

RC76 vol 601 file 879545 #12

COPY

Kindly do not write more than one subject in any one letter.

In your reply refer to No. File 58.

CONFIDENTIAL

Immigration Branch

Department of the Interior

WCH/DACN.

JUN 10 1914

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Vancouver, B.C. 10th June, 1914.

(Copy for the information of W.D.Scott Esq., Superintendent of Immigration, Ottawa.)
Sir,

In continuation of my letter of the 6th instant, I beg to advise you that I received a communication on the 8th instant from Gurdit Singh - the Charterer of the "Komagata Maru" - to come on board and see him in connection with provisioning the ship. I went on board and was met by Baljit Singh the Secretary of the Steamship and by him taken to the Saloon where after a time Gurdit Singh and a couple of other Hindus joined us.

Gurdit Singh advised me that all the Hindus on board had refrained from eating from the 2nd instant, and that they were in a sorry plight. He requested me to ask the authorities to send provisions to the boat as they had run out. He also stated, that in going on this "hunger strike", (if it can be called such), he was under the impression that some of the people of Canada would take notice of the situation and urge the Government to relax the tension, and permit him and his secretary to interview the Hindu community ashore, and allow them to arrange for provisions. He was convinced that the people of this country were apparently quite unconcerned as to their condition, and were not dealing fairly with them, both from a humanitarian point of view, and that of British subjects.

He urged the fact that it was against all rules of law and procedure, not to permit him to see counsel or seek assistance from his countrymen ashore. That even, though he were here with these men, in contravention of the regulations, it was but justice to proceed with all despatch and let them know if they would be permitted to land or not, or as an alternative, give them a chance to appeal to the courts by whose decision they were willing to abide.

I informed Gurdit Singh and his company, that inasmuch as Gurdit Singh has chartered the boat, he was responsible for the

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feeding of any passengers on the ship till such time as the Immigration authorities were through with their examination. That I was in receipt of instructions from Mr. Reid the Immigration Agent, to the effect that no one was to be allowed ashore for any purpose whatsoever, and, if they had representations to make, they had better communicate the same to Mr. Reid.

After a deal of argument of both sides, Gurdit Singh decided to send for provisions and requested me to ask Mr. Reid to order the provisions per list already in his possession, and as earnest money they furnished me with 16 pounds sterling, a ten dollar gold piece and a letter addressed to me as authority for the purchase of the provisions.

I left the boat with the understanding that the fast would be broken on receipt of the provisions. On coming ashore, I reported the situation to Mr. Reid and handed him the letter with the money, and we at once arranged with a wholesale grocery firm to carry out the order. Provisions equivalent to the value of the money sent, were despatched to the boat and arrived on board about 8 p.m.

Yesterday we completed the examination of the remaining returned men, who have all been landed, and this now leaves 355 new men, women and children to be examined. Of this number about 90 have been medically rejected. One of the passengers was removed to the Hospital some days ago, and died the day before yesterday.

The medical officer of the "Komagata Maru", Dr. Raghunath Singh, at present on leave from his Regiment, the 8th Rajputs at Hong Kong, was granted permission to come ashore, in company with one of our officers to purchase medical supplies for the ship.

On the 8th instant, Mr. Reid wrote to Gurdit Singh advising him, that for the purpose of purchasing provisions for the ship, he would permit his (Gurdit Singh's) steward to come ashore and make the

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necessary purchases in company with one of our officers.

Yesterday afternoon, when the final batch of returning men were being brought ashore, Daljit Singh, in the capacity of steward, attempted to come ashore with the returned men, and was prevented from doing so by the officer in charge of the launch. Daljit Singh stated that he had permission from Mr. Reid to do so; but our officer decided to enquire first, and refused to allow him on board the launch, and reported the matter at the office.

I proceeded to the ship, and informed Daljit Singh, on instructions from Mr. Reid, that he would not be allowed ashore, and that if they wanted to purchase any provisions they had better commission their medical officer to do so.

Gurdit Singh and his secretary, after a consultation, refused to do so, and wanted to know why Mr. Reid had changed his mind. I was not in a position to give them an answer, and stated that if they had any communication to make to Mr. Reid, they had better put the same in writing and I would see that it reached him. They decided to write to him, and shortly after handed me a letter.

In handing me a letter for Mr. Reid, both Gurdit Singh and his secretary, informed me that they did not want any provisions, and countermanded the order of the 8th instant. They further stated that the charter would expire on the 11th instant, and inasmuch as they did not have the money to meet the charter obligation or pay for provisions, and the Hindu committee ashore had not come through with any assistance, they would be entirely at the mercy of the Government. If the ship and her passengers were ordered back to Hong Kong, either the Government, the agent of the owner or some philanthropic body of men, would have to provision the ship for her return journey.

I returned to the office, and reported the situation to

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Mr. Reid, and handed him the letter, and was informed by him that he could not permit anyone ashore except the doctor and replied to that effect in a letter to Gurdit Singh, which I conveyed to him, and on receipt of which, the latter reiterated his previous statement with regard to provisioning the ship.

The present situation is a deadlock again, and I am not in a position to say what the next step will be from the "Koragata Maru". In the meantime we intend to continue with the examination of the new arrivals.

The local papers had a despatch from Manila P.I. yesterday, from which it would appear that G.D. Kumar has taken it on himself to announce to the world at large, that if these men are not landed in Canada, a revolution in India would be the result.

This morning I visited the boat again, and found the passengers in a state of unrest for want of food. Several of them have applied to Gurdit Singh to furnish rations; but he is unable to do so, having no money. The medical officer has also demanded payment, of his salary, and will not give any further medical attention till such time as he is paid. His contract was for the trip from Hong Kong to this port, and unless he is ordered by the Indian Military Authorities to resume duty here, (being on leave of absence) and act in the capacity of a medical officer to the ship on its return journey, we cannot force him to do so. Mr. Reid is writing you confidentially further, in connection with a proposition on behalf of this doctor.

It is possible that Gurdit Singh and his close friends, will receive rough treatment at the hands of those on board if no provisions are forthcoming.

If the sum of \$15,000 is paid by the Hindu committee ashore, there is a likelihood that the ship will stay; but the question is,

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who will supply provisions pending the disposition of these cases at our hands. The probabilities are, that the matter will be taken into court, and if this should be the case, there is no knowing when the matter will be finally disposed of.

In view of the fact that Gurdit has come here with these people in contravention of the Immigration Regulations, of which he and his company had full knowledge, prior to embarking on this expedition, I verily believe that he has committed a criminal act in not making arrangements to provide against delays, either on the high seas or in Canada, by provisioning his ship to meet contingencies of this kind.

If this ship-load of Hindus should be turned back, as it will in all probability, it will entail a large expenditure on the part of the Canadian Government, to provision it for the return trip to Hong Kong. Further, in view of the disappointment of the passengers, it is likely that the master of the ship will seek assistance some way or another to keep these people in order on board ship during the return journey.

The crew of this boat number 43, and 355 disappointed and penniless Hindus returning, it is safe to assume that the Captain and his crew would be dubious about taking them back without additional safe-guards against a mutiny, by asking for the services of special officers or by seeking assistance from the Japanese warships due here on the 19th instant.

If the Captain took the latter course, it would entail a further delay.

In undertaking an enterprise of this description, Gurdit Singh has had two motives - First - that this transaction would have netted him a sum of \$100,000 and - second - the most important, that by this undertaking and landing of ^{The} Hindus in

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Canada, he would become a recognized leader or Indian
patriot (Deebhagat).

I regret that this report is rather lengthy; but
it is due to the fact that it incorporates the developments
for the past two days, and the situation as it is to-day.

Yours obediently,
W. C. HOPKINSON

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

Deputy Minister of the Interior,

Ottawa.