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# EXCLUSION OF ASIATICS

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Premier McBride in Address to Legislature on  
Subject of Oriental Immigration

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Declares That British Columbia Must Forever  
Remain a White Man's Country

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Condemns Duplicity of Liberals on  
Question



THE HISTORY OF  
THE EAST INDIES

By  
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# EXCLUSION OF ASIATICS

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## Premier McBride in Address to Legislature on Subject of Oriental Immigration

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In the Legislative Assembly on February 14th, the Hon. Richard McBride, Premier, moved the following resolution which was recommended by the Hon. W. J. Bowser, Attorney-General:

"That whereas the feeling in the Province of British Columbia has long been opposed to Asiatic immigration; and

"Whereas numerous representations have been made by the Legislative Assembly of this Province to the Federal authorities, setting forth the views of the people at various times as being in favor of effectual exclusion; and

"Whereas on account of the action of the Dominion Government on several occasions in disallowing local legislation, framed on the lines of the commonly called "Natal Act," with the object of preventing such immigration, the local Legislature has been prevented from exercising authority on its own behalf; and

"Whereas a delegation from the Government of British Columbia, whose report has been submitted to this House, has recently made further and urgent representations on the subject to the Federal authorities to the effect that the immigration from Oriental countries still continues in a degree constituting

a menace to white labor and the desire to preserve British Columbia as a white man's domain:

"Therefore, be it Resolved, That this House heartily concurs in the representations made by the said delegation to the Right Honorable R. L. Borden, Prime Minister of Canada, and desires to express its great satisfaction at the announcement that the Government of British Columbia will be consulted in connection with the new Treaty with Japan so far as consideration specially affecting British Columbia may be concerned; and

"Be it further Resolved, That His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor be requested to forward a copy of this Resolution to the Honorable the Secretary of State at Ottawa."

**Report Reprinted from News-Advertiser, Jan. 16th, 1912.**

The Hon. Mr. McBride said:

"In rising to move this resolution I am quite sensible of the importance that must attach to the attitude of this House with regard to the party that may be in power in the Dominion in the settlement of this question. The object of the resolution is to secure once more the voice of the House on the policy the

Government will pursue, so that I would like to make a few observations in order to clearly define the position the Government is taking. It is true that the party with which I am associated has made very strong protests in connection with the Asiatic problem. In season and out of season since 1896 we have never relaxed in our advocacy of a White British Columbia, and it is with a view of acting consistently with those professions that I ask the House to adopt the resolution to which I now address myself.

#### **Sir Wilfrid Laurier in 1896 and 1910.**

We know that a review of the political situation in 1896 discloses the fact that in that year the Liberal party secured support from this province, because of the emphatic declaration of Sir Wilfrid Laurier contained in a telegram he sent at that time to the effect that the views held in British Columbia would prevail regardless of opinion in Eastern Canada. He said that the Asiatic problem was not a question in the East, and that the views of the West must prevail. But if we follow his attitude from the moment he assumed office to his last declaration in the Horse Show Building in Vancouver, we shall see that he has lacked in sincerity from start to finish. From the way he has tried to sidestep by pleading diplomatic considerations we know that he has never fulfilled the promise of 1896 by which he gained so many votes in British Columbia. I ought to know, as I happened to be one of the unfortunate candidates in that year, that nothing seemed to have more weight with the electorate than that declaration that once the Conservatives were out the Asiatic problem would be solved and British Columbia saved to the white people.

"Well, we have gone on year after year, and session after session, emphasizing in this House how a great majority of the people in the West feel on this important issue. We have enacted and re-enacted laws designed after the famous Natal Act, and in each instance have had to meet the rebuff of Ottawa, where our bills were disallowed. You will well recollect that not many

months ago we had fully expected to be able to secure a decision from the Privy Council on our attitude in this matter. The federal authorities allowed it to be argued in the courts in this province, where it was settled in their favor, but when the time came for consideration before the Privy Council, we suddenly received the news that the bill would be disallowed at Ottawa and so we were not allowed to proceed. One would have expected, after the declaration of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, that he would at least have permitted that bill to receive judicial consideration of the Privy Council, so that we might take upon ourselves the full measure of its responsibility. We had nothing to conceal, nor had we the slightest desire to do anything that would be repugnant either to the authorities at Ottawa or in England.

#### **Mr. Chamberlain Favored a Natal Act.**

From the first we had the declaration of Mr. Chamberlain to which Sir Wilfrid Laurier might have referred and which would have fully justified him in allowing us to proceed. You will all recollect that some years ago Mr. Chamberlain concluded his communication on this subject with these historic words: 'In the meantime I have to request that you will impress upon your minister that restrictive legislation of the type of which the legislation in question appears to be, is extremely repugnant to the sentiments of the people and government of Japan, and you should not fail to impress upon them the importance, if there is any real prospect of a large influx of Japanese laborers into Canada, of dealing with it by legislation of the Dominion Parliament on the line of the accompanying Natal Act, which is likely to be generally adopted in Australia.'

"If Sir Wilfrid Laurier wished for any confirmation or guidance he could surely have had it in this declaration, but we were of no concern in British Columbia. It was all right in the heat of the general election of 1896 to tell the people of British Columbia that if he came into office this question of Asiatic immigration would be quickly solved, but no sooner was he there than these consid-

erations were overcome by international considerations or diplomatic influences. I have yet to listen to a single apologist for him who could offer any explanation of the apathy, indifference and duplicity practiced towards this section of Canada by the heads of the government of 1896.

"This question is as important now as it was then—indeed far more so. The problem arising from the admission of Chinese and Japanese workmen in 1896 was nothing to what it is in 1912. If Sir Wilfrid Laurier had kept his promise I am satisfied that the Natal Act of 1896 would have kept the Japanese from coming into competition with our own people. It is since that date, I am confident that the great bulk of Japanese have come into this country to make it their habitation. We were not discouraged by Ottawa's action. It did not stay our hand, nor have we lost opportunity or time to drive home to the whole of Canada the necessity for some active policy on this score.

#### Sir Wilfrid Not Sincere.

"When Sir Wilfrid Laurier paid his last visit as Premier of Canada to these parts in the summer of 1910, his two principal addresses were made in the Horse Show Building in Vancouver, and in a similar structure in Victoria. I have taken trouble to gather from those speeches the parts referring to the Asiatic problem. To do him justice he chiefly addressed himself to this question, showing that he must have known that he had not been sincere with the people of British Columbia on this matter, and it required some explanation on his part."

The Premier then quoted at length from Sir Wilfrid's address in the Horse Show Building, Vancouver, on August 17, 1910. Sir Wilfrid had then stated that his policy had been based upon two ideas. The first was that they must discuss it from the point of view of the whole British Empire, not one portion of it, and to remember that it was in the interests of that Empire to see if possible that her relations with Asiatic countries were of a friendly character. His second proposition had been that this immigration had to be controlled and checked and kept within reasonable bounds.

"Surely," said the Premier, "Sir Wil-

frid must have known all this in 1896, and the attitude assumed by other parts of the Empire, especially the colony of Natal at that time. He went on further to say that he agreed with the people of this province as to the end to be obtained, but differed as to methods some sought to adopt. If Sir Wilfrid Laurier had sent a message couched in that language to the Liberals of British Columbia in 1896 how much chance of election would they have had?"

The Premier continued to read from Sir Wilfrid's address where he had said, "Those who assailed the government during the last election looked at it (the Asiatic question) from the point of view of the labor man. I have looked at it from the point of view of the whole British Empire. While you have sought to obtain restrictions of Asiatic labor by harsh enactments of Parliament, the policy by which I myself and the government sought to achieve the same result has been that of diplomatic action, friendly relations and mutual agreement. I ask now which of these two methods is most conducive to the peace and dignity of the Empire to which we have the honor to belong?"

"Well," said Hon. Mr. McBride, "If the peace and dignity of the Empire were to be disturbed by the enactment of the Natal Act in this country, how is it that in face of the Natal Act legislation in Australia and South Africa the peace and concord of the Empire still continue?" (Applause).

#### The Policy of Soft Solder

He quoted further from Sir Wilfrid Laurier where he had spoken of the treaty of commerce with Japan in 1905 against which not a word of contradiction had been said in the Canadian Parliament, but in the summer of 1907 there had been a sudden influx of Japanese into British Columbia, and especially Vancouver, over-riding the agreement that had been made. He thought it was an oversight on the part of the Japanese government, and had sent Mr. Lemieux to Japan to protest, and there, aided by Sir Claude Macdonald, the agreement was re-enacted that no more than 400 Japanese should be allowed to come into Canada in one year. He believed that that undertaking had been scrupulously ob-

servd though he had heard rumors to the contrary. In the same year came the influx from India and the men we had to deal with were fellow subjects of the King. He did not conceive it to be the position of the government to turn back these men with "violence, contumely and contempt," but had sent his colleague, Mackenzie King, to India, and no other man from India had come to this country since that time. Which was better, the method of treating these men with contempt and contumely, of telling them they were an inferior race, or asking their government to keep them at home?

"I suppose he thought he could score a point by that," said the Premier. "But I can say confidently that there has been no case that I know in which there has been any desire to treat the Hindus in this province with hardship. At the same time, while we have tried to keep this a white man's country, developments have shown that Hindu labor has not been a success. I am confident that if enquiries were made where Hindus have been employed it would be shown that their employment was not successful. It may have been, of course, because of climatic conditions and the complete change of environment, but the fact remains. And further it has been shown conclusively that the Hindu cannot assimilate with the people of this country and enjoy that full measure of citizenship which we wish all the people of this country to enjoy for all time to come.

"Sir Wilfrid Laurier said that no harsh enactments should be made to keep these people out, but that it should all be done by diplomatic arrangements and mutual agreement. In other words we should have not protection, such as has been enjoyed by Natal and Australia, but we must leave it to diplomatic agreement to say whether these people shall be allowed to stream in by the thousands or not."

#### **The Chinese Had No Friends at Court.**

Again the Premier quoted Sir Wilfrid Laurier where he had said that when they increased the Chinese head tax from \$100 to \$500 "the Chinese had no diplomatic agent at Ottawa. There was no one to protest, and so we had no hesitation in adopting that policy."

"In other words," said Hon. Mr. McBride, "had there been a Chinese diplomatic agent at Ottawa it was not likely that this increase would have taken place, but as the Japanese were represented he must take other measures with them. Yet he must have known in 1896 when he made his famous declaration that the opinions of the West must prevail, that England and Japan were on friendly terms, and though they had not then entered into an alliance, there was no quarrel between them. Now I have given you I think very fairly from these extracts the substance of Sir Wilfrid's addresses when he was last in British Columbia, and you must agree with me that he never, in one single instance, seems to come very close to the principle which is involved. He speaks of the working men, and says it is not a mere matter of how it affects labor in this country, or how it affects the whole of Canada, but it is a matter of how it affects the whole Empire of which Japan is the ally. He says, 'You can be harsh with the Chinaman, you can treat him with contumely and contempt because he has no diplomatic agent at Ottawa,' but 'hands off the other Asiatics because they have representatives at Ottawa.' A very strange attitude for a high-minded statesman like Sir Wilfrid Laurier to take, and very difficult for him to explain if he were to come again to British Columbia and indulge in a discussion of this kind. Now, as far as the Chinese and Japanese are concerned, to British Columbia and this legislature which represents the people of British Columbia they are the same. We look upon them as Asiatics. At the same time we agree that they are entitled to equal consideration under our laws, while they are in this province, but I would venture to take other views, and I would submit that the higher ground for the consideration of this whole question from the economic point of view is the effect that this immigration will have on our own people.

#### **A Question of Race and Empire.**

We protect our trade from foreign competition, and why should we not also protect our labor, which is equally

with our trade and manufactures a product of our nation. It is useless to dwell upon the impossibility of two peoples with different ideals and different modes of life trying to compete upon equal terms. It is too well recognized and has been too often repeated to need any argument this afternoon. Our contention is that different classes of people belonging to different geographical zones have habits and ideas that do not harmonize and the same argument applies to the Hindus, even though they are our fellow-subjects in the Empire. For the same reason we don't want to assimilate with the Japanese, and we must assume that the Japanese are equally desirous to preserve the purity of their own race.

"In this resolution I have tried to crystallize the views of this Legislature as I have heard them expressed so frequently in this hall, and on the platforms throughout the country at large. It is then a question of how this country may be preserved for the white people. I may say of the Natal Act that if it had been in force, it would have been a decent ordinance for our own protection and was never designed to visit any harshness upon the shoulders of an alien people.

"Considering now the interests of the Empire, I do not think that any body of men can be said to be more solicitous of the welfare of that Empire than members of this Legislature or of this Government, or than the people of this province as a whole, and I know we all would hesitate to do anything that would involve the Empire or the nation of which we are a part, in warfare, or injure its peaceful relations with other countries or wish anything to be done that would be injurious to its commerce abroad. But I cannot understand why a law which is in operation in Australasia and in South Africa, and which was declared to be by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, when Secretary of State for the Colonies, a proper and competent law for the purposes for which it was enacted, and which has been in operation all these years without affecting the internal relations of Great Britain or being the subject of protest by other nations whose subjects were affected by it. All we have asked for

our own purposes was that we be permitted to pass a law similar to that, or that the Dominion Parliament should pass such a law. We have not asked Sir Wilfrid Laurier while he was in power to do that because we wished to embarrass him, and obviously my friends of the Opposition will admit that we do not now wish Mr. Borden to pass such a law because we wish to embarrass his government. We have not changed our position in that matter one iota. We ask that the labor of this country, and I submit it should not be referred to as a 'mere matter of labor,' should be protected against unfair competition, unfair in the sense of conditions of unequal competition. Our labor and social conditions are matters of great importance to us, tremendous assets in the building up of a country, and one in the very highest Imperial sense of world-wide importance.

**British Columbia for the Whites; Asia  
for the Asiatics.**

"Sir Wilfrid has presented to us as an alternative a policy of diplomacy, or understanding, or an arrangement which depends upon the good faith and friendship of the Japanese Government. That is an uncertain foundation to build upon. It is not satisfactory. Japan on one occasion did not live up to it, as Sir Wilfrid informs us that it did not, but he believes that it will in the future. I do not wish to impugn the good faith of Japan, but governments in that country, as in this, change from time to time. But, sir, apart from that altogether, as a condition of that understanding, we do not wish 500 Japanese per annum in British Columbia, nor do we want a number of Chinese. The rate of wages being paid now in this country is attracting large numbers of Chinese, as the revenue from the tax on Chinese shows. They are coming now as easily as when the tax was only \$100, because they can afford to pay it. As leader of this government, and of the local Conservatives in British Columbia, I wish to place myself on record as opposed to the system at present in operation and as being unwilling, no matter what government is in power at Ottawa, to agree to any policy which has not for its object and is not in its

details sufficient to preserve Canada as a whole and this province in particular what we wish it to be in fact and altogether, a white man's country.

"As will be seen from the report presented by the delegation of which I was a member, we discussed this matter with the Premier of Canada, and we made representations to his government in terms similar to what I have endeavored to say to you today, and we have had the assurance that the Government of British Columbia will be consulted when the new treaty with Japan is being considered in matters affecting the interests of this province. That is all we can ask him at present, as the government at Ottawa, only a few months in power, has not had time to take the subject up and consider it as it should be considered.

#### **Want to Be Friendly, but Separate.**

"In what I have said this afternoon I do not mean to be offensive in one single sense against the Japanese nation. Her progress in the past fifty years is a world's record, and who is the man who will not accord to the Japanese a fair measure of credit for his wonderful achievements? I yield to no man in the respect I hold for the Japanese, their constitution and their sovereign. At the present time it ought to be understood that we propose to preserve this country for our own people and to maintain Canada for the white race. We

can take high ground from international considerations, and we can say, 'It is best for the nation and the Empire to which we belong that this country be reserved for men of our own race and our own color.' I trust that this resolution will be received with the unanimous endorsement of this assembly. I want it sent to Ottawa so that they may know in unmistakable terms our determination. We want no differences with the Japanese. They have their own country and are entitled to enjoy it, and there is no disposition on the part of the Canadian people to trespass on their preserves. We all know how narrow many of their laws are, and how they try to preserve everything in Japan for the Japanese people. We have no quarrel with them for that. They have every right to do it, and for ourselves we claim the same right and privilege. We want to develop this country for our own people, and we want it to be understood that we will not budge one inch from our stand in this matter. Once more I wish the House to understand that there is nothing offensive in my words to the Asiatics and to the Japanese people especially. We have large business relations with Japan and we want them to continue, but nevertheless it is of imperative importance that we should show that we intend to preserve at all times Canada for the white race." (Applause.)