Victoria re an Hindu named Behari Lall Verma, whose intention was to bring a large number of Hindus to this Port, I now write to say that a freight steamer, the "Komagata Maru", arrived in Vancouver on Saturday the 23rd instant, with 376 Hindus on board including two women and three children.

From information obtained by me on a visit to this boat, it would appear that she has been chartered by an Hindu named Gurdit Singh, late of Hong Kong, for a sum of \$75,000.00 for a period of four months. The charter is due to expire at this Port on the 11th June next. Of the 376 Hindus on board, about 22 claim to be returning men with Canadian domicile.

Prior to the arrival of this boat at Williams Head Quarantine Station, it was learnt that two East Indians, H. Rahim and Rajah Singh, had proceeded to Port Alberni on Vancouver Island, and there chartered a launch with the purpose of intercepting this vessel en route to Victoria with a view to bringing her into Port Alberni, and thus overcome the regulations regarding P.C. 2642, re Artisans and Labourers prohibited from landing at certain ports of entry in British Columbia. It was also thought that there was a large sum of money in their possession, which they intended to put on board for distribution among the Hindu passengers to make up the necessary amount of money, viz: \$200.00 apiece, to enable them to comply with P.C. 24. Fortunately they were unable to carry out their intentions, and the "Komagata Maru" arrived at the Quarantine Station without having met the chartered launch. To frustrate the intentions of H. Rahim and Rajah Singh, Dominion Immigration Agent Mr. Reid, myself and

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other officers, had gone to Nanaimo with the object of proceeding to Alberni to assist Immigration Officer H.L. Good of Nanaimo, who had been in Alberni for some days watching the situation. While in Nanaimo, Mr. Reid received a telegraphic communication that the vessel had arrived at the Quarantine Station. We, therefore, left in an automobile from Nanaimo at 10-30 p.m., arriving in Victoria at 3-30 a.m. The following day we proceeded to the Quarantine Station; but were unable to board the boat as she had not passed the quarantine regulations, and Dr. Nelson, the quarantine officer, had taken up the question of issuing partique with the Department in Ottawa.

A launch chartered by several Hindus made attempts to get into communication with those on board the "Komagata Maru"; but were unable to do so, and eventually left. It might be of interest to note that Dr. Ernest Hall, the missionary who accompanied the Hindu delegation in December 1911 to Ottawa, was on board this launch, and made every effort to induce the Authorities to allow the occupants of his launch to get in communication with the Hindus on board the "Komagata Mary". His efforts, however, were futile, and he returned with the Hindus to Victoria.

The same evening the "Komagata Maru" received her pratique from the Quarantine Station, and proceeded to Vancouver, where she arrived in the early hours of the following morning. On arrival here, Mr. Reid, myself, accompanied by other Inspectors, visited this boat, and while Dr. Menro, the Dominion Medical Inspector, was conducting a preliminary examination, I had an opportunity of making some investigations on board. From what I have been able to ascertain, it appears that Gurdit Singh is responsible for the bringing of these people to Canada. This man informed me personally, that he is here in direct contravention of the Provisions of the Immigration

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Act. That before he chartered this boat and left Hong Kong, he knew fully well that all Asiatic Immigrants, which includes Hindus, had to come direct from the land of their birth or citizenship by continuous journey and by a ticket purchased in that country or prepaid in Canada. Also that each man had to have in his possession a sum of \$200.00, and that the recent Orders-in-Council prohibited the landing of artisans, and labourers in the Province of British Columbia, had been extended to 30th September 1914.

Notwithstanding his knowledge of these regulations, he states he has come in opposition to them, in order to force the hands of the Canadian Government, and compel them to declare openly their policy on Hindu Immigration to this Country. He claims that the present regulations are a subterfuge, and if the Canadian Government compel them to return to Hong Kong, they would precipitate trouble in India.

With the exception of the 20 or 22 returning men, none of the others comply with the regulations.

As soon as the medical examination is finished, the civil examination will be conducted, with a view to testing their qualifications re their admission to this country.

Behari Lall Verma is not on board this boat, and from what I have heard, it appears he is making arrangements to take a horde of Hindus to one of our Atlantic ports, and to this end, has made enquiries of several of the steamship companies in Hong Kong.

I will advise you of further developments in this connection.

Yours obediently,
W. C. HOPKINSON

W.W.Cory Esq., C.M.G.

Deputy Minister of the Interior,

Ottawa.