

The undersigned (Minister of Trade and Commerce) has the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Privy Council Reference No. 724 J, being a copy of a report of a committee of the Executive Council of the province of British Columbia having reference to a resolution of the legislative assembly of that province, passed during the present session, praying that the Dominion government may be moved to increase the per capita tax on Chinese entering the Dominion to \$100—such report having been transmitted through His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of the province under date of the 1st instant—and in reporting thereon, the minister would call attention to the report of his predecessor of date May 12, 1894, on similar resolutions, as per Privy Council Reference No. 1829 H, and in doing so would add that he sees no reason for changing in any way the substance of the report of May 12, above referred to.

I may just observe upon this resolution and report, that the resolution at that time adopted by the province of British Columbia, demanded that the increase of the personal poll tax on Chinese be raised from \$50 to \$100. Similar resolutions have been passed almost yearly. But I would call special attention to the last one, in which there is to be found a very important departure. In the year 1889, the legislature of British Columbia adopted a resolution which is embodied in a minute of His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor to the Secretary of State. It is as follows :

Sir,—I have the honour to transmit herewith, for consideration of His Excellency the Governor General in Council, an approved minute of my Executive Council, dated the 2nd instant, embodying a resolution passed at the recent session of the Legislative Assembly of this province, expressive of the opinion and desire of that body that the federal government increase the per capita tax on Chinese immigrants to at least \$500.

Now, there has been in the minds of the people of British Columbia, upon that subject, a very serious movement indeed. In 1895, just five years ago, the people of British Columbia, as represented in their Legislative Assembly, demanded that the present poll tax of \$50, should be raised to \$100. To double a tax of that kind would be already a very serious step ; but in 1899, the same body passed a resolution asking that the tax should be raised from \$50 to \$500. There is in this fact a very grave suggestion, and one which everybody will admit requires serious consideration before it is adopted. In 1885 the parliament of Canada thought it advisable to impose a poll tax of \$50 ; and I may say that for several years this tax seemed to meet the object for which it was imposed. Of late years it also seems evident that this tax has become inadequate. Now, to what extent should it be increased ? I submit to the judgment of every man in this House, that to double it at once, would be to take a very considerable step ahead, but to increase it at one bound to \$500, would seem to be a proceeding which should be very carefully considered before it is adopted. The govern-

ment is not prepared to go that length, but the government thinks that at the present time, under the considerations I have stated to the House, we would be doing substantive justice to the people of that province, if we acted upon the suggestion they made a few years ago, and repeated several times and increased the tax from \$50 to \$100. The commission which I have spoken of, will have to investigate, not only the Chinese and Japanese questions, but also to consider whether it would be advisable further to increase the tax to \$500, as was proposed to us last year. The wisdom therefore, of appointing such a commission seems to be indicated to the consideration of the House. So far as Chinese immigration is concerned, we are prepared to go a good ways to meet the views of our fellow-citizens in the province of British Columbia. At the same time there are other interests to be considered, and we would not be prepared to sanction such a very wide departure as is involved in the proposition to raise the tax from \$50 to \$500. We think the people of British Columbia will be satisfied with the advanced step we are taking under this legislation, and will be prepared to await the result of the experiment of raising the tax to \$100, and see how it will work on the immigration of next year. The commission, therefore, will have to investigate that subject of Chinese immigration, and will have to determine whether the increase which we make this year is adequate or not to meet the views of our fellow-citizens in the province of British Columbia.

With regard to the Japanese question, I have to inform our friends from British Columbia, that in coming to the decision not to impose any tax whatever upon Japanese immigrants, it is possible that we may disappoint the people of that province ; but I feel almost certain, indeed I have an abiding faith, that when they realize the motives of the Imperial policy which guide us in denying them that wish, when we represent to them that at present England is not only engaged in war in South Africa, but that serious complications are arising in China, and it is not impossible that England, though we hope it will not come to pass, may find herself engaged in another war in the Orient, the people of British Columbia, I venture to think, will be prepared to put no obstacle in the way of an alliance between Japan and England ; and although it may call for a sacrifice on their part, they will be prepared to make that sacrifice for the sake of the mother country and for the sake of a united empire.

Mr. E. G. PRIOR (Victoria, B.C.) I have listened to the special pleading of the right hon. leader of the government, very attentively. There is only one feeling that will permeate the people throughout British Columbia, as soon as the telegraph has flashed