

That Phantom Komagata Maru

By H. F. WEST

VANCOUVER is determined that the Komagata Maru, with her shipload of Hindus, shall sail back to India with her full list of passengers, bar none. This was demonstrated at a mass meeting held in Dominion Hall, Vancouver, on Monday, June 22nd. Mayor Baxter was in the chair. Mr. H. H. Stevens, M.P., and Mr. Ralph Smith, ex-M.P., were on the platform. The hall was jammed, and according to newspaper reports irrespective of party politics a thousand were turned away. About fifty East Indians were present and several among the crowd on the street. There was no violence. But there was a good deal of vigorous language culminating in a resolution calling for the immediate deportation of the Hindus, who for several weeks now have been marooned on a ship island in Vancouver Harbour while the ship's dues are paid by the East India colony on shore.

THE resolution which focused the sentiment of the meeting was as follows:

"That whereas the steamer Komagata Maru has been lying in the port of Vancouver from the 23rd day of May until the present date with a shipload of undesirable immigrants demanding admission into the Dominion of Canada;

"And whereas it is the universal opinion of all citizens resident upon the Pacific Coast of the Dominion of Canada, that the influx of Asiatics is detrimental and hurtful to the best interests of the Dominion, from the standpoint of citizenship, public morals and labour conditions;

"Be it therefore resolved that this meeting strongly urges upon the Dominion Government the necessity of supporting the efforts of the immigration authorities undertaken towards the rejection of the immigrants aboard the steamer Komagata Maru and their immediate deportation;

"And that stringent legislation be enacted whereby such immigration may, in the future, be entirely restricted from admission to the Dominion."

The Mayor said that the meeting had been called to back up the immigration authorities in their fight with the representatives of the East India colony now pending in the courts to test the meaning of the order-in-council. It was the evident intention to land the Hindus under the aegis of that order, which debars all Hindus, labourers and artisans, for a stated period. It was necessary to prevent that landing and to get legislation from the Canadian Parliament making any future immigration of Hindus impossible. In this Mr. H. H. Stevens concurred. He

intimated that owing to a gradual awakening on this subject at Ottawa it would be possible for the seven members from British Columbia so to impress the other 214 that prohibitive legislation could be enacted. He believed that the Komagata Maru had been brought over to test the validity of the existing order which should be crystallized into definite legislation.

"I am for a white Canada and a white race," he said, in conclusion.

GURDIT SINGH, the Vancouver promoter who chartered the Komagata Maru, was not present. An added note of unrest was contributed by the well-authenticated rumour, based upon a despatch from Calcutta, that the Norwegian steamer Christian Michelsen had sailed from that port with four hundred more Hindus bound for Vancouver, each man physically and financially qualified to enter Canada—whether in defiance of, or in conformity to, the terms of the order-in-council affecting the immigration of Hindus. And the man behind the movement is said to be Jamsetjee, a Parsee merchant of Bombay, who is interested in emigration to Canada.

M. R. RALPH SMITH, the well-known labour man of Vancouver, although not on the same side of politics as Mr. Stevens, said:

"All good British subjects respect the law, even though they may not approve of it. There is a species of anarchy in the attitude of these Hindus which, if white people were the offenders, would be vigorously suppressed. We are all alike in wishing our own working people to have food to live upon, and we do not want any sort of immigration that, by cutting wages and lowering the standard of living tends to degrade our people to Asiatic standards.

"As a man with public responsibilities, I am sober-minded enough to appreciate the difficulties of the imperial government. But the affairs of India are not the business of Canada. We recognize the exclusive right of Great Britain to deal with India, and Canada has the exclusive right to make her own laws and enforce them. The strength of British loyalty consists in the fact that in the British dominions every man realizes the right of self-government, with its corresponding responsibilities and freedom."

It is obviously the intention of Vancouver that Ottawa shall have more to do with the Oriental problem

than the Imperial Parliament; all Canada shall observe that the migration of yellow and brown and other shades of men across the Pacific affect more than British Columbia.

ALDERMAN WOODSIDE, in moving the resolution, was even more pointedly emphatic than any of the other speakers.

"We have in our harbour," said he, "a shipload of men who have come here in defiance of our laws in an effort to break in where they are not wanted. This problem is no new matter. For twenty years British Columbia has been trying to prevent the influx of Asiatic immigration, but owing to the attitude of Eastern Canada, where the situation is not understood, the fight has been in a sense a losing one. We have seen our white fishermen driven off the Fraser and Skeena rivers and our white workmen driven out of the shingle and lumber mills, and now these people are endeavouring to back our own people still farther off the map.

"These people who are now demanding admission in defiance of our laws, cut wages, then hoard their money, some of which is now being spent in bringing here this shipload of their friends and to pay lawyers to break down the barriers which our government has set up against such immigration."

The resolution was put to the meeting and carried by an overwhelming majority. A copy of it was sent to Premier Borden, who, in the absence of the Minister of the Interior, is dealing personally with the Hindu problem; which from the standpoint of British Columbia is not so much an Imperial as a provincial and national problem to be handled without gloves and to be solved as quickly as possible in the interests of a white Canada.

EAST INDIANS must admit that so far as peopling the Pacific coast with Orientals is concerned, British Columbia is right. Orientals should not be permitted to form colonies in British Columbia, just because that province is nearer to India, and has a limited labour market that might be useful to the Orient. There is no reason why British Columbia should be made an immigration scapegoat for the rest of Canada. If the Sikhs are willing to go on the land they should be ticketed clean through British Columbia to points on the prairie where there is land enough to try out the sincerity of their professions and their efficiency as farmers.

The Hindu problem is not merely a British Columbian, not merely an Imperial problem. It is one that affects the whole of Canada, and Canada as a united people by means of government should deal with it on its merits.



AN EMERGENCY

ISN'T IT HUMILIATING NOT TO HAVE YOUR OWN WATCHDOG ON THE JOB?