



Office of
The Deputy Minister of the Interior

17185

LMB.

Ottawa 8th April, 1914.

Dear Mr. Borden,

My Minister has asked me to write you fully in reply to your letter of the 7th instant in regard to a certain dispatch transmitted here by the Department of External Affairs from the Governor-General of Hong Kong to His Royal Highness, the Governor-General, respecting one hundred and fifty Indian sikhs who left Hong Kong for British Columbia on board the "komogata Maru" on April 4th.

In this connection, I beg to state that according to the record of this Department the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs sent here on the 31st ultimo a reference to which was attached a telegram to the Governor-General of Canada, signed May, Hong Kong, as follows:-

" 150 Indian emigrant sikhs have
" chartered steamer from here to
" British Columbia are not on through
" tickets from India. Am advised that
" local emigration clauses does not
" apply to other than Chinese emigration.
" Please telegraph whether in the cir-
" cumstances they will be permitted to
" land Canada."

This reference was immediately sent to our Immigration Branch for a report. Although certain changes in the regulations were mooted the immigration

The HON. R. L. Borden, P.C., K.C.,
Premier,
Ottawa.

immigration officials were not aware of the particulars, and consequently were not in a position to furnish a prompt and definite reply. The Order in Council. P.C. 2642 was running out at the end of March and they were awaiting a pronouncement from the Government of a further policy before submitting a report.

On the 3rd April, I received an urgent letter from Sir Joseph Pope, enclosing a copy of a further wire from the Governor-General of Hong Kong, as follows:-

" My telegram 31st March. Telegraph
" reply with least possible delay. Matter
" most urgent."

I immediately sent this letter to the Superintendent of Immigration asking him for a rush report. The delay, if any, in the furnishing of his statement was evidently caused by the fact that he was unable to ascertain that the prohibition of this class of immigration had been extended as provided in the Order in Council of the 31st March last until he was notified by the officer who has charge of the gazetting of such Orders on Saturday, the 4th instant, the Order having been received in that Branch the afternoon before. This was the first intimation that this Department had received that such an order had been passed. The memorandum to Council upon which P.C. 897 of the 31st ultimo was based was not drafted in this Department, nor had we any official notification that such action was contemplated. Mr. Scott's memoranda covering these dispatches were received in my office Monday morning and within fifteen minutes, I had dispatched by special messenger a letter to Sir Joseph Pope of which I am enclosing a copy.

The only telephone message that I recall was one from Sir Joseph Pope on Monday morning.

I am since in receipt of a further reference from the Department of External Affairs, dated the 6th instant, covering a wire addressed

by

17487

R.L.B. -3;

by the Governor-General of Hong Kong, to his Royal Highness, the Governor-General, as follows:-

- " My telegram 31st March have been
- " unable to further detain vessel name
- " of vessel if Komogata maru leaving
- " Hong Kong for Vancouver April 4th."

I would respectfully point out that this is the first intimation which we have received of the date upon which this vessel was to sail. I regret extremely the delay which has taken place in answering this reference, but as Hong Kong is at least more than half a day ahead of our time, even if the Department had replied immediately upon receipt of the Order-in-Council, we would hardly have been in time to prevent the sailing of these one hundred and fifty Indian sikhs.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to be 'A. B. C.', written in dark ink on the document.