

TO THE GOVERNMENT

OF THE PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA:

THE HUMBLE PETITION of the undersigned, Khalsa Diwan Society, a society duly incorporated under the "Societies Act" of the Province of British Columbia, and representing all persons residing in the Province of British Columbia coming within the definition of "Hindu" as defined by Section 2 of the "Provincial Elections Act" of the said Province, and hereinafter referred to as "East Indians",

SHOWETH AS FOLLOWS:-

- 1 - That by reason of Section 5, Subsection (a) of the said Statute "East Indians" of the Province of British Columbia may not apply to have their names inserted in any list of voters, and are disqualified from voting at any election.
- 2 - That Section 14, Subsection (2) (i) of the "Dominion Elections Act, 1938", Chapter 46 of the Statutes of Canada disqualifies and renders incapable of being registered as an elector, any person who is disqualified by reason of race from voting at an election of a member of the Legislative Assembly of the Province in which he or she resides.

- 3 - That because of the provisions of the "Provincial Elections Act" enacted by the Government of the Province of British Columbia "East Indians" residing in British Columbia are prohibited from voting at any Dominion or Provincial election taking place in the said Province.
- 4 - That the Province of British Columbia is the only Province of the Dominion of Canada which disqualifies "East Indians" from voting at Provincial Elections.
- 5 - That your Petitioner has as its members all "East Indians" resident in the Province of British Columbia, being about one thousand two hundred in number.
- 6 - That at a meeting of your Petitioner, Khalsa Diwan Society held at the Sikh Temple in the City of Vancouver, Province of British Columbia, the 27th day of September, 1942, the following resolution was duly passed by a unanimous vote, namely:-

"THAT WE, THE "EAST INDIANS" OF BRITISH COLUMBIA, ARE LOYAL TO CANADA, AND, IF NECESSARY, ARE READY TO LAY DOWN OUR LIVES IN DEFENCE OF THIS COUNTRY AGAINST AGGRESSION.

THAT A PETITION OR MEMORIAL BE SENT TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA AND THE PREMIER OF BRITISH COLUMBIA AND OTHER PROPER AUTHORITIES IN OTTAWA AND VICTORIA REQUESTING THAT WE, THE "EAST INDIANS" OF BRITISH COLUMBIA BE GRANTED OUR LONG CHERISHED AND LEGITIMATE OVERDUE CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

THAT SOME OF OUR YOUNG MEN HAVE BEEN CONSCRIPTED OR CALLED FOR MILITARY SERVICE RECENTLY, AND IN VIEW OF THIS FACT THAT A PROTEST BE LODGED WITH THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE, OR OTHER PROPER AUTHORITY, OBJECTING TO THE CALLING OF OUR PEOPLE FOR COMPULSORY MILITARY SERVICE WITHOUT GIVING OUR PEOPLE THE RIGHTS OF CITIZENSHIP IN BRITISH COLUMBIA."

7 - That since 1908 "East Indians" of the Province of British Columbia have been seeking the franchise now enjoyed by other British Subjects or naturalized aliens (Germans, Italians, and others). Shortly after the "Great War" I the Rt. Hon. Mr. Sastri, then Indian Government Agent in South Africa representing the "East Indians" of British Columbia, urged upon the authorities at Ottawa, the granting of such franchise, but without success. About two years ago, Dr. D. P. Pandia, then a member of the Indian National Council of India, while in Canada made similar efforts to accomplish such purpose, but with the same result. That during the months of January and February, 1942, Mr. H.S.L. Polak, Barrister of London, England, and Secretary of the Indians' Overseas Association personally interviewed Prime Minister W. L. Mackenzie King at Ottawa, and Dr. H.L. Keenlyside of the Department of External Affairs, Ottawa, requesting on behalf of the "East Indians" of British Columbia that the Government of Canada prevail upon the Government of British Columbia the granting of such franchise. The Prime Minister of Canada refused such request. During such period Mr. Polak personally interviewed the Honourable

John Hart, Premier of the Province of British Columbia, with a view of obtaining such franchise from your Government. Such efforts were unsuccessful.

- 8 - That the said "East Indians" are loyal British Subjects, but they consider that in view of their efforts for over thirty years to secure for themselves the rights referred to above, and in view of obligations imposed upon them with regard to military service, that their petition herein should be granted.
- 9 - That your petitioner hopes that the granting of this petition, if the same is allowed, will have in some measure, a soothing effect upon the present political unrest in India. A communication from the Prime Minister of Canada to the Viceroy of India, stating that such franchise had been granted, would have no little effect upon the forty million voters of India, many of whom reside in the very Punjab cities, towns and villages from which they themselves originate.

YOUR PETITIONER THEREFORE most humbly prays that your Government may be graciously pleased to grant to the "East Indians" resident in the Province of British Columbia the right to vote at all elections held in the said Province, and that your Government will enact an amendment to the said "Provincial Elections Act" with the object of removing the disqualifications of "East Indians" under the said Statute, thereby abolishing the racial restriction preventing "East Indians" from voting at all elections held in the said Province, including elections held under the said "Dominion Elections Act".

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AND YOUR PETITIONER will ever pray, etc.

DATED at the City of Vancouver, Province of  
British Columbia, this first day of October, 1942

KHALSA DIWAN SOCIETY,

Per \_\_\_\_\_

President

Per \_\_\_\_\_

Secretary