

18. Confidential Memorandum on Matters Affecting
the East Indian Community in Vancouver by Col. E. J. E.
Swayne, Governor of British Honduras

INFORMATION AS TO HINDU AGITATORS
IN VANCOUVER.

Taraknath Dass, Bengali Brahmin of Bhanwanipur, suburb of Calcutta, F.A. of Calcutta University, student at one of the Colleges of Seattle, came to Vancouver from Seattle as interpreter to the United States Emigration Department. He published a newspaper called "Free Hindustan", in English. Its general tenour is theosophical, but from time to time it contains articles setting forth the so-called unfair treatment of Hindus in Vancouver, and has reference to agitation in Bengal, and in tone is Anti British.

Owing to representations made by the Dominion Government to Washington, inviting attention to the unfriendly attacks made upon British prestige in a paper published by an interpreter in their employment, claiming protection as a United States citizen, (no papers have however been issued to him) the United States Government dispensed with his services, and the paper ceased for a time to appear. After an interval of two months, during which he remained unemployed in Vancouver, he was found to have opened a school for Hindus at Millside, New Westminster, (near Vancouver) and lectures were delivered on topics connected with the unrest in India and the unfair treatment of Hindus in Vancouver. Gurmukhi newspapers from the Punjab containing articles animadverting on British administration in India have been circulated amongst the Hindus round this school, as also Bengali newspapers containing articles on the unfair treatment of Hindus in Vancouver. At the same time translations of

Taraknath's paper "Free Hindustan" have been made at the school into Gurmukhi and Urdu and sent to the Punjab and Calcutta; and posters showing cartoons in which white men are kicking out Hindus from Canada (Vancouver Province: Dec. 1st 1908, Opposition paper) have also been sent. It was found that besides considerable correspondence through the ordinary channels of the Post Office, between Vancouver Hindus and their friends in India, the Hindu Store at Millside and the school were used as addresses from which correspondence on arrival was distributed.

Taraknath Dass also collected sums of money from the Hindus for a fund called the Mutual Fund.

For this information I am indebted to Mr. W. Hopkinson, Inspector of the Calcutta Police, now on leave from India and employed by the Dominion Government as official Hindustani interpreter in Vancouver. Mr. Hopkinson in this capacity accompanied the two Hindu delegates to Belize, British Honduras, returning to Vancouver with them on November 4th 1908.

Mr. Hopkinson considered that the matters relating to the school at Millside which came to his knowledge were sufficiently important to be made public, and as his ~~un~~official position at that time was only that of interpreter and therefore in his opinion precluded his making an official report in a matter of this kind, he, after consultation with Mr. L. W. Creppin, who as correspondent of the 'London Times' was then enquiring into the position of the Hindus in Vancouver, decided to give publicity to the information acquired by him to the public press of Vancouver. Thereupon the school was closed.

Taraknath Dass for 14 days thereafter remained unemployed in Vancouver amongst the Brahmin section of the Hindus. Amongst these were Udey Ram, Bengali, who with Radhi Krishan of the N.W. Provinces (who came to Vancouver from Fiji) keeps a 2000 dollar store at Millside, the business of which is to make advances of food, clothing and money to Hindu labourers at the mills, recovering the value from the men's pay with heavy interest. Udey Ram has a brother Nubhi Ram, a Bengali Brahmin settled in Seattle.

It was found that Taraknath Dass has family relations in the Sham bazaar of Calcutta; that he is acquainted with A. C. Bannerji, barrister at law of the Calcutta High Court, arrested in October 1907 for sedition and known as a leader of the present agitation in Bengal. He also knew Surendernath Bannerji, formerly a district judge in the Civil Service in India, and now editor of the newspaper "Bengali" published in English in Calcutta. He also knew Arbindeo Ghos, editor of the "Sunjimandi" a vernacular newspaper of Calcutta. Fourteen days after the closing of the school, Taraknath Dass, taking with him Behari Lal, Brahmin, went to Seattle to Nubhi Ram, brother of Udey Ram, settled there and arranged for the entry of Behari Lal as a student at the University there. Taraknath Dass himself continued the publication of 'Free Hindustan' in Seattle and sends copies to Vancouver. A copy of the paper in the possession of Mr. Harkin, Secretary of the Minister of the Interior, which was seen by me was decidedly seditious. In the midst of a long disquisition on theosophical teaching, references were made to the so-called miserable condition of natives in India under British rule: the famine in India being attributes to the depletion of the gold

reserves by British merchants and officials.

Teja Singh.

Teja Singh is an Amritsar Sikh; an M.A. of Lahore University, an L.L.B. of Cambridge, and a student of the Columbia University of New York. He first came to Vancouver on the 2nd October 1908, and gave out that he had been touring the United States and Canada, looking into the position and grievances of Hindus. He left on October 8th (within the week) for Victoria and Seattle whence he proceeded to San Francisco. About a month later; on November 11th, seven days before the return of the deputation to British Honduras, he was called back to Vancouver by Uday Ram, Brahmin Storekeeper and Radha Krishan, Brahmin. His mission this time apparently was to dissuade Hindus from proceeding to Honduras. Local Hindus, who were receiving very good wages, enabling them to save four times what they could possibly save in Honduras, had been led to believe by the attitude of newspapers representing white labour opinion, and made use of for electioneering purposes, that an attempt would be made to forcibly deport the whole community (rich and poor) to British Honduras on the ground that they were destitute, had become a charge upon the public and were physically unfit to sustain the rigours of the Canadian climate. In order to prevent this disruption of a very profitable livelihood for themselves the well-to-do Hindus, who probably save some 40,000 dollars a month, which they have been placing in Banks and sending by money orders to India, decided to form a Society which is in fact a Labour Union, using as a rendezvous, a Sikh Temple, built 2½ years ago at Fairview, 2nd Avenue, Vancouver. It was decided to provide assistance to indigent Hindus so as to keep them off the streets, to form a labour

labour employment bureau, and to start schemes for the purchase of land and colonisation. (Note 1.)

The disaffected Brahmin section were anxious whilst holding ^{out} forcible deportation as a threat out of which they could make political capital, to prevent a voluntary exodus of the poorer part of the community to British Honduras, as this would have taken the wind out of their sails and could not be used in the agitation against the British Government in Bengal. They were also personally and privately opposed, owing to their interest in the profits of their shop, and the debts owed by their customers, to the latter leaving. Moreover, it is very probable that the whole community of the Sikh Temple and its priests, which is supported by the contributions of Vancouver and provincial Sikhs, would be opposed to the departure of the people.

I do not think that the Machiavellian idea of compelling the Canadian Government by an attitude of passive resistance, to deport the Hindus wholesale, and thus set up centres of disaffection in the Punjab, could have emanated from these local Vancouver Hindus, for even the Brahmin agitators had too much to lose, in their private interests from such a course. The idea, if started at all among st the Hindus, must have come from Bengal. In fact Teja Singh has done all he can to prevent deportation by assisting the Union to make feasible schemes to provide work. Immediately on his arrival in Vancouver, on November 11th he convened meetings at Millside, New Westminster - at Vancouver, and at Port

Note 1. Hindus have been in the habit of privately helping their poorer brethren, but up to quite recently there appears to have been no organisation to give poor relief. From time to time cases of destitute Hindus asking for repatriation to India have been brought by the community to the notice of Government officials, and a number of them have in this way been assisted by Government to return to India. Quite recently indigent Hindus have disappeared from the streets, and this no doubt is due to the efforts of the new organisation.

Moody, 20 miles up the line of the C.P.R., and there dissuaded the people from going to British Honduras and made proposals for their employment locally. He formed the GuruNanak Mining & Trust Co. Ltd. received contributions and made application for registration from the Government. He also made arrangements to purchase a tract of land in North Vancouver to be divided into market garden lots and worked by Hindu labourers. (Note 2.) He has publicly lectured and had interviews with press men. Neither his interviews nor his lectures give me the impression of being intended to further the agitation in India, although they undoubtedly show indignation and possibly resentment at what he considers to be the unfair treatment of natives of India as British subjects, as well in Vancouver as in India. He is anxious to show that so far the Sikhs are loyal, but he at the same time warns the public that current events are tending to do much to shake that loyalty, and that results may be disastrous. (Note 3). He is primarily a theosophical teacher, and whilst no doubt flattered by the idea of posing as the protector and head of Hindu communities on this continent, I do not think he intended to take up this position from mere agitator's motives. There is an interesting lecture by him in the 'Vancouver World' of Friday, December 11th, in which he refers to the Temple incident, when the Government officials, fearing to furnish grounds for misrepresentation, declined to take off their shoes and enter the upper room, where the Sikh religious ceremonies were at that time being performed.

Note 2. The negotiations have, I have since heard from Mr. Harkin, not yet come to anything.

Note 3. One of the delegates to British Honduras made an allegation of bribery against his companion, saying Mr. Hopkinson had bribed him to report favourably on British Honduras. Teja Singh communicated this to a correspondent of the 'Province' newspaper, but wrote withdrawing the allegation, whilst

His contention is that all matters affecting the public weal of the Sikh community, must, according to their rules, be discussed in open conclave in the Temple, so as to avoid any idea that it is a "hole and corner affair". Personally, I think however that he had reasons of his own for desiring to prevent the Government officials from presenting a true report on British Honduras conditions to the natives of India as a whole, and wished that it should be done in the Inner Temple where the Sikhs over whom he had complete influence would not be likely to be affected by the Government proposals or recede from their decision. (Note 4.)

It is a matter of considerable interest to trace the growth of a combined sentiment between the various classes of Hindus in Vancouver. They have coalesced from the common need of protection against the hostility of white labour, and Punjabi-Mohamedans, Sikhs, and Hindus from the Punjab, and Brahmins from the N.W. and from lower Bengal, have been brought together in a way that could not have happened in India.

I have been unable to discover any general strong feeling on the part of the white population against the Hindus. Undoubtedly last winter when large numbers of Hindus arrived in a destitute condition, and when they were competing with destitute white people, the feeling ~~against~~ was strong that immigration of Asiatics should be stopped, but now that the numbers coming in have decreased

still in press, but before publication. This I have from the 'Province' correspondent himself.

Note 4. Amongst the natives of India in Vancouver, besides Hindus of the Punjab, United Provinces and Bengal, there are a certain number of Punjabi Mahomedans, and these could never combine with the Hindus except under very exceptional circumstances, and could never be counted on to act in a body with the Hindus for any length of time.

and labour conditions have improved, the feeling against Hindus has died down. (Note 5.) It is however strong against the Japanese, who are considered to be the real competitors of white labour and who are thought to be a political danger. The Chinese do not compete in that class of work done by the whites and there is no general feeling against them, although there is a feeling that in their case, as well as in that of the natives of India further immigration should be restricted to small numbers, and strictly controlled. Employers on the other hand, stand in need of the regular labour supplied by Asiatics, and are hampered by the want of sufficient white labour, and the unsettled nature of the labour given by whites. Whites go from one work to another, but Asiatics stay where they are satisfied. At one Mill the Sikhs there employed had stayed for 2 years and had given complete satisfaction, and amongst the many reports received by me from employers the feeling was one of satisfaction with the better class of Hindus and their work. (Note 6.)

The Hindus met by me in Vancouver and Robson and at Nelson were quite satisfied with their position, and had been sending money to India. They intended to remain 3 years longer, and then return to their families in India. They were very anxious to explain that they were thoroughly loyal and that they were pleased with the country. They no doubt feared that any other attitude would give their opponents a chance to deport them.

Note 5. It is claimed that white people are building up the country and however destitute they may be at the start, soon settle down into valuable citizens, whereas, the Asiatic takes his money away with him, and at the same time by accepting lower wages than white men prevents the poorer whites from eking out a living until better times come. It is a fact however that the better class of Hindus are earning as high wages as the white man.

Note 6. The Hindus belong to various classes of society in India.

Now that the Hindu community has undertaken to provide for indigent Hindus, it only remains to hold them to it and to make use of their representatives to undertake responsibilities as to sanitation, &c. At the same time there are, I think, strong reasons why further immigration should be strictly limited. The terms of close familiarity which competition with white labour has brought about, do not make for British prestige.

These Hindus never meant to settle in British Columbia. Even the most wealthy do not mean to bring their families out. They all mean to accumulate money and return to India to free their farms from mortgages, or to purchase others. Socialists of a very undesirable type have made it their business to tamper with the East Indians in Vancouver. Recently Emma Goldman, the Socialist lecturer, from the United States, visited Vancouver and lectured in public. The return of the Sikhs to the Punjab amongst their friends, spreading as they will, new, ill-digested socialistic ideas, and the familiar knowledge of such defects amongst their white fellow labourers, such as labour rivalry would have been only too ready to pick out, cannot but tend to re-act amongst the military classes of the Punjab, to the detriment of British prestige. As - when all is said and done, looking at our position in India as a whole, it must be recognised that it is by prestige alone that India is held and not by force, the importance of a circulation of labour between Vancouver and India as affecting that prestige is such, I submit, as cannot be wisely overlooked. Also, looking to the future, labour rivalry must from time to time cause

The soldier class or the policeman from Hong Kong are highly thought of, whilst on the other hand, weaker members of the community have an indifferent value.

outbreaks of feeling on the part of the white labour on the Pacific, which must produce difficulties, as has been the case in the past, both for the Canadian and Imperial Governments, and any dissatisfaction at unfair treatment of Hindus in Vancouver, resulting therefrom, will be sure to be exploited, as in fact has already been done, for purposes of agitation in India. For these reasons (as apart from the general one of keeping the temperate zones of the Empire for the surplus white population, whilst giving full scope to our Asiatic subjects in the more tropical zones of the Empire) I think immigration into Canada from India should be strictly limited and controlled. I would suggest that Indian regulations as to indentured emigration from India necessitating as it does legislation on behalf of such emigrants by Colonial Governments, be applied if possible to emigrants not proceeding out of India on indenture or contract. The absence of such legislation on the part of the Colonies would, as pointed out by Mr. Mackenzie King, be sufficient to make such emigration illegal, and a system of passports would then enable the Governments of India and of Canada to control the immigration into Canada of such persons having commercial, educational or other interests, as might advantageously be admitted. (Note 7.)

Note 7. As natives of India now in Vancouver will return to India as soon as they have made sufficient money, it will only be necessary to prevent their return to eliminate the whole Hindu community in course of time. I, however think that no harm, but on the other hand a certain amount of good, will result from allowing the limited numbers now in Canada to be maintained. The limitation of further immigration might be put at 100 yearly for the present, but the number will depend on the commercial needs of the times and these will naturally be dictated by the growth and development of trade between Canada and India.

I deprecate measures recently adopted to check immigration by imposing the onerous condition that Hindus landing in Canada must be provided with \$200. This, when compared

Undoubtedly many industries of British Columbia at the outset, require encouragement in the shape of a cheaper form of labour than could be obtained under the unlimited control of white labour unions, which would result from the total exclusion just now of Asiatics, and this is more especially the case with the promising fruit industry, but the political reasons I have given for the exclusion of natives of India, and the importance of this exclusion to India itself, do not admit, I think, of our continuing the immigration of these Asiatics as free labourers, whatever might be feasible in the way of contracts. That the Indian of the Punjab is unsuited, owing to climatic conditions, to work and reside in British Columbia, cannot, in the face of the experience of the last 3 years amongst the Hindus in Vancouver, be maintained. The rigorous winter of parts of the Punjab is more severe than the mild climate of the Pacific coast. It is true that in the winters of 1906-7 large numbers of Indians arrived provided only with cotton clothing, and owing to the general bad labour conditions which at that time prevailed, throughout the country, were unable to get employment, and roamed the streets in a destitute condition; but Dr. Lunroe (attached to the General Hospital & Emigration Department) assured me from his personal observation, that a smaller number of Asiatics were admitted into hospital, or suffered from pulmonary affections, than would have been the case with an equal number of white men under similarly trying conditions and unprovided with proper clothes. (Note 8.)

to the \$40 imposed upon Japanese, cannot fail to give rise in India to the cry that British subjects are unfairly discriminated against, and it will be difficult to explain this away.

Note 8. Out of some 5000 natives of India who have during the last few years arrived in Canada, nearly half have gone to the United States to find work, some few having been assisted

When I left England it was assumed that there would be large numbers (possibly as many as 1500) of Hindus in Vancouver out of employment, but on my arrival I found that industrial conditions had improved to such an unexpected extent as to completely alter the state of affairs and upset the calculations as to unemployment which the authorities of Vancouver, basing their estimates upon previous winters, had been, I am convinced, fully justified in making.

I have received the greatest assistance in my enquiries from many gentlemen, official and otherwise in Vancouver, Mr. McMahon, City Relief Officer enabled me to personally visit various quarters inhabited by the Hindus and courteously accompanied me with his assistants. Dr. Underhill and Mayor Betheun, called upon me, and gave me frankly ^{such} ~~with~~ information as their intimate knowledge of the sanitary condition of the Hindus enabled them to collect, and I am much indebted to these gentlemen for their courtesy. The emigration authorities also did all they could to help me.

I am indebted to Mr. Harkin for bringing me in touch with these and other gentlemen and for doing everything to forward my enquiries. I did not call a public meeting of the Hindus, nor appeal to the local authorities for facilities to get in touch with the community as a whole, as after recent events at the Temple, I did not think such a course would have resulted in any good, and I preferred therefore to make my enquiries unofficially.

by the local authorities to return to India, on the representations of the local Health & Relief Officers. These Hindus appear to have been readily received in the United States.

I think it important that the doings of the Brahmin section be closely watched. There is presumptive evidence that they have a close connection with the agitation in Bengal. I do not think that a better man than Mr. Hopkinson of the Calcutta police could be found for this work. He has already managed to get a knowledge of their affairs, and Mr. R. S. Chamberlin, Chief of the Police of Vancouver, with whom I unofficially spoke on the matter would have no objection to his doing this. I suggest Mr. Hopkinson be appointed as Dominion Police Officer on special duty at Vancouver, for the special purposes of this enquiry, and the Government of India be asked to place him in official communication with the head of the Calcutta Police in order to further his work. This suggestion is of course a purely confidential one.

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