

The Montreal Star May 23 1914

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Gurdit Singh, Who Chartered Boat, Will Fight in Courts.

OFFICIALS WATCH JAPANESE STEAMER

Strange Launch Rushed to Meet Ship Bringing Immigrants.

Special to The Montreal Star.
Vancouver, May 22.—Quarantine officials began at eight o'clock this morning to examine the Jap steamer Komagata Maru and her party of 375 Hindus, which arrived off the William Head station last evening. It is expected that by noon she will be turned over to the immigration officials, who will decide whether or not her excursionists may land. The East Indians have been brought here by Gurdit Singh, a man of considerable wealth who lives in Calcutta. The object of the voyage is to test the immigration laws of this country. Speaking to a representative of the Star this morning from the deck of the Komagata Maru, Gurdit Singh said he was determined to fight the matter out in the Courts, as he believed that the people of British India should have the right of entry in all portions of His Majesty's Dominions.

"There are thousands of natives of my country," he said, "who are anxious to come here. The reason why I chartered the Komagata Maru was to ascertain at first hand whether it was the intention of your government not to permit East Indians to come to Canada.

"If we are turned back, the matter will not rest there. I intend to use every legitimate course I can pursue to find out if it is true that East Indians will not be permitted to land in your country."

Gurdit Singh, beyond the foregoing, refused to discuss the subject of his arrival with his fellow-countrymen. What he had to say would be said to the Courts, if it was necessary for him to go there to seek redress.

Of the East Indians aboard he stated that 160 had been taken on at Hong Kong and the balance at Shanghai and Japanese ports. The vessel had been chartered by him for six months at a cost of \$66,000. She carries a crew of forty Japanese, and a cargo of coal which it is hoped to dispose of at Vancouver.

Throughout last night two launches stood by the Komagata Maru to prevent any attempt being made to land any of her passengers. The Komagata Maru sailed from Yokohama on May 5.

MYSTERIOUS LAUNCH SAILS.

The mystery of the expected arrival of the Hindus kept the immigration officials on the jump yesterday. The officials learned that on Wednesday night five Hindus hurried by automobile into Alberni, on the extreme west coast of Vancouver Island, and there chartered the launch Salita Queen, a staunch forty-footer capable of going far out to sea. In an hour she was provisioned and gone, no one knew whither. From outside sources the immigration inspectors learnt that she would attempt to intercept the Komagata Maru, but whether the object was to provide the new-comers with money to give them standing as immigrants desirable under the regulations it is impossible to tell.

Immediate steps were taken to overhaul this expedition. A Government launch was ordered out, and fishery protection vessels were warned to keep a lookout on the west coast of the island, but neither these nor the U.S. revenue cutters which were watching off the Cape, saw the Japanese vessel until she was reported in the evening in quarantine.

The Komagata Maru is consigned to C. Gardiner Johnson and Co., a well-known shipping firm, who will attempt to dispose of her 1,500 tons of coal in Vancouver.

With the several days of waiting, excitement over the expected arrival of the vessel has reached a fever pitch. Labor leaders think there is no question but that the Government inspectors will order the deportation of all the new arrivals, but the real fight will come after that in the Courts.

The labor people insist more strongly than ever that a general admission of this shipload of Hindus will mean a very forcible agitation against all Orientals in B. C. No distinction is more in favor of Hindus as compared with Chinese or Japanese.

ALL PRECAUTIONS TAKEN

Intense Excitement on Pacific Coast—Ship Has Left Quarantine and Is en Route to Vancouver

(Special to The Gazette)
Ottawa, May 22.—The situation is simply this—we are going to enforce the law.

This was the reply of Hon. Dr. Roche, minister of the interior, when asked tonight what action the Government proposed to take with respect to the four hundred Hindus who have arrived at Victoria on the steamer Komogata Maru and whose landing is disputed.

There are two main reasons why they can be kept out. The first is, that their coming to Canada is in contravention of the embargo placed on all laborers for the next six months. In the second place, they did not come to Canada direct from their place of origin.

HAS SAILED FOR VANCOUVER.

Vancouver, May 22.—Word was received from Victoria that the Komogata Maru had left Williamhead quarantine and without calling at Victoria had sailed for Vancouver. As the trip occupies about six hours, it is expected she will arrive here about one o'clock on Saturday morning.

ARRIVAL AT QUARANTINE.

(Special to The Gazette)
Victoria, B.C., May 22.—The steamer Komogata Maru, with over four hundred Hindus on board, arrived here last night and was at once placed in quarantine. This is the vessel which had been specially chartered to bring several hundred Hindus to Canada to test the immigration laws and in regard to which an order has been received from Ottawa to prevent their landing on Canadian soil. It is stated that every effort will be made by the Hindus to effect an entry to this country, but all precautions have been taken to deal with the situation should necessity arise. Malcolm Reid, Dominion immigration officer, has arrived here to take charge.

The mystery surrounding the arrival of the Hindus kept the immigration officials on the jump yesterday. They learned that on Wednesday night five Hindus hurried by automobile to Alberni, on the extreme coast of Vancouver Island, and there chartered the launch Salita Queen, a launch of forty feet, capable of going far out to sea. In an hour she was provisioned and disappeared. From outside sources the migration inspectors learned that she would attempt to intercept the Komogata Maru, but whether the object was to provide the newcomers with money to give them a standing as desirable immigrants under the regulations, it is not known. Immediate steps were taken to overhaul this expedition. A Government launch was ordered and fishery protection vessels were warned to keep a lookout on the west coast of the island, but neither these nor the United States revenue cutters, which were watching off the cape, saw the Japanese vessel until she was reported in the evening at quarantine. The Komogata is consigned to C. Gardner, Johnson & Company, a well known shipping firm, who will attempt to dispose of her cargo of coal in Vancouver.

With the several days of waiting excitement over the expected arrival of the vessel has reached a fever heat. Labor leaders think there is no question but that the Government inspectors will order the deportation of all the new arrivals, but the real fight will come after that in the Courts. The labor people insist more strongly than ever that a general admission of this shipload of Hindus will mean a very forcible agitation against all Orientals in British Columbia. No distinction is made in favor of Hindus as compared with Chinese or Japanese.

Mr. Reid, who arrived here today, gave it to be clearly understood that under no circumstances would he permit a violation of the order from Ottawa that the Hindus should not be allowed to land in Canada in the face of the recent order excluding laborers of all nationalities. In reply to this, the Hindus say that they are not laborers and that they are British subjects and that they have a right to effect a landing on British soil. The Dominion officials are adamant and refuse to listen to any argument they advance.

ANCIENT VENUS