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KITH BUT NOT KIN: THE HIGHLAND SCOTS, IMPERIAL RESETTLEMENT,
AND THE NEGOTIATING OF IDENTITY ON THE FRONTIERS OF THE BRITISH
EMPIRE IN THE INTERWAR YEARS

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by

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Based on archival work in England, Scotland, the United States, Canada and Australia, my dissertation expands the traditional purview of diplomatic history into the international dimensions of the social and cultural realms. My study treats doomed attempts to reconstruct previously-held notions of hierarchy and deference as encapsulated in the Empire Settlement Act (ESA) in the wake of the dramatic changes to the world order resulting from World War I. To counter the emergence of Japan as a world power, under the auspices of the ESA, British Columbia and Western Australia, the two most distant outposts of the “white” British Empire in the Pacific, imported poor Celtic farmers and militiamen from northern Scotland in an attempt to retain their

“British” identity, which they felt was threatened by Japan on the one hand, the Japanese in their midst on another, and local “nationalisms” on a third.

This dissertation argues that such schemes were undermined by the conflicting priorities of Britain and the Dominions, the tensions between laissez-faire and excessive centralized control, the disconnect between government, capital and labor, the valuations of self-help within highly circumscribed situations, the conflict between the themes of rejuvenation and permanent regression, the fight between an idiosyncratic rural ideal and the reality of the urbanized and industrialized world of the twentieth century, and the inconsistent application of supposedly inviolable Social Darwinist ideals. The birth and death of plans to recruit Hebridean crofters to British Columbia and Western Australia in the 1920s reveals a great deal about the fluidity surrounding concepts of identity and security in a very unstable time. The debates surrounding the status of the Hebridean Scots, especially vis-à-vis their British compatriots and the Japanese, are an extreme window through which the much wider dialogues taking place regarding the status of the British Empire both internally and on the global stage, on the changing role of race as the final determinant of one’s identity and status, and the clashes between the Victorian and the modern ways of defining and conceiving of Empire, can be viewed and debated.

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INTRODUCTION

The years immediately following World War I presented a multitude of crises for the British Empire. The unabashed self-assuredness that characterized Britain and its Dominions in the halcyon days of July 1914 was fundamentally shaken by World War I's challenges to the *pax Britannica*. The famous "Two-Power Standard" that the British Government employed prior to the war, under which the strength of the Royal Navy had to be at least equal to that of the next two largest naval powers combined, was jettisoned by the Washington Naval Conference of 1922, when Britain conceded parity to the United States. London's prewar dominance of global finance and trade was now seriously challenged by New York, in the process losing much of the financial leverage over other nations it hitherto had held. Japan, which fewer than seventy years earlier was almost wholly isolated from the international community, emerged from World War I not only as a dominant power in the Northern Pacific basin, but one that was no longer tethered to the Empire as a formal ally as it has been since 1902, a consequence of the Washington Conference. Britain itself was mired in a severe postwar depression from 1920 onwards. As a result, industrial and agrarian unrest erupted throughout Britain, as men and women who had "fought the good fight" over the previous four years expected some sort of reward for their sacrifices, only to more often than not find themselves unemployed.

Meanwhile, the majority of Ireland, one of the four constituent parts of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland as it had existed since 1801, won its *de facto* independence from Britain through a brutal civil war in 1921, in doing so ending seven centuries of English and later British dominance over the island. Simultaneously, in 1919, the suspension of certain liberties in India in the wake of mass protests against the glacial process of reform under the terms of the Rowlatt Act, such as detention without warrants, combined with the deaths of approximately 400 people at the hands of British troops at Amritsar, led to a massive push against British rule throughout the subcontinent. Even in Canada and Australia, which before the war were seen as steadfast bastions of “Britishness” in terms of both culture and identity, many there now questioned their previous automatic deference to and subordination of their interests to the fiat of the British Parliament and the Colonial Office.

To confront all of these serious challenges, the British Parliament passed the Empire Settlement Act of 1922. This act marked the first official involvement of the British state in managing and funding a comprehensive program of emigration since the ending of the transportation of its criminals in the 1860s. Under its terms, the British Treasury provided £1,500,000 for 1922, and £3,000,000 annually thereafter, to subsidize the resettlement of Britons to the Dominions, especially to Canada and Australia.¹ This act’s ratification was motivated by the perceived need to better

¹ Funds released by the British Government under the terms of the Empire Settlement Act were limited in two important ways. The first, perhaps reflecting the heightened Social Darwinism and eugenicist movements of the 1920s, was that schemes of imperial resettlement to parts of the Empire that did not

redistribute the population of the British Empire. Suddenly, the ability and even the willingness of the state to marshal the resources of the entire Empire to effect the monumental social changes such an endeavor required became first necessary, then expected. While much of the unprecedented wartime expansion of the British government into the regulation and management of the economy and of its society was reversed once hostilities ended, the precedent for increased state involvement in areas deemed in the national interest had been established and legitimated. Over the next fifteen years, some 36 percent, or 405,230 British emigrants, received some sort of government aid under the Empire Settlement Act for their relocation within the Empire. Canada as a whole welcomed 186,524 of these assisted settlers, while Australia received 172,735.²

Almost immediately, the governments of two of the furthest extremities of British settlement in the Empire, British Columbia and Western Australia, seized upon this unprecedented opportunity to shore up their defenses against the new threats to their security and their quintessential British identities by attempting to recruit poor war

enjoy responsible government were ineligible for participation in this scheme. This may in part be explained by the increasing prevalence of ideas that non-Anglo-Saxons were could never be “elevated” to the standards of living and of morality that their “superiors” enjoyed due to their genetic inheritance. Thus, it would be best if the “British” were either separated from the indigenous populations for fear of degeneration, as what increasingly occurred in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, or reinforced areas where they already constituted a majority of the population, as in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. In fact, neither South Africa nor Southern Rhodesia actively pursued schemes of imperial resettlement themselves. This is largely due to both their secure access to large reserves of cheap labor, notably the majority African populations in both entities, and their unwillingness to welcome large numbers of cheap, British competitors who would it was feared dilute the high standards of “whiteness” seen as essential to maintaining their veneer of racial supremacy that justified minority white rule and also upset the delicate balance between Anglo-South Africans and Afrikaners in the region.

² Source: Stephen Constantine, ed., Emigrants and Empire: British Settlement in the Dominions between the Wars (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1990), p. 16.

veterans and farmers from the Scottish Highlands as a counterbalance to the woes they faced. Most Scots traditionally enjoyed the reputation of being the “shock troops of modernization” and the “creators” of “the idea of the British Empire,” to cite two modern celebrations of the Scottish role in the imperial project.³ Unlike the more settled and thus more “docile” English and Lowland Scots, the Highlanders were considered men and women of the frontier, a “wild, sexy and bestial” population full of “primitive Highland soldier[s]” who were supposedly driven by “duty and basic aggression.”⁴ This was certainly not lost upon the political elites of both societies, each of which proposed aggressive schemes to recruit such immigrants to their expanses.

Such positive valuations were considered especially true of the men and women from the Outer Hebrides, a remote archipelago that to this day is at least a three-hour sail from the remote northwestern mainland of Scotland. The Hebrideans, then as now, were mostly small-scale farmers and fishermen (otherwise known as crofters, after the small plots of land or crofts they rented from their lairds or landlords) who eked out a precarious living from the tempestuous waters that surround the islands and the barren rocks and thin soil that dominate its landscape. With the notable exceptions of two wartime booms in demand for the islands’ produce – fish, kelp and wheat – during the

³ R.A. Cage, ed., The Scots Abroad: Labour, Capital, Enterprise, 1750-1914 (London: Croon Helm, 1985), p. 80; Arthur Herman, How the Scots Invented the Modern World: The True Story of How Western Europe’s Poorest Nation Created Our World and Everything in It (New York: Crown Publishers, 2001), p. 294.

⁴ Robert Miles, Racism (New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 24; Edward M. Spiers, The Scottish Soldier and Empire, 1854-1902 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 13.

Napoleonic Wars and again, more notably, during World War I, the Outer Hebrides have remained mired in poverty for the past three centuries. Despite this, or perhaps due to it, the Hebrideans have long enjoyed a reputation in Britain and throughout the Empire as being an honorable people. They maintained their usage of the Gaelic language and their quasi-feudal relationship with their “lairds,” both of which had long since disappeared from the rest of Scotland.

More importantly, the Hebrideans were also renowned for their military prowess. They had a reputation, dating back centuries, as being some of the most ardent defenders of the British Empire. This image was only reinforced by their military exploits during World War I. To quote the Reverend A.C. MacLean, Presbyterian minister in Stornoway, the largest town in the archipelago, in the 1920s:

For many years it has been a tradition of the men of Lewis to serve on board the ships of our royal navy, and at least 5,000 of them are members or ex-members of the Royal Naval Reserve, besides the men on active service in the other branches of our fighting forces on sea and on land. Practically every able-bodied man in the Lewis has served with perfervid loyalty King, country and home with that highest, rarest, noblest asset of all – his life.⁵

Considering that these stereotypes held considerable sway in the 1920s, it is little wonder that Western Australia and British Columbia at the time turned so assiduously to the Hebrides to help fill and defend their vast and empty expanses.

In 1922, the state government of Western Australia asked the Colonial Office in London what the prospects were of procuring some of these Hebrideans to settle in its

⁵ “Stornoway, By the Rev. A.C. MacLean, Contin,” in The Ross-shire Journal, April 11, 1924, p. 3.

southwest as part of the ambitious Group Settlement Scheme, a large-scale immigration project that ultimately aimed to resettle some 75,000 Britons in Western Australia. In October 1923, a small group of approximately one hundred crofters arrived at the Western Australian port city of Fremantle. Shortly thereafter, these immigrants were transported to a large parcel on the Peel Estate located approximately forty miles south of Perth. This land was officially designated Group 80. Once there, the Hebrideans were to help establish a large-scale dairy industry in the state from scratch. If this trial succeeded, then it was hoped that several of the other groups would be pioneered by other equally intrepid crofters.

A few months later, in February 1924, the Minister of Lands of British Columbia, future provincial premier Thomas Dufferin Pattullo, proposed to the Scottish Office in London a plan under which his government would arrange to bring a small settlement of twenty-five Hebridean families to the west coast of his province, in anticipation of several hundred more. Under the terms of this scheme, the provincial government would extend loans of £120 or \$600 Canadian per family to establish the crofters in the province's burgeoning fishing industry. Immediately upon arriving in British Columbia, they were whisked to Port Alberni, where model villages were to be quickly in order to convince the Scottish Office that it should fund the further resettlement of hundreds if not thousands of Hebrideans in the province. British

Columbia wanted these immigrants to trawl the province's waters for fish as they had in Scotland.⁶

If one of the main motivations behind Empire Settlement was to redistribute people from overcrowded Britain to the under-populated Dominions, why then did the British Government, British Columbia and Western Australia focus their attention so intensely on the sparsely populated Outer Hebrides, which in 1921 boasted a population of approximately 50,000?⁷ Most of the advertising in the Stornoway Gazette, the leading newspaper of the archipelago, consisted of solicitations for immigrants by agents from the Canadian and Australian governments or by private enterprises in those Dominions. This is something that surely could not be said for practically any other newspaper or magazine published in Great Britain at the time, even when compared to the leading broadsheets of Inverness, Edinburgh and Glasgow.

The reason for this, according to supporters of these schemes, was to alleviate the destitution and poverty seen as endemic to the Hebrides. The Vancouver Sun boasted of the magnanimity of the government of British Columbia in its "inducing their friends of the Hebrides to emigrate [sic] to British Columbia, where conditions are not so severe" and where they "could make a comfortable living and establish happy homes" in the province.⁸ Such boasts were echoed in Western Australia. A reporter there expressed his desire that "this saving gospel will be preached to heeding

⁶ In "Advance Guard of Settlers Arrive," September 18, 1924, p. 1

⁷ In "Report of the Oversea Settlement Committee for the Year Ended 31st December 1923" (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1924), p. 4.

⁸ In "Local Scots to Send Aid," February 25, 1924, p. 7.

ears...[Scotland] is not herself a country rich in resources” – especially when compared to the lush, verdant and fertile lands of the reporter’s home state.⁹

Historically, many in British Columbia and Western Australia often would have looked towards Ireland as the main source of “British” immigrants who had been shipped throughout the Empire in order to both develop the Empire from within through their labor, by working the mines, building roads and railroads, or engaging in agricultural pursuits, and to defend the Empire from without, by increasing the population of its frontiers and serving in its militias and armed forces in times of need. While neither British Columbia nor Western Australia was particularly known for being a center for Irish immigration, especially when compared to the larger eastern cities of Melbourne and Montreal, they did receive their fair share of Irish immigrants throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Unfortunately for both British Columbia and Western Australia, this traditional source of labor was abruptly and explicitly excluded for consideration for such schemes by the terms of the Empire Settlement Act. The Irish Free State, now considered more or less a Dominion rather than a constituent part of the United Kingdom, was ineligible for consideration as a potential source of migrants under the terms of the Empire Settlement Act. Consequently, both Western Australia and British Columbia now viewed the Outer Hebrides, an archipelago that had throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries been more likened to Ireland in many ways due to their

⁹ In “The Scottish Delegation,” in the West Australian, April 20, 1928.

assumed shared ancestry, Gaelic languages, poverty and quasi-feudal societal organization, as a possible substitute. In fact, to many in both societies, the Hebrideans were vastly preferable to the Irish, because they were seen as more loyal to the British Empire based on their Scottish identity and their Protestant faith.

This reputation made the Hebrideans very attractive to political leaders in British Columbia and Western Australia. Both entities conceived of themselves as remote and under-populated frontiers of British civilization and British ideals, located vast distances not only from Great Britain but also from the major population centers of their respective federations. As such, these Hebridean crofters, themselves products of and defenders of Great Britain on its northern frontier in both a geographical and a racial sense, would counter any challenges the British Empire may face in the Pacific region.

As the twentieth century progressed, that threat increasingly became identified with Japan. In August 1914, Japan activated the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 at Britain's request. Almost immediately, Japan invaded and conquered all of the German colonial possessions in the Pacific Ocean north of the Equator. With these quick victories over the Germans, many British Columbians and Western Australians worried that they might be the next targets of Japanese expansion. Australian expert on Asian affairs Major E.L. Piesse remarked in 1919 that "it was not seen [in Australia] that these islands were required by Japan for her own defence, and their commercial value was trifling; their occupation seemed then to point to some aggressive purpose," as if these

islands were to be stepping stones should Japan decide to take advantage of British naval weakness in the Pacific to seize both British Columbia and Western Australia as a possible *Lebensraum*.¹⁰

Not only were the Hebrideans considered the ideal soldier-settlers who would defend the British presence in the Pacific basin, they were also supposed to serve as white British replacements of the Japanese residents already present in British Columbia, and who threatened to infiltrate Western Australia.¹¹ This argument, while voiced in both places, was much more prominent in British Columbia. Western Australia had in the 1890s and the 1900s closed its doors to practically all non-British immigration through a judicious and rigorous application of literacy tests that formed the cornerstone of the “White Australia” policy. Consequently, while it was hoped that farmers and dairy cooperatives would purchase the produce of the Hebrideans, and in the process drive the approximately 1500 Japanese who resided in Western Australia by the 1920s out of farming and later the state altogether, this priority was a distant second compared to the need to procure a population that would ward off any threat of an invasion by Japan.¹² This explains why the Hebrideans, like all other immigrants

¹⁰ National Library of Australia (NLA), MS 882, Series 5, Folder 1, Number 46, “Notes of Statements Made by Major E.L. Piesse in a Conversation with Dr. Hanihara, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, and S. Shimidzu, Consul-General for Japan at Sydney,” dated December 25, 1919.

¹¹ Raymond Callahan, “The Illusion of Security: Singapore 1919-1942,” in the *Journal of Contemporary History*, v. 9, no. 2 (April 1974), p. 77.

¹² According to contemporary popular racial theorist Lothrop Stoddard, “Australia is the focal point where the expanding forces of East and West confront each other most sharply and most irreconcilably,” where the “hurricane winds of race war would begin to blow,” where the “congested Oriental populations” threatened to “swamp (the Anglo-Saxons) racially in a hungry, quick breeding brown and yellow flood.” Source: NLA, MSS 1538, Series 32, Subseries 2, Folder 12, “White Australia – The Low-

brought to Western Australia through the auspices of the Group Settlement scheme, were to establish dairy farms, a profession the Hebrideans were ill-suited and ill-prepared for. It also explains why the rhetoric of those who promoted their resettlement in Western Australia focused almost solely on their supposed innate martial qualities rather than on their experience as agriculturalists.

Supporters of the resettlement of Hebrideans to British Columbia continually stressed the experience of these immigrants in the deep-sea fisheries of Scotland. This was arguably the most attractive skill the Hebrideans could bring to their new home. But privately, many politicians pointed out that the scheme's main goal was not to rehabilitate the Hebrideans or to allow them to grow prosperous. Rather, they emphasized that they were to function as a white British replacement for the ill-paid and ill-treated Japanese fishermen who by the early 1920s had come to constitute one-half of the number of those employed in that industry. Unlike in Australia, the only restriction to the entry of Japanese to Canada was a "Gentleman's Agreement," under which Japan voluntarily restricted the emigration of its subjects to Canada to 400 persons annually, wives of migrants being excluded from that figure. With more Japanese already living in British Columbia than in Western Australia, and with the former lying geographically much further away from Japan, the Hebrideans who

Pressure Center of the Globe," in *Liberty*, May 26, 1928, pp. 37, 38. Also, it should be pointed out that according to the 1921 Australian census, only 2921 Japanese resided in the whole of the Dominion (this figure includes 183 "half castes"), out of a national population of approximately 5,000,000. Source: NLA, MSS 1538, Series 16, Subseries 2, Part 1, Folder 40, Number 3079.

migrated to British Columbia were envisioned as agents of “whiteness” first and potential defenders of the province second.

Yet despite all of these high hopes and aspirations surrounding the importation of Hebrideans to both British Columbia and Western Australia in the early 1920s, both schemes proved to be remarkably short-lived. Less than five years after the *Bendigo* arrived in Fremantle with its cargo of Hebrideans, Group 80 was officially condemned by the state government in 1928.¹³ Most of the Scots who populated Group 80 had long before then abandoned their chronically flooded sandbars and marshes. The settlers who arrived with high hopes in 1923 soon discovered that the promises of residing in a land of milk and honey proved to be completely false. Some of these immigrants relocated to Perth, the state capital and largest city, as early as 1924, mere months after they arrived in Western Australia. By the end of 1928 all that remained of Group 80 was an unpaved road; all of the Hebrideans had left the area.

The fate of their compatriots who migrated to Port Alberni was no less distressing. The jobs they were promised by the provincial government proved to be illusory. The Hebrideans were to be housed in tents as they were shuffled from fishery to fishery all along the west coast of British Columbia. Yet here, too, the government concluded that these settlers would either rise or fall largely on their own efforts. On October 31, 1925, Pattullo informed the Scottish Fishery Office that the provincial government was abandoning this particular immigration scheme. The proposal so

¹³ J.P. Gabbedy, Group Settlement Part 2: Its People: Their Life and Times – An Inside View (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1988), p. 161,

eagerly promoted in 1924 was dead only a year and a half later. The handful of Hebrideans who did arrive on Vancouver Island quickly disappeared from the historical record, other than those a representative from the Scottish Fishery Board visiting the province decried as “bums” living on the streets of Vancouver.

The fates of these schemes may have been more easily predicted had the governments involved taken into account the attitudes of several key constituencies regarding the Hebrideans, the Japanese they were intended to confront and replace, and even the whole rationale behind Empire Settlement. Firstly, advocates of these schemes neglected to consider the fact that in the opinion of many people at the time in Western Australia, in British Columbia, and even within the Colonial Office and the Scottish Office in London, the positive attributes of the Hebrideans listed above were more than outweighed by their perceived deficiencies. Just as state and provincial politicians applauded the British status of the Hebridean men and women who would defend, transform and reinforce these frontiers of the Empire at a time of unprecedented strain, many others prioritized their Celtic nature and the chronic poverty and unrest that supposedly resulted from this as evidence that these particular immigrants were unwilling or unable to perform the tasks assigned to them.¹⁴ Even men like Pattullo, Western Australian Premier Sir James Mitchell and others who in public celebrated the “Britishness” and the military valor of the Hebrideans as irrefutable assets in private pointed out to potential employers that the main attraction of the Hebrideans from an

¹⁴ Colin Kidd, “Race, Empire and the Limits of Nineteenth Century Scottish Nationhood,” in The Historical Journal, v. 46, no. 4 (2003), p. 877.

economic perspective was that these crofters could be paid lower wages, provided with substandard living conditions, and be treated in a heavy-handed manner than would never be afforded other British immigrants.

These negative characterizations were also shared by a rather unlikely alliance of labor and capital in both British Columbia and Western Australia. In the case of the former, many canners and fishing outfits rejected the government's argument that the Hebrideans were automatically superior to the Japanese based on their skin color and racial heritage alone.¹⁵ D.T. James of the Fishery Board of Scotland remarked that "protests were made by the canners that it would be impossible to replace the experienced Orientals with whites owing to the difficulties and hardships connected with fishing."¹⁶ The fishing industry, instead of believing that Japanese skill and cunning would be used to infiltrate, weaken and ultimately betray British Columbia, actually prized these attributes, especially when contrasted to the supposed sloth and lethargy of the Hebrideans. The fact that in 1922 Japanese-Canadian fishermen landed almost twice as many fish per head as their white counterparts was used by the fisheries to show that the Japanese were much more preferable than those who a leading recruiter of British immigrants to Canada called the "pap-feeding [Hebrideans]."¹⁷

¹⁵ National Archives of Canada (NAC), RG 76, vol. 95, file 11365, part 2, confidential letter from Anne MacDonald to "The Director," dated June 1, 1925.

¹⁶ British Columbia Archives (BCA), MS-0003, "Proposed Settlement of Scottish Crofter Fishermen in British Columbia," dated February 3, 1925, p. 20.

¹⁷ In 1922, the Japanese netted on average 5451 fish in the Skeena River district, compared to 3192 for the typical white fisherman. Source: Geoff Meggs, Salmon: The Decline of the British Columbia Fishery (Vancouver: Douglas and MacIntyre, 1991), pp. 126, 127; "Not Satisfied with B.C.-Hebrides Plan," in The Daily Province (Vancouver), February 27, 1924, p. 20.

Surprisingly enough, the working classes also inverted the Social Darwinist hierarchies that motivated this scheme, but from a much different perspective. Most fishermen – and voters – in the province by no means advocated the continued employment of the Japanese in their industry, and they certainly supported their government’s desire to rid the province of their Asian competitors. Yet they too realized that the provincial government intended the Hebrideans to be paid the same wages as the Japanese, a rate half of what the “Anglo-Saxon” fishermen commanded. Consequently, a very real fear emerged on the part of the working classes of British Columbia that the Hebrideans would undercut the higher wages that whites supposedly required to subsist properly on. Not only that, the mere presence of such a downtrodden white and even worse, in their eyes, British population would depreciate the elevated status of British moral and racial “supremacy” that justified the very existence of British Columbia.

This latter realization was brought into even starker relief in the case of Western Australia. At the time, when one British commentator observed that the Western Australians “[were] more British in their race consciousness than the people of Britain itself,” any immigrant who may have been perceived to be “inferior” in any way not only threatened the whole British argument for holding Australia – their ability to control and tame the land as apparently no other people, the Aboriginals included, could – he or she also might, so it was feared at the time, open the door to a possible economic, moral and racial degeneration that Japan could seize upon to claim Australia

for itself.¹⁸ The fact that these crofters were Gaelic-speaking and “chose to retain their separate non-Australian identity” only served to reinforce fears amongst their neighbors that their refusal “to adapt to the customs of this country” would undermine the Anglo-Saxon ethno-racial solidarity seen then as essential to Australia’s core identity and security.¹⁹

Just as in British Columbia, the Hebrideans were viewed by the laboring classes as a means for the business community to depress their wages.²⁰ Farmers and factory workers alike were up in arms that their state government was so assiduously cultivating the importation of poor crofters at a time when the economy of Western Australia had not fully recovered from the postwar recession and while its leading customer, Great Britain, was still suffering from its loss of export markets, a staggering war debt, and increased industrial competition. Many working-class Australians feared both the economic danger such immigrants posed to their high wage standards and generous industrial relations awards they only so recently gained in the years immediately preceding World War I.²¹

Supporters of these schemes, and Empire resettlement as a whole, also failed to take into account the growth of nascent nationalisms in both Canada and Australia

¹⁸ “Australian Delegation to Britain,” in *The Times* (London), March 29, 1927. Source: *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Anne Bradley, “Group Settlement on the Peel Estate 1920-1928, With Emphasis on Personal and Social Aspects of the Settlers (sic) Lives,” essay penned by Anne Bradley, student at the University of Western Australia, 1986; “Benefit Ourselves and Help Others,” in *The Daily News* (Prince Rupert, BC), February 25, 1924, p. 2; National Archives of Australia (NAA) Series A 458/1, letter from the Premier of Victoria John Allan to the Prime Minister Stanley Bruce, dated December 24, 1924.

²⁰ NAA, Series A458/1, letter to Prime Minister Bruce dated December 8, 1924.

²¹ Cecil Edwards, *Bruce of Melbourne: Man of Two Worlds* (London: Heinemann, 1965), p. 103.

during and after the First World War. Much of what propelled the passage of the Empire Settlement Act in general and the two immigration schemes discussed here in particular rested on the realization many had in Britain, in Canada, and in Australia that the newfound international status of the Dominions might be but the first step towards Dominion autonomy if not actual independence. The dispatch of loyal Britons *en masse* from Britain to the Dominions would cement the ties of “kith and kin” that were under unprecedented strain in the years following World War I, and ensure that the economic, diplomatic and cultural unity of the British Empire that underpinned Britain’s status as a world power would be maintained.²² These migrants would, it was assumed, reinforce the “British” orientation of both Dominions by purchasing British goods, following British cultural trends and leads, defending those exposed frontiers for Britain and Empire, and voting for politicians who resisted any further dilution of the ties that bound the Dominions to Britain.

Unfortunately for advocates of imperial resettlement in general and the Hebridean immigrants to Western Australia and British Columbia in particular, many in Australia and Canada in the interwar period started to question whether such an augmentation of the “British” component of their identity was a wholly positive good, particularly at the federal levels of government. The postwar Canadian Prime Minister William Mackenzie King was of the opinion that subsidized immigrants would be used

²² Brian Blakeley, “The Society for the Oversea Settlement of British Women and the Problems of Empire Settlement, 1917-1936,” in *Albion*, v. 20, no. 3 (Fall 1988), p. 421; J.D.B. Miller, *Britain and the Old Dominions* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), pp. 31, 32.

as a tool by the British to subvert the autonomy Canada had only so recently achieved.²³ King started to make some tentative overtures towards embracing Empire Settlement, but not until 1926, by which time the scheme to import Hebridean crofters to British Columbia had been utterly abandoned.²⁴ Even in Australia, which as a whole was more British both in a cultural and a racial sense than Canada, increasing numbers of people were agreeing with a columnist writing under the pen name of “Ibex,” who openly mused that “if proof were needed that something is radically wrong with the system of selecting immigrants for West Australia, in England, the increasing number of new arrivals who are being shipped back to the Homeland as physically unfit is all the evidence required.”²⁵ Now that Britain was no longer in some ways the model that Australia and Canada should sheepishly follow, many in these Dominions started to conceive of themselves as coming from superior stock than these subsidized and inherently degraded immigrants from “Home.”

Very little has been written on the Empire Settlement Act in the eighty-plus years since its passage, and even less on the role the Hebrideans played within this grandiose experiment in social engineering. The two most substantial attempts to investigate the broader scope of state-directed imperial resettlement of Britons are Kent

²³ In H. Blair Neatby’s chapter “Mackenzie King and National Unity,” in Harvey L. Dyck and H. Peter Krosby, eds., *Empire and Nations: Essays in Honour of Frederic H. Soward* (Vancouver: The University of British Columbia Press, 1969), pp. 58, 59; Marjorie Harper, “‘Personal Contact is Worth a Ton of Text-Books’: Educational Tours of the Empire, 1926-1939,” in *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, v. 32, no. 3 (September 2004), p. 65.

²⁴ In John A. Schultz’s chapter “‘Leaven for the Lump’: Canada and Empire Settlement, 1918-1939,” in Constantine, ed., *Emigrants and Empire...*, pp. 154, 161.

²⁵ In “How the West is Worsted: The Unfit Migrant,” in *The Sunday Times* (Perth), October 28, 1923, p. 4.

Fedorowich's Unfit for Heroes: Reconstruction and Soldier Settlement in the Empire Between the Wars, and Steven Constantine's compilation Emigrants and Empire: British Settlement in the Dominions Between the Wars, both of which were published by Manchester University Press in the 1990s. Fedorowich, as his title suggests, focuses on the redeployment of British soldiers to the Dominions in the early 1920s as a reward for their wartime services, as a means of buttressing the Empire's defences, and as a way for Britain to deflect any agitation such seasoned veterans may have fomented against the British state. Constantine and his fellow authors also deal with soldier resettlement, but at a much broader level, comparing and contrasting the general experiences of assisted settlers who were dispatched throughout the colonies of white settlement in the Empire. Both of these works focus almost squarely on the political negotiations between the myriad of governments, private organizations, charities and committees both in Britain and in the Dominions. Neither work concerns itself much with the contradictory theme of rejuvenation that held up that degraded Britons could be rehabilitated if they could be shipped elsewhere, while those in the recipient Dominions felt that such stock could never be rehabilitated.

Besides a scant four-page outline of Pattullo's scheme for the importation of Hebridean crofters to the fisheries of British Columbia in Marjory Harper's Emigration from Scotland between the Wars: Opportunity or Exile?, no books or articles have been written on the specific experiences of the Hebrideans in British Columbia or in Western Australia. That said, no one was analyzed how they are situated within and reflect the

broader economic, diplomatic, political, and racial debates that surrounded not only these schemes, but the whole project of imperial resettlement. There are several articles that analyze the experiences of particular groups of assisted settlers in Canada and Australia in the 1920s, notably Brian Blakeley's study of the emigration of poor women, Paula Hamilton and B.W. Higman's work on the recruitment of domestic servants to Australia in the late 1920s, and R.L. Schnell's and John Schultz's articles on the encouragement of the immigration of orphaned boys and demobilized soldiers to Canada.²⁶

While at one level this dissertation adds the Hebrideans to this admittedly small cacophony of specific voices of the migrants assisted under the auspices of the Empire Settlement Act, it also makes three new contributions to the growing historiography of immigration in the interwar period. The first is that, unlike other investigations into Empire Settlement, this dissertation posits the new argument that Social Darwinism and the burgeoning science of eugenics, particularly with regards to the Hebrideans, was a central motivator behind the selection of such worthy subjects for relocation. Far from recruiting the cream of the crop, so to speak, many vested interests in both Britain and the Dominions actively sought the "floatsam and jetsam" of the British Isles, or those

²⁶ Blakeley, "The Society for the Oversea Settlement of British Women and the Problems of Empire Settlement, 1917-1936," in *Albion*, v. 20, no. 3 (1988), pp. 421-444; Hamilton and Higman, "Servants of Empire: The British Training of Domestic for Australia," in *Social History*, v. 28, no. 1 (January 2003), pp. 67-82; Schnell, "The Right Class of Boy: Youth Training Schemes and Assisted Emigration to Canada under the Empire Settlement Act, 1922-39," in *History of Education*, v. 24, no. 1 (1995), pp. 73-90; Schultz, "Finding Homes Fit for Heroes: The Great War and Empire Settlement," in the *Canadian Journal of History/Annales canadiennes d'histoire*, v. 18, no. 1 (April 1983), pp. 99-110.

still available, in order to fulfill the less publicly advertised aspects of their own agendas vis-à-vis imperial resettlement.

The Hebrideans are also important, as are British Columbia and Western Australia, in revealing how important the notion of the frontier was in crafting the fragile and defensive identities of the Hebrideans and of British Columbia and Western Australia. The Hebrideans, from what today is known as the “Celtic fringe,” a frontier of Britain in a physical and in an ethno-cultural (and, in the 1920s, bio-imperial) sense, were seen by many as the perfect vessels through which the newly threatened frontiers of the white British Empire in the Pacific would be strengthened. The insecurities that such zones of contact with the foreign are wrapped up in the very ideology of imperial resettlement as representing an attempt to provide security along these borders of the Empire, an idea that has not been addressed to date by other historians.

Lastly, while these two schemes are admittedly very small-scale in nature, they, in the myriad of social, political, diplomatic, and racial questions they raise and factor into their very existence, can be used as telescopes as one moves between the local, the state/provincial, the federal, the intra-imperial, and the diplomatic levels of analysis that all impact upon and are impacted by these hundreds of Hebrideans on the outposts of the Empire. This study covers chapters that range from schoolyard fights over the use of Gaelic in the swamps of the Peel Estate to political infighting in the British House of Commons. A central theme of this dissertation is the reciprocal impact that these negotiations occurring between the various governments, committees and agencies

played themselves out in the hardships the Hebrideans, and many other sponsored immigrants, experienced, and how these experiences in turn reflect the glaring inconsistencies that were inherent in such a grandiose program of social engineering.

The experiences of these crofters are indicative of and reveal a great deal about the myriad of social, political, and economic tensions involved in the birth, development, and death of such a grandiose experiment in social engineering. The presumably immutable racial and ethnic hierarchies that motivated these schemes turned out to be rather flexible, as stereotypes were accentuated, downplayed or outright manipulated in order to fit the prerogatives of politicians, diplomats, business magnates, bio-imperialists, workers, and nationalists, not to mention the Hebrideans and the Japanese. In this way, they also embodied the broader transformations of the Empire in the interwar years. The contradictory views and characterizations of the Hebrideans that simultaneously promoted and scuttled attempts at their resettlement was reflective of the newly bifurcated ways both British Columbia and Western Australia conceived of themselves in the interwar years. Both societies questioned their own “Britishness” in much the same manner as the Hebrideans’ “British” status was debated. The birth and death of these two schemes to attract these crofters to the furthest frontiers of the British Empire in the 1920’s proves just how fluid and ephemeral these racial hierarchies were at a time when the very identity and security of the Dominions and the British Empire were themselves being challenged and renegotiated as never before.

CHAPTER I: THE HIGHLAND SCOT, THE HEBRIDEANS, AND THE RISE OF SOCIAL DARWINISM AND BIO-IMPERIALISM

Around 1800, Sir Walter Scott penned a series of articles in the Quarterly Review about the Highland Scots. The opening chapter starts with the following description:

Everything belonging to the Highlands of Scotland has of late become peculiarly interesting. It is not much above a half a century since it was otherwise. The inhabitants of the lowlands of Scotland were, indeed, aware that there existed, in the extremity of the island, amid wilder mountains and broader lakes than their own, tribes of men called clans, living each under the rule of their own chief, wearing a peculiar dress, speaking an unknown language, and going armed even in the most ordinary and peaceful vocation.¹

Scott continues, hoping to counter some of the lingering stereotypes surrounding these “Oriental mountaineers” on the part of his mostly English audience:²

But in England, the knowledge of the very existence of the Highlanders was, prior to 1745, faint and forgotten; and not even the recollection of those civil wars which they had maintained in the years 1689, 1715, and 1719, had made much impression on the British public. The more intelligent, when they thought of them by any chance, considered them as complete barbarians; and the mass of the people cared no more about them than the merchants of New York about the Indians who dwell beyond the Alleghany mountains. Swift, in his Journal to Stella, mentions having dined in company with two gentlemen from the Highlands of Scotland, and expresses his surprise at finding them persons of ordinary decorum and civility.³

¹ In Manners, Customs and History of the Highlanders of Scotland and Historical Account of the Clan MacGregor (Glasgow: T.D. Morrison, 1893), p. 13.

² *Ibid* p. 22.

³ *Ibid* p. 14.

Although Scott was by and large sympathetic to the Highlanders, his writing is imbued with many of the facile and negative stereotypes that surrounded his subjects at the time.

While the Scots as a whole found their reputations considerably enhanced in Britain and the Empire in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries, such a rehabilitation by and large was not extended to the Highlanders and especially to the Hebrideans, or only so far as they were begrudgingly considered “Scottish.” After all, unlike the Lowland Scot who used the commercial opportunities that the Act of Union of 1707 and the subsequent opening up of the British Empire to their enterprise and their Protestant Teutonic work ethic to “take new risks [in] building their new land[s],” the “Celtic race” to which the Highlanders were increasingly relegated remained, to quote nineteenth century author Donald McLeod, “dirty, lazy, untameable beings, who would do nothing to help themselves while they would be kept alive upon charity.”⁴

The Strengthening of the Highland-Lowland Divide, 1745-1845

The seminal moment that led to the reinforcement of this cleavage between the Highlands and the Lowlands of Scotland was the final defeat of the pro-Stuart forces, mostly comprised of Highlanders, at the Battle of Culloden in 1746. The victorious Hanoverians concluded that the chronic rebellions in support of the Stuarts of the first half of the eighteenth century were the result of the failure of the British state to fully

⁴ R.A. Cage, ed., The Scots Abroad: Labour, Capital, Enterprise, 1750-1914 (London: Croom Helm, 1985), p. vi; in Gloomy Memories in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland Versus Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe's Sunny Memories In (England) a Foreign Land, Or a Faithful Picture of the Extirpation of the Celtic Race from the Highlands of Scotland (Toronto: Thompson and Co., 1857), pp. i, xi.

incorporate the Highland population into its body politic. In 1739, an anonymous author wrote in the London publication Gentleman's Magazine the following:

In this great extent of Country [the Highlands] Ignorance and Superstition generally prevail; in some Places the Remains even of Paganism are still to be found, and in many others the Reformation from Popery has never yet been obtained...Most of the Inhabitants being destitute of all Means of Knowledge, are entirely ignorant of the Principles of Religion and Virtue, live in Idleness and Poverty, are subject to the Will and Command of their Popish disaffected Chieftains, who have always opposed the propagating Christian Knowledge, and the English Tongue...The poorer sort have only the Irish Tongue, and little Correspondence with the civilized arts of the Nation, and only come upon them to pillage the more industrious Inhabitants.⁵

After the very real threat “The 45” posed to the Hanoverian dynasty had been defeated, the British state launched a systematic assault on the Highlands, to ensure such a rebellion would never occur again. Laws were passed that banned traditional Highland dress, the pipes, feudal courts, and the carrying of weapons. The Scottish Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) dispatched missionaries *en masse* to the Highlands in order to reduce the “Paganism” that so many in England and Lowland Scotland felt inspired the “Gaels” of the north to rebel. A series of fortifications and military roads were constructed throughout the Highlands to ensure that any sign of rebellion would be dealt with swiftly there, before any marauding could encroach upon the increasingly industrialized Lowlands, let alone England.⁶

⁵ Vol. IX, June 1739. Source: T.M. Devine, Clanship to Crofters' War: The Social Transformation of the Highlands (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 29.

⁶ For a further discussion of these “reforms,” please see Michael Hechter, Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1966), pp. 112-115.

In short, the cumulative impact of this systematic onslaught on the Highland way of life achieved two goals. The first was perhaps the more obvious – the effective neutralization of the Scottish Highlands as a military threat to the British state. The second was to entrench a division between the Scottish Lowlands and Highlands.⁷ This division once and for all bound the Lowlands in both an economic sense (through industrialization) and an ethno-cultural sense (by reclassifying the Lowlanders as fellow “Teutons”) to the English rather than to their Highland Scot compatriots. To quote the historian Christopher Harvie:

[Marginalization] certainly happened in the Highlands after 1746, but the internal colonisers were Scots. More Scots had fought for [the Royalist] Cumberland than for Charles Edward [Stuart]; more Scots than English soldiers thereafter wasted the glens; it was Scots landlords and factors, not Englishmen, who forced the Highlanders on to the emigrant ships. Not until later could the Highlanders look south for pity, while their bards commemorated them, with dignity and rare beauty, in the last flowering of a dying tongue.⁸

This internal division of Scotland, between “Teutonic” Lowland and “Celtic” Highland, would come to have major repercussions over the course of the following two centuries.

This distinction only grew more ingrained over the remainder of the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century. The Lowland economy industrialized rapidly, while that of the Highlands languished. Throughout the late eighteenth century, with the Lowlands secure from Highland and foreign incursions, the southern third of Scotland, led by a drive for “improvement” and rationalization of landholdings and land tenure

⁷ *Ibid* pp. 29-31.

⁸ In Scotland and Nationalism: Scottish Society and Scottish Politics, 1707-1994 (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 44.

practices, underwent the “Enclosures.” Through this process, subsistence agriculture and quasi-feudal relationships between landlord and tenant were replaced with cash rents and commercial agriculture. This process greatly reduced the number of agricultural laborers necessary for a landlord to make a profit. Through either encouragement or coercion, many poor Lowland Scots fled the countryside for the teeming cities of the Central Lowlands, Glasgow and Edinburgh in particular.⁹ In 1750, only 9.2% of all Scots resided in towns with a population of 10,000 or more; in 1850, 32% did. By 1800, Scotland was one of the five most urbanized nations in Europe; by 1850 only England and Wales combined had a higher percentage of its population residing in urban areas.¹⁰

This urbanization provided a concentrated, available, and cheap labor pool that proto-industrialists could draw on to work in their factories.¹¹ This new and relatively large (by contemporary standards) urban populace enabled the rise of a linen industry that doubled its output every twenty-five years between 1725 and 1800, then the establishment of chemical manufacturing facilities, and later the building of large ironworks.¹² The wages these factories paid to their workers and the capital they accumulated for their investors and owners stimulated a thriving banking system, which

⁹ For a further discussion of the “Lowland Clearances” and the resultant rapid urbanization of the Central Lowlands of Scotland, please see T.M. Devine, The Scottish Nation: A History, 1700-2000 (New York: Viking, 1999), in particular Chapters 7 and 8.

¹⁰ Source: Devine, The Scottish Nation..., pp. 152, 153.

¹¹ Michael Flinn, ed., Scottish Population History from the Seventeenth Century to the 1930s (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 238.

¹² R.A. Houston. and W.W.J. Knox, eds, The New Penguin History of Scotland from the Earliest Times to the Present Day (London: Allen Lane, 2001), pp. 287-289.

in turn financed the construction of a widespread network of roads and canals that led to even further economic expansion.¹³

Accompanying this growth was a concomitant flourishing of intellectual discourse. During this “Scottish Enlightenment,” men like David Hume, Adam Smith, and James Watt revolutionized the fields of philosophy, economics, and technology respectively. Even Samuel Smiles, that nineteenth century prophet of the mantra of “self-help” that would come to have such detrimental consequences for the Hebrideans, was a by-product of this movement, having been born in Haddington and his early education clearly having been influenced by the individualism stressed by these scholars.¹⁴ The eighteenth century also witnessed a large expansion in enrollment at Scottish universities. The range of disciplines offered there, combined with an overall favorable intellectual milieu that encouraged the inspiration and circulation of new ideas, further stimulated the development of the Scottish Lowlands. The three pillars of Scottish society after the Union of 1707 – the Kirk, the law courts, and the educational system – all threw their collective weight behind embracing reform and encouraging the spread of capitalism.¹⁵

¹³ Bruce Lenman, Integration, Enlightenment and Industrialization: Scotland 1746-1832 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), pp. 54, 55.

¹⁴ *Ibid* pp. 289, 290.

¹⁵ As the eighteenth century progressed, to cite but three examples of change, legal restrictions on apprenticeships and restricting access to trade had by and large been discarded, the Kirk started to preach about the correlation between material success and God’s favor, and the parish schools and the universities encouraged the spread of literacy and the expansion of practical training and rationalism. Source: T.M. Devine’s chapter “The English Connection and Irish and Scottish Development in the Eighteenth Century,” in T.M. Devine and David Dickson, eds., Ireland and Scotland 1600-1850:

[In] Scotland... a unique if fading cultural heritage, and the profit motive... generate[d] a unique dynamism which was further fuelled by the relatively favourable opportunities offered by an expanding British political and economic system to educated men. The frustrated and therefore alienated intellectual was unimportant in eighteenth-century Scotland. This was a most significant fact, for student numbers increased steadily in every university except St Andrews.¹⁶

For the ambitious Lowland Scot of means, the opportunities for advancement and progress seemed boundless in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹⁷

For the average Highland Scot, however, such avenues to “improvement” were closed, at least locally. Just as opportunities opened up for the Lowland Scots at home and throughout the Empire, most Highlanders were excluded from participating, at least at home, in this radical change. While the economy and the intellectual milieu of Lowland Scotland flourished, that of the Highlands languished. The “Clearances” that have been associated with “progress” in the southern portion of Scotland started to arrive in their much more dramatic form in the Highlands in the decades following 1745. Ironically enough, it was the increased need for wool generated by the power looms of England and the Scottish Lowlands, not to mention a heightened demand for Highland beef caused by a rise in the standard of living in the south, that led to the later introduction of the Clearances to the northern half of Scotland.¹⁸

Parallels and Contrasts in Economic and Social Development (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1983), pp. 20, 21.

¹⁶ Lenman, Integration, Enlightenment and Industrialization... pp. 95, 96.

¹⁷ In his chapter “The Scottish Improvers and the Course of Agrarian Change in the Eighteenth Century,” in L.M. Cullen and T.C. Smout, eds., Comparative Aspects of Scottish and Irish Economic and Social History (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1976), p. 206.

¹⁸ John MacLeod, Highlanders: A History of the Gaels (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1996), pp. 184, 185.

While this process was similar to the one that preceded it in the Lowlands, a great deal more coercion was used in the Highlands to evict the tenants there.

Exemplifying this was the answer provided by a factor to a question posed by the Scottish Board of Agriculture in 1811:

Sheep-farms are paying well on the Sutherland estates. The number of Cheviots are now about 15,000. More ground will be laid off for the same mode of husbandry, without decreasing the population. Situations in various ways will be fixed on for the people. Fishing situations, in which mechanics will be settled; inland villages, with carding machines; moors and detached spots calculated for the purpose will be found, but the people must work. The industrious will be encouraged and protected, but the slothful must remove or starve, as man was not born to be idle, but to gain his bread by the sweat of his brow.¹⁹

To compound the issue, the Highlands, with its infertile soils, overall rugged terrain, and paucity of natural resources, in particular coal and iron, never developed the urban centers that blossomed in the Central Lowlands in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Consequently the only opportunities that presented themselves to many displaced crofters from the northern half of Scotland were either in the Lowlands or elsewhere in the British Empire. The north became a region dominated by pastoralism and casual employment such as the illegal distilling of whisky and fishing, whereas the Lowlands were known as the region characterized by “more vigorous agrarian and industrial change.”²⁰

¹⁹ John Henderson, “A General View of the Agriculture of the County of Sutherland” (London, 1812), pp. 143, 144. Source: T.C. Smout, A History of the Scottish People, 1560-1830 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1969), p. 355.

²⁰ T.M. Devine, “Temporary Migration and the Scottish Highlands in the Nineteenth Century,” in The Economic History Review, New Series, v. 32, no. 3 (August 1979), p. 344; Hayden Lorimer, “Ways of

As the Highland economy remained moribund, the divide between the two halves of Scotland grew increasingly entrenched. The Highlanders, the feared warriors of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries who twice managed during that period to seize broad swaths of England, now increasingly invaded the south as an army of supplicants. Their migration only served to reinforce the divide between the progressive Lowlands and the “Gaelic speakers” to the north who could not or would not adapt to the new capitalist order.

By the middle decades of the nineteenth century it seemed that there were two radically different societies in Scotland. In the Lowlands a world-class manufacturing system had emerged based on productive farming, textile manufacture and heavy industry; in the Highlands there was a different world of poverty, heavy emigration and famine. The north and west seemed to have more in common with the poorer districts of Ireland than the rest of Scotland and the United Kingdom.²¹

This widening gap caused many in the Lowlands to view their Highlander compatriots as almost “Irish,” in their continued poverty and failure to “modernize” and “progress.”²² Indeed, much of the Scottish intelligentsia of the period advocated following the English lead with gusto, going so far as rejecting the Scottish label

Seeing the Highlands: Marginality, Authenticity and the Curious Case of the Hebridean Blackhouse,” in the *Journal of Historical Geography*, v. 25, no. 4 (1999), p. 527.

²¹T.M. Devine, *Clearance and Improvement: Land, Power and People in Scotland, 1700-1900* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2006), p. 164.

²² T.M. Devine, “Highland Migration to Lowland Scotland, 1760-1860,” in *The Scottish Historical Review*, v. LXII, 2, no. 174 (October 1983), p. 137, 146.

altogether, preferring to think of themselves as “North Britons,” distinct from the “Scots” of the Highlands that were as now as much pitied as feared.²³

In the eighteenth century, most of these critiques of the Highlanders laid blame for their continued poverty and indolence on the hardscrabble terrain they inhabited.²⁴

Samuel Johnson, the famed English man of letters who harbored a notorious dislike of all Scots, classified the Highlanders as a “mountain” people:

Mountaineers are warlike, *because* [in] their feuds and competitions they consider themselves as surrounded with enemies...Mountaineers are thievish, *because* they are poor, and having neither manufacture nor commerce, can grow richer only by robbery.²⁵

The converse to this rather disparaging remark was that if “civilization” was introduced into the Highlands, whether it be the English language, the Presbyterian faith, or “modern” agricultural and commercial techniques, then the Highlanders could be “redeemed” just as the Lowlanders had been in the decades following the Act of Union of 1707.²⁶

The Highland Potato Famine and the Racialization of Difference in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

²³ In Richard Finlay’s chapter “Caledonia or North Britain? Scottish Identity in the Eighteenth Century,” in Dauvit Brount, R.J. Finlay, and Michael Lynch, eds., Image and Identity: The Making and Remaking of Scotland Through the Ages (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1998), pp. 146, 147.

²⁴ For a concise, if at times patronizing, overview of the poor “physical conditions” of the Outer Hebrides, please see William A. Hance, “Crofting in the Outer Hebrides,” in Economic Geography, v. 28, no. 1 (January 1952), in particular pp. 37-40.

²⁵ A Journey to the Western Isles of Scotland (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1985 ed.), p. 64. Source: Krisztina Fenyő, Contempt, Sympathy and Romance: Lowland Perceptions of the Highlands and the Clearances during the Famine Years, 1845-1855 (Phantassie, UK: Tuckwell Press, 2000), p. 25.

²⁶ *Ibid* p. 25.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, however, this distinction hardened as it grew racialized, for several reasons. The first concerns the continued failure of the Scottish Highlands, in the eyes of many Lowlanders, to develop a market economy that could provide for its own people. All the efforts of the British army in constructing roads and fortifications throughout the Highlands, all the attempts of the SSPCK to promote the Presbyterian faith, all the efforts of the missionaries and the parish schools to introduce the English language and literacy in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries seemed increasingly to have been for naught. As decades passed, and as “progress” failed to materialize, “the very attempt to improve people by improving their conditions, and by reminding them implicitly of their debt to [the improvers...came] under trial.”²⁷ Something else had to explain the seemingly inherent inability of the Highlands to develop along the same lines as the Lowlands.

That explanation gradually came to be attributed to biology. The universal model of “progress,” through which anyone who was willing to adopt the methods of the more “advanced” peoples (in this case, the Anglo-Saxon), gave way to more racialized explanations as to why some nations flourished and others did not.²⁸ Much of these hardened distinctions derived from earlier tomes on the environment. Charles Kingsley, in his novel Hypatia, or New Foes with an Old Face, written in 1853, borrows

²⁷ Nigel Nicolson, Lord of the Isles: Lord Leverhulme in the Hebrides (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1960), p. 17.

²⁸ Colin Kidd, “Race, Empire, and the Limits of Nineteenth-Century Scottish Nationhood,” in The Historical Journal, v. 46, no. 4 (2003), p. 878.

heavily from Samuel Johnson's aforementioned theory about the "mountains"

determining the "Highland character," but with a new twist.

Don't talk to me of the moral and physical superiority of mountain races, for I tell you it is a dream. Civilization, art, poetry, belong to the lowlands, as the stronger and cunninger [sic] races instinctively seize the lowlands, because they half-know (and Providence knows altogether) that they alone can become nations.²⁹

Following such logic, even the Highlanders who relocated to the Lowlands or migrated elsewhere could never become fully acculturated to their new environment. Their "Scottish" and "British" status grew subordinated to their "Gaelic" and "Celtic" nature.³⁰ Between the two, an "unbridgeable chasm" emerged.³¹

This "chasm" grew infinitely wider in the 1840s. A fungus, scientifically classified *Phytophthora Infestans* but more colloquially known as the potato blight, swept across Ireland and the Outer Hebrides between 1843 and 1851, almost entirely wiping out the potato crop of both locales.³² The catastrophic failure of the potato harvest in Ireland, and the millions of Irishmen and women who either died or were permanently displaced due to the loss of their sole means of income and sustenance, is well-known, and need not be repeated here. The "Great Famine," however, was not a phenomenon that was confined to the Emerald Isle. Across the North Channel, the

²⁹ Source: Michael Banton, The Idea of Race (London: Tavistock Publications Ltd, 1977), pp. 73, 74.

³⁰ Nancy Stepan, The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain 1800-1960 (London: The Macmillan Press, 1982), pp. 24, 25.

³¹ Matthew Frye Jacobson, Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 48.

³² For further information on the potato famine, especially in Ireland, please see Cecil Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger (New York: McGraw Hill, 1954). For a detailed analysis of the impact of the famine in the Scottish Highlands, please see T.M. Devine, The Great Highland Famine: Hunger, Emigration and the Scottish Highlands in the Nineteenth Century (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1988)

Scottish Highlands and especially the Outer Hebrides were equally devastated by the rapid spread of the blight. By 1846, sixty-seven percent of Highland parishes reported a complete failure of their potato crop. The following year, according to government relief workers, “two-thirds of the supply of food ordinarily raised by the cultivation of the labouring classes for their own subsistence” was destroyed by the fungus.³³

The failure of the potato crop was even more devastating in the Hebrides. A committee convening in 1846 in Ardnamurchan in Argyll noted that potatoes were “the sole support of a large population during eight months of the year.”³⁴ Portions of the Hebrides lost between a quarter and a third of their populations as a direct result of the famine.³⁵ Donald McLeod, who visited the Hebrides in the 1840s, offered the following gloomy depiction of the desperate situation there.

During labour and sufferings, which none but a Highlander could sustain, they had to subsist entirely on potatoes dug out of the snow; cooking them as they could, in the open air, among the ruins of their once comfortable dwellings...I may mention that on all previous and subsequent removals, and especially this one, many severe diseases made their appearance; viz: typhus [sic] fever, consumption, and pulmonary complaints in all their varieties, bloody flux, bowel complaints, eruptions, rheumatism, piles, and maladies peculiar to females...Famine and utter destitution...began to attract attention as an almost national calamity.³⁶

³³ National Archives of Scotland (NAS), HD 6/2, letter from Sir E. Coffin to Sir Charles Trevelyan of the British Treasury, dated August 16, 1847. Source: Devine, The Great Highland Famine..., pp. 36, 37.

³⁴ Source: Flinn ed., Scottish Population History..., p. 425, 426.

³⁵ Devine, “Highland Migration...,” p. 140.

³⁶ Donald McLeod, Gloomy Memories in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland Versus Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Sunny Memories In (England) a Foreign Land, Or a Faithful Picture of the Extirpation of the Celtic Race from the Highlands of Scotland (Toronto: Thompson and Co., 1857), pp. 14, 15.

Modern estimates agree that approximately 200,000 Highlanders were directly affected by this famine, a catastrophe one historian characterizes as “a human tragedy on a scale unparalleled in modern Scottish history.”³⁷

The British government, the Church of Scotland, private philanthropists and many of the landlord/lairds of the Highlands quickly organized relief efforts to alleviate the distress. In the Lowlands, a voluntary organization was formed to solicit and distribute charity to the Highlands. This body, the Central Board of Management of the Fund for the Relief of the Destitute Inhabitants of the Highlands, raised the enormous sum of £250,000 to alleviate the widespread suffering that the famine caused.³⁸ This figure is astonishing because it is roughly equal to the aggregate amount raised to provide relief for the entire island of Ireland, with its vastly larger population affected and much more widespread levels of suffering.³⁹

This can be explained by the commonly-held perception at the time that, unlike the utterly degraded and equally as important Catholic Irish, the Highlanders, while widely considered to be “of the same pattern as those...in Ireland,” to quote a commissioner for The Times, were Protestant, and Scottish.⁴⁰ To cite the historian T.M. Devine:

³⁷ Fenyő, Contempt, Sympathy and Romance..., p. 53; James Hunter, The Making of the Crofting Community (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, Ltd., 1976), p. 50.

³⁸ In T.C. Smout’s chapter “Famine and Famine Relief in Scotland,” in Cullen and Smout, eds., Comparative Aspects..., p. 30.

³⁹ Devine, Clanship to Crofters War..., p. 153.

⁴⁰ Source: Fenyő, Contempt, Sympathy and Romance..., p. 55.

The 'virtuous' Highlanders were contrasted with the unregenerate Irish as a race who were far more deserving of assistance and the romantic associations of Highland society were fully exploited...One contemporary...suggested that the people of the Highlands were not only brave and daring in war but also 'peaceful, patient and submissive' in the face of the great disaster which had overwhelmed them...In contrast, the Irish were 'unruly and turbulent' and did not have the same claim on the generous feelings of the philanthropic.⁴¹

Their utility to and inclusion within the Scottish and British national communities rendered them "worthy" of assistance and thus redeemable, in a way their Irish compatriots were and never could be.

Yet even so, a dualism emerged during this crisis that often oscillated between the positive valuations of the "Scots" as outlined above and their more negative and debased characteristics at another level that likened them more to the Irish even more so than to their fellow Scots in the Lowlands. The famine revealed the enormous gap that existed between the standard of living of the Hebrides and the Highlands on the one hand and the rest of the island of Great Britain on the other. Sir John McNeill and Charles Trevelyan, two of the chief organizers appointed by the British government to oversee the relief effort for the Highlands and founders of the Highland and Island Emigration Society in 1851, were convinced that the Highlanders as a whole were "feckless, guilty of overbreeding to an alarming extent, were too fond of 'ardent spirits' and were notoriously indolent...they saw the Highland population as 'uncivilised and lacking the proper values which only education and closer communication with the

⁴¹ Devine, Clanship to Crofters War..., p. 156.

world to the south and east could instill.”⁴² The destitution that had plagued the Highlands for decades was now accompanied by the smear that the Highlanders were dependent on the charity of the Lowlanders and the English for their very survival. They were not only unable to earn decent livelihoods through their own efforts, they were now dependent on the largesse of their “Anglo-Saxon” compatriots to even feed themselves.⁴³

Still, the general perception was that the Scottish Highlanders could still be improved and rejuvenated. While the Highlanders were certainly considered “backward” and “indigent,” the very use of such terms implies that they were still a people capable of advancement. As such, it was up to the Anglo-Saxons to dispatch its teachers, its missionaries, and its experts to the Highlands to again show them the route to prosperity and modernity that they themselves had pioneered and perfected.⁴⁴ The fact that the British Government sent men like Trevelyan and McNeill, men who had considerable experience in the civil service of the East India Company and who were both rehabilitated “Celts,” to the Scottish Highlands is indicative of this lingering belief. To quote Trevelyan:

The change from an isle, barbarous, isolated potato cultivation, to corn cultivation, which enforces industry, binds together employer and employed in mutually beneficial relations, and, requiring capital and skill for its successful prosecution, supposes the existence of a class of substantial yeomanry who have an interest in preserving the good order of society, is proceeding as fast as can be reasonably expected under the circumstances; and that if the rich and highly-

⁴² Devine, *The Great Highland Famine...*, p. 127.

⁴³ *Ibid* pp. 126, 127; Devine, *Clanship to Crofters War...*, p. 169, 174.

⁴⁴ *Ibid* p. 126.

favoured portions of the empire give some further temporary assistance to these distressed sections of our population, to enable them to ‘tide over’ the shoals upon which they have fallen, the harbour will, ere long, be attained.⁴⁵

While “neither their language nor habits fit them for the active competition and sustained hard labour” were required to achieve prosperity, to again cite Trevelyan, the Highlanders and the Hebrideans still could be remolded, under proper Anglo-Saxon supervision, into productive British subjects.⁴⁶

While this combination of sympathy on the one hand and contempt on the other towards the Highlanders continued to hold considerable sway well into the twentieth century, many Britons started to privilege the latter characterization as the nineteenth century progressed. The notion that the Highlanders, and especially the even more degraded Hebridean within that broader label, were biologically inferior to the “Anglo-Saxon” majority, started to gain credence with the growing acceptance of the theory of evolution as postulated by Charles Darwin in his groundbreaking On the Origin of Species, first published in 1859. While Darwin refrained from extending his hypotheses to human beings, others quickly seized upon his theories of natural selection as the best explanation as to why different peoples throughout the world stood at such vastly different levels of development. By the 1880s, men like Herbert Spencer, J.A. Froude, and Francis Galton developed a systematic theory of human evolution that placed all

⁴⁵ “To the Editor of The Times,” in The Times, October 12, 1847, p. 5.

⁴⁶ “To the Editor of The Times,” in The Times, May 28, 1852, p. 5.

variations in the human condition squarely in the hands of genetics.⁴⁷ This theory was quickly buttressed by the growing ascendancy of supporting scientific endeavors such as anthropometry and later eugenics as providing concrete proof that a biologically determined gulf separated not only the Europeans from the other broader races of the globe, but also the more “evolved” European nations from their less “advanced” neighbors.

Within the British domestic context, many late Victorians subscribed to the conclusions drawn by John Beddoe in his comprehensive study The Races of Britain. Beddoe scathingly refuted liberals such as John Bright and John Stuart Mill, both of whom insisted that the plight of the Scottish Highlanders was the result of English mistreatment and neglect. Their ethnological research drew heavily on Social Darwinist pioneers such as David Mackintosh, who in 1865 proffered this new “scientific” observation of the mental capacities of the Celt, which derived from their “bulging jaw...large mouth and lips, prominent cheekbones, sunken eyes, projective eyebrows, narrow, elongated skull and protruding ears”:

Quick in perception, but deficient in depth of reasoning power; headstrong and excitable; tendency to oppose; strong in love and hate; at one time lively, soon after sad...extremely social, with a propensity for crowding together; deficient

⁴⁷ For further reading on this “evolution” from geographical/climactic/linguistic/religious explanations of racial difference to biological ones, please see Christine Bolt, Victorian Attitudes to Race (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), particularly Chapter 1; Stepan, The Idea of Race and Science..., particularly Chapters 2 and 3; and Banton, The Idea of Race, in particular Chapters 4 and 5.

in application to deep study, but possessed of great concentration in monotonous or purely mechanical occupations...want of prudence and foresight.⁴⁸

Hunt believed that humans were fundamentally unequal in heredity and those designated to be “inferior” could never be “civilized.”⁴⁹

Beddoe, considered to be “one of the most careful observers of the present day,” divided the British Isles into two racial divisions, based on anthropometric measurements of skulls, torsos, eye and hair color, and other markers “of nigrescence.”⁵⁰ He concluded that there was a “Teutonic” division that comprised England and the eastern parts of Scotland and Ireland, and a “Celtic” division that consisted of the remainder of the British Isles. Beddoe argued that the “nigrescence” levels, highest in western Ireland and the Outer Hebrides, proved that men and women from those areas were closer to the “Africanoid” type than to the Teutons they shared the British Isles with.⁵¹ Not only did this provide a scientific basis for proving the permanent and immutable inferiority of the Celt, it also linked them to Africans, who were almost universally considered the least “evolved” of peoples.⁵²

⁴⁸ In “The Comparative Anthropology of England and Wales,” in the Anthropological Review and Journal, v. IV, no. 12 (January 1866), p. 16; L. Perry Curtis, Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England (Bridgeport, CT: Conference on British Studies, 1968), p. 69.

⁴⁹ Source: *Ibid* p. 69.

⁵⁰ John Beddoe, “On the Evidence of Phenomena in the West of England to the Permanence of Anthropological Types,” in the Journal of the Anthropological Society of London, v. 4 (1866), p. xix.

⁵¹ In The Races of Britain (London: Trübner and Co., 1885), pp. 10,11. The actual levels Beddoe calculated were an index of 65 (out of 100), compared to an overall figure of 41 for the Scottish Highlands.

⁵² Paul Rich, “Social Darwinism, Anthropology and English Perspectives of the Irish, 1867-1900,” in History of European Ideas, v. 19, nos. 4-6 (1994), p. 780.

The Crofter's War, the Napier Commission, and the Hebrides as a "Special Case," 1882-1888

The first test of these new racially driven theories of difference as they applied specifically to the Hebrideans occurred in the early 1880s. In 1882, after an uncharacteristically harsh winter in the Highlands in which thousands of boats were destroyed and the dreaded potato blight returned, and in part inspired by the tenant agitation led by the Land League that spread across Ireland in 1879, many of the poorest crofters and cottars started to rebel against their landlords. Starting at the Braes of Benlee on the Isle of Skye, crofter unrest quickly spread throughout the rest of the Hebrides, most notably on the Isle of Lewis.⁵³ For the next six years, broad swaths of that archipelago were in varying states of rebellion, as desperate tenants facing eviction and even starvation who were almost wholly disenfranchised until 1884 and had little legal options against their landlords resorted to violence to make their grievances heard.

The British Government eventually employed a three-pronged approach to quell the disturbances in the Hebrides and to address the root causes that generated the uprisings in the first place. One was the dispatching of troops to the islands to restore order. In November 1884, the first contingent arrived in the Hebrides. For the next

⁵³ H.J. Hanham, "The Problem of Highland Discontent, 1880-1885," in the Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 5th Series, v. 19 (1969), pp. 52-54; Cameron, Ewan, "Communication or Separation? Reactions to Irish Land Agitation in the Highlands of Scotland, c.1870-1910," in the English Historical Review, v. CXX. No. 487 (2005), p. 643. For a further analysis of the linkages between the "Crofter's War" in the Scottish Highlands and the Irish "Land War" that preceded it, please see Andrew Newby, "Edward McHugh, the National Land League of Great Britain and the 'Crofter's War', 1879-1882," in The Scottish Historical Review, v. LXXXII, no. 218 (April 2003).

four years, hundreds of troops were garrisoned throughout the archipelago, struggling to put out the flames of protest that periodically rekindled.⁵⁴ The second tactic the government used was to convene a royal commission to investigate the social conditions of the Hebrides that caused the crofters to take such drastic measures. This body, which came to be known as the Napier Commission after its chairman, Lord Napier, sent experts to the Hebrides in 1883 to collect testimony and gather evidence. These men spent almost the entire year performing these tasks. Napier recognized that the most effective way of pacifying the protesters would be to implement a systematic reform that would cure “the deeper malaise of the region,” so that, to quote Napier himself, the Hebrideans could “shake off the torpor which besets them and induce in them habits of industry and self-respect.”⁵⁵

In 1884, the Napier Commission released its report of recommendations to alleviate the plight of the Hebrides. The Commission’s findings represent a watershed of sorts, for it was the first official recognition that the crofters did have some form of legal protection.⁵⁶ The report also suggested that the British Government help the crofters purchase their holdings. It urged the government to create a body that would regulate the relationships the crofters had with their landlords. In addition, it called for the augmentation of the powers of the township, hitherto an ineffectual level of

⁵⁴ Hanham, “The Problem of Highland Discontent...,” pp. 60, 64.

⁵⁵ British Parliamentary Papers, XXXVI, 1884, “Report of the Royal Commission to Inquire into the Condition of the Crofters and Cottars of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland,” p. 41. Source: Devine, Clanship to Crofter’s War..., pp. 220, 226.

⁵⁶ *Ibid* p. 220.

government, so that it could in essence function as an arbiter between the landlords and the crofters.⁵⁷

While many of the Commission's findings were virtually ignored or dismissed as too "radical," several key recommendations eventually were codified in the Crofters Holdings (Scotland) Act, which was passed by Parliament in 1886. This act extended to crofters security of land tenure through fixed leases, reimbursement for any improvements made by the crofters to their land and dwellings, rights of access to common lands for pasture, and the creation of a new land court that was bestowed with the power to fix rents, so long as the crofters paid their rent in a timely fashion.⁵⁸ This act represented an official recognition of, in the words of the historian T.M. Devine, "the notion of the Highlands as a special case deserving special treatment."⁵⁹

That is, if one was a farmer who rented a croft with a net worth of £6 or greater. Crofters who held lands worth less than that amount – essentially those who were not extended the vote under the provisions of the Third Reform Act of 1884 – and the mass of cottars who were agricultural day-laborers were specifically excluded from the reforms established by the Crofters Holdings (Scotland) Act.⁶⁰ These Highlanders, who comprised the majority of the population of the Outer Hebrides, were subjected to the

⁵⁷ "Evidence Taken by Her Majesty's commissioners of Inquiry into the Conditions of the Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, Report with Appendices, Presented to Both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty" (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1884), pp. 17-25.

⁵⁸ Devine, *Clanship to Crofter's War...*, pp. 220, 221.

⁵⁹ *Ibid* p. 228.

⁶⁰ According to the report produced by the Napier Commission, out of 420 crofters surveyed in the parish of Uig on the Isle of Lewis in 1883, only 28 paid rents valued at £6 or greater. Source: "Evidence Taken..." p. 11.

third strategy employed by the British Government. The report of the Napier Commission specifically cites as the primary causes for the recent unrest “defects in education, defects in the machinery of justice, and want of facilities for emigration.”⁶¹ The Napier Commission and the Crofters Holdings (Scotland) Act both strove to consolidate the wealthier and more successful crofts in order to ensure their continued prosperity and proper investment and improvement. For the rest, the state was to provide those “facilities for emigration” to encourage their removal.⁶²

While the British government in general was loathe to directly involve itself in promoting and more specifically funding emigration schemes, again, the Highlands, and the Hebrides in particular, were seen as a “special case.” One of the authors of the report advocated the removal of 30,000 families from Lewis alone, a striking figure considering that the 1881 census counted only 22,939 inhabitants on the island.⁶³ Part of the motivation for this approach was the belief that the barren Hebrides could only support a finite number of inhabitants. The removal of the “surplus” population would ensure that those who were already successful crofters would assume the more lackluster parcels. Those who emigrated would also be provided with education and opportunities for economic advancement.

⁶¹ *Ibid* p. 10.

⁶² Cameron, “Communication or Separation?...” p. 654.

⁶³ Devine, Clanship to Crofter’s War..., p. 236; Groome, Francis, ed., Ordinance Gazetteer of Scotland: A Survey of Scottish Topography, Statistical, Biographical, and Historical (Edinburgh: Thomas C. Jack, Grange Publishing Works, 1883), p. 257.

One wonders, however, if less magnanimous reasons lay behind the desire to remove such a large segment of the population of the Hebrides, let alone the active state participation in and funding of such an enterprise at a time when liberal orthodoxy and laissez-faire dominated discourse across the British political spectrum. The official report of the Napier Commission concluded that “the difficulties which the small tenantry of the Highlands and Islands experience...are varied in kind and intensity by the accidents of physical nature, by the historical development of the laws and customs of the country, and by the qualities of race.”⁶⁴ The Duke of Argyll, one of the largest landowners in the Scottish Highlands, expressed his belief in a memorandum he wrote to then-Prime Minister William Gladstone that “Gaelic sentimentalism led by Professor Blackie has fanned the flames” of rebellion in the Hebrides.⁶⁵ An anonymous contributor to The Times wrote that the rebellious crofters and the circumstances that prompted their violence were “very much the same as they were in Ireland...why should not the Scotch crofter be awarded the maximum seven years compensation, and take himself away from a locality in which he is so little wanted? Suppose his rent is £5 and he owes two years’ arrears...he will still have £25 left with which to seek a new home across the Atlantic. Why should not that be enough for him, if it was considered enough for his Irish congener?”⁶⁶

⁶⁴ “Evidence Taken...,” p. 3.

⁶⁵ Letter dated September 19, 1882. Source: Hanham, “The Problem of Highland Discontent...,” p. 32.

⁶⁶ In “The Scotch Crofters and Compensation for Disturbance,” February 6, 1885, p. 13.

Alexander Campbell, in his contemporary analysis of the unrest, observed that “I am keenly aware of encouraging a population, naturally improvident to rely upon others instead of upon themselves,” to emigrate.⁶⁷ The British Government viewed the evidence of the continued failure of the Hebrideans to “progress” throughout the nineteenth century through the twin lenses of “self-help” and Social Darwinism. They thus concluded that while the Highlanders deserved charity at a time of severe distress, the majority of the crofters and cottars were essentially beyond redemption. The only solution to those who subscribed most wholeheartedly to these new explanations for the chronic malaise and suffering in the Highlands was either the wholesale removal of the offending population, or perhaps their gradual elimination.⁶⁸

The Fifeshire Journal offered the following permanent resolution to the “Highland Problem”:

Ethnologically the Celtic race is an inferior one, and attempt to disguise it as we may, there is naturally and rationally no getting rid of *the great cosmical fact that it is destined to give way – slowly and painfully it may be, but most certainly – before the higher capabilities of the Anglo-Saxon*. In the meantime, and apparently as a part of the natural law which had already pushed the Celt from continental Europe westward, emigration to America is the only available remedy for the miseries of the race, whether squatting listlessly in filth and rags in Ireland, or dreaming in idleness and poverty in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ “Alleged Destitution in the Western Highlands and Islands, April 1883. Reports from Mssrs. Peterkin and Campbell, General Superintendents of Poor to the Board of Supervision” (Edinburgh: Accounts and Papers, 1884), p. 288.

⁶⁸ Kidd, “Race, Empire, and the Limits....,” pp. 877, 878.

⁶⁹ In “New Light on the Highlands,” September 11, 1851. Source: Fenyő, Contempt, Sympathy and Romance...., pp. 85, 86.

The report of the Napier Commission, while much less patently condemnatory than this editorialist, offered the following characterization and made a similar recommendation.

The social problem in the Highlands and Islands is complicated by the prevalence of subtenancy and squatting... The evil assumed its darkest complexion in [Lewis], where in some places, in the waste, there are crowds of squatters who construct hovels, appropriate land, and possess and pasture stock, but pay no rent, obey no control, and scarcely recognise any allegiance or authority... It is needless to say that they are a burden to the crofter and the proprietor, and that they are in a chronic state of poverty, degenerating in bad seasons to absolute destitution. Pending the operation of remedies which, it is hoped, may gradually transfer and disperse this class of people.⁷⁰

Thus the British Government made the largest exception by far to its steadfast Victorian and Edwardian policy of not involving itself in matters of emigration as a result of the Crofter's War and recommended that funds of an unspecified amount be made available to encourage the resettlement of the Hebrideans in other parts of the Empire, especially in Western Canada.

Why the Hebrideans were the subjects of such apparent official largesse, while no other group, not even the downtrodden Irish or the urban "Anglo-Saxon" proletariat, was can be explained by the following. First, the area affected by the Crofter's War was compact in nature, unlike the much more widespread and graver suffering to be found throughout Ireland and the urban slums of Great Britain.⁷¹ With a smaller population concentrated in a few counties, relief was deemed easier to provide. Second, the Hebrides were so distressed that the British government could not draw from local

⁷⁰ "Evidence Taken..." pp. 43, 44.

⁷¹ For more information, please see P.L. Knox and M.B. Cottam, "A Welfare Approach to Rural Geography: Contrasting Perspectives on the Quality of Highland Life," in the Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series, v. 6, no. 4 (1981), pp. 433-436.

sources to fund such a systematic plan for emigration. If it was to achieve this goal, it was have to directly involve itself. The government slowly if grudgingly accepted that the Highlands were a “special case” that could not be resolved internally. It would be better if the state acted now, rather than lurch between crises every thirty years or so.⁷²

Third, from the perspective of the landlords, and of the British government, the encouragement of emigration would rid the Islands for good of a population prone to rebellion. The Hebrideans were valued for their martial prowess and bravery in battle, when it was channeled against the enemies of the British Empire at its outermost peripheries. The British Government was keenly aware of the damage the Highlanders could inflict domestically if these skills were turned against them. The Home Secretary at the time of the Crofter’s War, Sir William Harcourt, cautioned Lord Rosebery on the consequences of imposing a military solution on the rebellious Hebrides, which “with a *dour* folk like the Scotch most dangerous. It will bring up the Land question in the Highlands in a form which the lairds will bitterly regret.”⁷³ The government thus concluded that the best way of controlling such a population would be by exporting the trouble they might cause in the British Isles, and redirecting the outrage of the Hebrideans towards other “enemies,” preferably extra-Imperial ones.

Lastly, the co-mingling of the older perceptions of the Hebrideans as loyal, brave Scots and Britons who were largely the victims of geography and circumstance and were thus worthy and capable of redemption under the careful tutelage of the

⁷² Devine, *Clanship to Crofter’s War...*, pp. 226, 227.

⁷³ Letter dated October 3, 1882. Source: Hanham, “The Problem of Highland Discontent...,” p. 58.

Anglo-Saxon and the newer, more scientifically grounded Social Darwinist theories that branded these same people as irredeemably inferior led to the proposal and execution of a systematic program of depopulation that “would scarcely have been contemplated for the population of any other region of mainland Britain.”⁷⁴ Even parliamentary leaders at the time were amazed that this particular approach was “the only colonisation scheme in recent years which has been financed and practically carried out by the Imperial government.”⁷⁵ To place this policy in perspective, in the late 1880s and early 1890s the British Government made £48,000 available to provide for rate and tax relief throughout the seven northwestern counties deemed most in need of assistance by the Local Government (Scotland) Act of 1889.⁷⁶ Three years later, the British Columbia (Loan) Act was passed, authorizing the release of £150,000 to fund the resettlement of crofters to British Columbia.⁷⁷ The large discrepancy between these two sums is indicative of the fact that while modest reform of the crofting system and its glaring deficiencies was implemented, the British Government decided that the removal *en masse* of tens of thousands of Gaelic-speaking Hebrideans was the cheapest and most effective solution to a structural problem that increasingly looked unsolvable, at least in Britain.

⁷⁴ T.M. Devine, *The Great Highland Famine...*, p. 128.

⁷⁵ Summarized by a Mr. Rathbone. Source: *British Parliamentary Papers, Colonization*, “Report from Select Committee on Colonisation, 1889, IX, Appendix No. 1, 48.

⁷⁶ Devine, *Clanship to Crofter’s War...*, p. 236.

⁷⁷ Jill Wade, “The ‘Gigantic Scheme’: Crofter Emigration and Deep-Sea Fisheries Development in British Columbia (1887-1893),” in *BC Studies*, No. 53 (Spring 1982), p. 33.

It would also serve two purposes simultaneously. The first satisfied those who viewed the Hebrideans more favorably, who felt that they were capable of being rejuvenated overseas. Those who took this stance often employed a broader definition of the “British” race as including the Celts, or a slightly narrower one that incorporated the largely Protestant Scots while excluding the Catholic Irish.⁷⁸ Once the Hebrideans were transplanted to the bountiful virgin lands and forests in the overseas empire, they finally could achieve the prosperity and regeneration that had for so long eluded them in their windswept archipelago.⁷⁹ Such advocates undoubtedly agreed with men like racial theorist J.A. Froude, who envisioned the colonies as a reserve where Britain could “renew its mighty youth, [and] bring forth as many millions as it would,” in the process restore Britain “to her early prime.”⁸⁰

Others, however, viewed the expulsion of the Hebrideans in an even more virulently racialized light. To such people, the mere presence of the “Celtic” Hebrideans was a threat to the “racial vigour” that underpinned the British Empire overseas and English hegemony over the British Isles.⁸¹ Far from being heroic warrior-crofters who served the British nation and the British imperial project well over the previous one hundred years, they were instead likened to the Irish degenerates who

⁷⁸ Allison Leah Pion, Exporting “Race” to the Colonies: British Emigration Initiatives in the Late-Nineteenth Century (Ph.D, Northwestern University, 2004), pp. 46, 47.

⁷⁹ NAS, AF 51/58, letter from W.B. Search to W. Peacock Edwards, dated June 23, 1888.

⁸⁰ Source: Eric Richards, Britannia’s Children: Emigration from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland since 1600 (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2004), p. 201.

⁸¹ *Ibid* p. 200.

were beyond redemption. To quote the noted nineteenth century eugenicist Karl

Pearson:

Good or bad habits acquired by the father or mother in their lifetime are not acquired by their children. The parents are merely trustees who hand down their commingled stocks to their offspring. From bad stock can come only bad offspring...No degenerate and feeble stock will ever be converted into healthy and sound stock by the accumulated effects of education, good laws, and sanitary surroundings...The suspension of that process of natural selection in which an earlier struggle for existence crushed out feeble and degenerate stocks, may be a real danger to society, if society relies solely on changed environment for converting its inherited bad into an inheritable good.⁸²

It would be best from both a financial and a biological viewpoint if the “Highland problem” was simply exported to the colonies.

The apparent pacification of the Hebrides in the period between the Crofter’s War and World War I masked the failure of the Napier Commission and the Crofters Holdings (Scotland) Act of 1886 to address the broader problem of the unequal distribution of land throughout the archipelago, the exclusion of the majority of crofters and cottars from its modest modifications, and the continued ambiguity surrounding the culpability of the Highlanders in the plight they endured. The hybrid solution of the state assuming a role as both the arbiter of disputes between landlord and tenant and the direct provider of services combined with a palpable governmental reluctance to involve itself too directly for fear of creating a culture of dependency to which the Hebrideans were already accused of abusing left open the possibility of another crisis

⁸² In The Grammar of Science (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1900), pp. 26, 27.

that would once again unleash the debates surrounding the “Highland problem” and how it best could be solved, if at all.⁸³

“Abandoning Them to Their Fate”: Lord Leverhulme’s Plans to Transform the Hebrides and Its Fallout, 1917-1923

The years immediately following World War I produced just this scenario. In 1917, the Matheson family decided to sell the Isle of Lewis to William Lever of the Lever soap fortune, known better as Lord Leverhulme. Leverhulme purchased the island in part as an act of benevolent paternalism. He wanted to inject modern business practices into an economy that was quasi-feudal in its nature and organization. In doing so, Leverhulme would show the Hebrideans the path to prosperity he himself followed so successfully.⁸⁴ His initial meeting with his “flock” is emblematic not only of his attitudes towards the Hebridean, but also that of those he aimed to reform.

Good morning everybody!...Have you noticed that the sun is shining this morning? – and this is the first time it has shone in Lewis for ten days...this is going to be a great meeting...So great is my love of Lewis that I am prepared to adventure a big sum of money for the development of the resources of the island and of the fisheries.⁸⁵

At this point, Leverhulme was shouted down by a crofter by the name of Alan Martin.

He addressed the new laird and the amassed audience in Gaelic, translated as follows:

⁸³ Devine, *Clanship to Crofter’s War...*, pp 238, 239; Susan Parman, *Scottish Crofters: A Historical Ethnography of a Scottish Village* (Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2005), pp. 44, 45.

⁸⁴ Nigel Nicolson, *Lord of the Isles: Lord Leverhulme of the Hebrides* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1960), p. 17.

⁸⁵ The sum he intended to invest was a staggering £5,000,000, most of which would come out of his personal fortune, to “give Lewis a fair start.” Source: *Ibid* p. 78.

Come, come men! This will not do! This honey-mouthed man would have us believe that black is white is black. We are not concerned with his fancy dreams that may or may not come true! What we want is land – and the question I put to him now is: Will you give us the land?⁸⁶

Lord Leverhulme hoped to restructure the entire economic and social system of his new estate by essentially transforming it into a gigantic model rural settlement run entirely under his careful watch.⁸⁷

In 1918, Leverhulme had taken his summer residence in Stornoway and announced his grandiose plans to transform Lewis. Towns were to be built all along the coast of the island, all of which would have harbors deep enough to accommodate the mechanized ships Leverhulme provided his employees. Most of these settlements would also contain canneries, which would provide employment for the islanders who did not catch the fish. The Hebrideans would no longer have to cut peat from the commonage lands, for that would be done by machines and sold to the crofters. A whaling station was established at Bunaveneadar on the island's southwestern coast, not too far from the newly-rebuilt Leverburgh, where whale meat would be processed and shipped to Leverville in the Belgian Congo. A railroad network that spanned the island from Ness at its far north to Aline in the south to the port of Carloway in the west, over 100 miles in total, was planned. Stornoway would be transformed into a "Venice" of the north, with wide avenues surrounded by grand Beaux-Arts buildings and anchored by a large Art Gallery and a new imposing secondary school. Immediately east of this

⁸⁶ Source: Roger Hutchinson, The Soap Man: Lewis, Harris and Lord Leverhulme (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd., 2003), p. 126.

⁸⁷ Nicolson, Lord of the Isles..., pp. 16, 17.

model city, an industrial zone would be built from scratch that would house the main fishing fleet, along with an ice plant, a cannery, tweed mills, a laundry, a mechanized dairy, and new fish-oil and guano plants.⁸⁸

Lastly, Leverhulme wanted to dramatically alter the entire mixed-use communalistic nature of crofting. The new landlord operated with the unwavering conviction that “crofting today is entirely an impossible life for these fine people.”⁸⁹ He thought that their meager crofts were at best inefficient distractions from the one commodity the islanders could successfully exploit – fish. To quote Lord Leverhulme:

At present the Lewisman is only what I call an amateur fisherman. Stornoway people tell me that they won’t employ Lewismen on their boats, because the crofter must leave his trawler or drifter to attend to his croft. Fancy running a newspaper along those lines! Imagine what it would be like if all the reporters and subeditors of the Scotsman had crofts, and went away to tend them for two or three weeks at a time!⁹⁰

Leverhulme was not opposed to agriculture per se. Rather, he, being a successful entrepreneur, thought that it should only be pursued if a profit was feasible.

To this end, landholdings needed to be consolidated and redistributed in lots of twenty acres or greater, far larger than the typical extant croft.⁹¹ Only cash crops such as raspberries and loganberries were to be raised.⁹² Other crofts would be converted into dairy farms. The commonages would be divided into ten-acre crofts.⁹³ The

⁸⁸ Gold and Gold, “To Be Free and Independent...,” pp. 196-202.

⁸⁹ Nicolson, Lord of the Isles..., p. 77.

⁹⁰ *Ibid* p. 77.

⁹¹ Gold and Gold, “To Be Free and Independent...,” p. 198.

⁹² *Ibid* p. 198.

⁹³ Hunter, The Making of the Crofting Community, p. 272.

majority of crofters, who would lose their lands as a result of this consolidation, would fish as their sole source of income. Without the burden or the distraction of tending their crofts, the Hebrideans in turn would become more efficient and more devoted fishermen. Their increased catches would fund the other improvements that would raise the islands from their present squalor. Through Leverhulme's largesse and benevolence, "a prosperous industrial community" would emerge in the Hebrides, "based on the rich harvest of the surrounding seas, instead of on the barren soil of the crofts."⁹⁴

Leverhulme, however, failed to understand that to the crofters, their small farms were far from distractions. They were on the contrary a powerful symbol of their links to their past, a guarantee against periodic famine, and a testament to their most successful legal and moral victory against the fiat of capricious landlords.⁹⁵ Crofting was at the very center of their lives and their identities, as much if not more than their ancillary fishing and weaving.⁹⁶ Consequently they saw Leverhulme's plans as a threat to their way of life. He sought "to withdraw the crofter and others from their crofts and land, and put them in industrial work in connexion with his various schemes. The crofters are, however, not enthusiastic about this proposal, and their only desire is to pursue their usual vocations."⁹⁷ The Times might have overstated the reluctance on the

⁹⁴ "Lord Leverhulme's Gift to Lewis," in The Times, September 6, 1923, p. 7.

⁹⁵ Leah Leneman, "The Last *Successful* Land Raid," in Northern Scotland, v. 10 (1990), p. 73.

⁹⁶ Jim Wilkie, Metagama: Emigration from the Isle of Lewis in the 1920s (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Ltd., 1987), p. 43.

⁹⁷ "Lord Leverhulme's Island: Lewis Crofters and Industrial Schemes," in The Times, June 28, 1919, p. 9.

part of the Hebrideans to work with Lord Leverhulme in his factories, inhabit his dwellings and be educated in his schools. But the price for this development was to many Hebrideans too high. A Trade Union official wrote Lord Leverhulme in 1919 regarding the loss of independence in his model towns:

No man of an independent turn of mind can breathe for long the atmosphere of Port Sunlight. That might be news to your Lordship, but we have tried it. The profit-sharing system not only enslaves and degrades the workers; it tends to make them servile and sycophant; it lowers them to the level of machines tending machines.⁹⁸

The crofters, with their land and perhaps more importantly a legacy of legal victories and of rebellion, were determined to avoid such a fate.

Many Hebrideans also returned to their homes following the “Great War” with a sense of entitlement, for some sort of reward in return for their military service. In 1914, when that conflict erupted, the Isle of Lewis answered the call for men in the services, women in the munitions factories on the mainland, and for fish and grains from those who remained. Out of a population in 1911 of 29,603, the island of Lewis sent 6712 of its men into the armed forces. Their departure was not only accompanied by thousands more who moved to the mainland to work in the war industries, it opened up opportunities for those who remained, who filled the new vacancies in the crofts and in the fisheries.⁹⁹ An air of prosperity, pride and hope swept across the isles, as the Hebrideans profited from the wartime economy and served their nation valiantly,

⁹⁸ Source: Nicolson, Lord of the Isles..., p. 17.

⁹⁹ Trevor Royle, The Flowers of the Forest: Scotland and the First World War (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2006), p.; 282.

basking in the comfort that the British were now turning to them for help rather than blissfully ignoring their plight.¹⁰⁰ In December 1917, an anonymous speaker asked an audience in Barvas on Lewis:

What are we going to do with our soldiers and sailors? We must look after the men who have fought for us. We must see that they get the land. (*Loud Applause*). It is morally theirs. Is there a landlord in the British Empire who would grudge them the soil which they so bravely defended from the savage and brutal Huns?¹⁰¹

Now that the Hebrideans fulfilled their end of an unspoken bargain by living up to the military traditions expected from them, losing 1100 men in the process, they expected the state to reward them by reconverting the land to crofts.¹⁰²

When Leverhulme proposed almost the exact opposite, the Hebrideans decided to take the law into their own hands. In 1919, the first “land raids” by disaffected crofters took place on the farms of Coll and Gress. By the summer of that year, squatters occupied sixteen of the twenty-two large farms on Lewis.¹⁰³ A civil servant from the Scottish Office observed that the raids were taking place “on a larger scale” than any since the Crofter’s War.¹⁰⁴ Leverhulme’s response was to halt the construction of new housing, which threw many crofters and cottars out of work. He also tried to

¹⁰⁰ Nicolson, *Lord of the Isles...*, p. 46; Brander, *The Making of the Highlands...* p. 205; “The Heroes of Perthshire,” in *Blackwood’s Magazine*, no. 184 (November 1908), p. 647 (Source: Heather Street’s chapter “Identity in the Highland Regiment in the Nineteenth Century: Soldier, Region, Nation,” in Steve Murdoch and A. MacKillop, eds., *Fighting for Identity: Scottish Military Experience, c. 1550-1900* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2002), p. 219.

¹⁰¹ Source: Nicolson, *Lord of the Isles...*, p. 47.

¹⁰² *Ibid* p. 47; Gold and Gold, “To Be Free and Independent...,” p. 202; “Lewis War Memorial,” in *The Times*, September 6, 1924, p. 12.

¹⁰³ Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community...*, p. 272; Gold and Gold, “To Be Free and Independent...,” p. 202.

¹⁰⁴ Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community...*, p. 272.

cajole the Hebrideans to cease their illegal occupation of farms by granting him ten years to prove the merit of his proposals before resuming further occupations.¹⁰⁵

The disturbances, however, only grew in size and intensity over the following three years. Besides the unyielding opposition of Leverhulme to crofting, and the equally stiff determination of the Hebrideans to farm their land how they pleased, the fishing and farming harvests of the 1920s were disastrous. To quote the annual report for the Fishery Board for Scotland in 1921:

We regret to have to record that the year 1921 was again one of acute depression in practically every branch of the fisheries. This depression is due to complex causes...Last year, for the first time since the termination of the war, the industry was thrown back on its own resources, not because the difficulties confronting it had been diminished, or were not fully realised by the Government, but mainly on account of the urgent need for national economy...The Russian market, which formerly used to absorb the greater part of the Scottish herring cure, was still closed; the purchasing power of Germany and the Baltic States continued to be below the normal standard.¹⁰⁶

The collapse of both the numbers of fish caught in Hebridean waters in the early 1920s occurred just when a severe postwar depression began to settle in. The worldwide slump in demand for commodities particularly hurt the Lever Bros. consortium, which was supposed to be the paymaster for Leverhulme's ambitious plans for Lewis.¹⁰⁷ In light of both of these developments, the new laird announced in August 1921 that "the

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid* p. 272; "Raids on Lewis Island: Lord Leverhulme's Offer to Crofters," in The Times, November 29, 1920, p. 8.

¹⁰⁶ "Fortieth Annual Report of the Fishery Board for Scotland Being for the Year 1921" (Edinburgh: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1922), p. 5.

¹⁰⁷ Gold and Gold, "To Be Free and Independent..." p. 202.

canning of factory fish products, and ice companies would not begin operations until the conditions of supply and demand in these industries made it possible to do so.”¹⁰⁸

The crofters, who faced immediate distress as those who served in the war effort returned to share an ever-shrinking economic base, viewed Leverhulme’s announcement as yet another betrayal. To quote one rebellious crofter, interviewed in 1959:

Most of us would have been willing to work in Lord Leverhulme’s canning factory, but not yet. I had just come back from the war. I wanted to settle down with a secure home; and then, maybe, look around afterwards. I was living with my wife at the back of my mother-in-law’s house. I was a burden on her. Although I had a share in a boat, the fishing failed, and I had no work. I wanted a croft and a home of my own... We had been promised so many things so often, and nothing had been done for us. We could not wait. Remember, we had been in the war. We were men, not boys.¹⁰⁹

They grew even more determined to maintain their crofts. To add to the misery, the potato crop on Lewis almost completely failed that winter. Sales of fish continued to plummet, due to the severe postwar depression that spread worldwide in 1920 that cut off vital markets. The islands’ only other significant export, tweed, also suffered, as mainland Britons cut back on expenses. Furthermore, because the crofters were classified as independent laborers, the majority of them were not able to collect unemployment benefits.¹¹⁰ Land raids soon recommenced, as destitute crofters scrambled to find land for pasture and to grow subsistence crops now that Leverhulme had turned off the financial tap. By September 1923, Leverhulme decided he had had

¹⁰⁸ “Lord Leverhulme and Lewis: Development Postponed,” in *The Times*, September 2, 1921, p. 8.

¹⁰⁹ Source: Nicolson, *Lord of the Isles...*, p. 141.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid* p. 186.

enough. He effectively abandoned the Isle of Lewis to its own fate, by deeding it *gratis* to the island's residents, and selling the town of Stornoway back to its former owners.¹¹¹

Conditions in Lewis and the Hebrides continued to plummet. The historian Nigel Nicolson's offers here a rather patronizing summary of Leverhulme's failed experiment, one undoubtedly shared by policymakers in the 1920s:

Are the people of a backward country the best judges of their own interests? Even if it assumed they are not, should 'improvements' be forced upon them? To what extent should the views of a minority who resist change be allowed to prevail over the majority who desire it?...[These] questions summarise the central subject of this narrative: the confrontation between a twentieth-century millionaire industrialist and the most primitive community to be found anywhere in the British Isles.¹¹²

The general view of "the immemorial problem of the Lews" was that if Lord Leverhulme with his generous plans to rehabilitate the Hebrides through private initiative and apparently unlimited funds could not rescue the crofters from their own insouciance, then what hope did the government have to do so? A general sense of apathy on the part of both the Hebrideans and the state set in. Unlike in the 1880s, when land raids on Lewis were viewed with sympathy on the part of public opinion, in the 1920s the land raiders were seen as foolishly rejecting Leverhulme's magnanimous efforts to industrialize and modernize the Hebrides. These "proud and sturdy stock" would rather live in "dirt and untidiness" and face starvation than give up their ever-

¹¹¹ "Great Gift to Stornoway: Lord Leverhulme's Plans," in The Times, September 5, 1923, p. 10; "Lord Leverhulme's Gift to Lewis: End of a Commercial Dream," in The Times, September 6, 1923, p. 7.

¹¹² Lord of the Isles..., p. 124.

shrinking crofts.¹¹³ They were, to echo nineteenth-century theorist Charles Kingsley, “clearly unfit for self-government.” Now, they were even deemed “unfit” for outside intervention on their behalf.¹¹⁴

This most recent confirmation of the “naturalization” of the poverty in the Hebrides and the chronic state of unrest there, when viewed through the lenses of parsimony in postwar government expenditure, the contemporaneous civil war unfolding in Ireland, strikes in Britain that some linked to “Bolshevist” agitation, and a burgeoning eugenics movement bolstered by claims that the British Empire was suffering due to genetic deterioration, and a new readiness by the government to encourage and finance imperial resettlement, led to the reemergence of a consensus that the only plausible solution to the “Highland problem” was, again, mass emigration.¹¹⁵ In the wake of Leverhulme’s abandonment of Lewis, the British government concluded that, to echo the emigration propagandist Andrew MacDonnell, “the Hebrideans must emigrate. There is no room for them at home.”¹¹⁶

Just as in the 1840s and again in the 1880s, the dualistic nature of the Hebridean Scot factored into this conclusion. Their “patriotism and readiness to serve in the [armed] forces,” stemming from their reputation as being valiant and loyal Britons and

¹¹³ NAS, AF 51/212, p. 14; “Starvation Faces 30,000 in Hebrides,” in The New York Times, February 20, 1924, p. 14.

¹¹⁴ Source: Banton, The Idea of Race, p. 76.

¹¹⁵ Wilkie, Metagama..., p. 58; Nicolson, Lord of the Isles..., pp. 186, 187; Brander, The Making of the Highlands..., pp. 206, 207; National Archives of Canada (NAC), RG-76, v. 633, File 968592, Pt. 3, letter from W.R. Little to Deputy Minister W.J. Egan, dated September 2, 1924.

¹¹⁶ NAC, RG-76, v. 633, File 465592, letter from MacDonnell to W.R. Little, dated June 16, 1925.

Scots “worthy of the race of giants from whom it is fabled they have sprung,” rendered them capable of redemption and rehabilitation. However, it was also decided that this rejuvenation was just not possible in the Hebrides. To quote the Local Government Board report of 1916, should be “regulat[ed] as a British colony.”¹¹⁷ Recent events, colored by the legacy of almost two hundred years of perpetual distress and plight in the Hebrides and the more recent ascendancy of Social Darwinism, caused the British state to decide that “the Celts *were* Celtic.”¹¹⁸ The British government essentially decided to cut its losses and export this “immemorial” problem to the Dominions, where it was hoped that their “British” status would emerge as it never had at home.

¹¹⁷ NAS, AF 51/212, p. 14; Wilkie, Metagama..., pp. 42, 66.

¹¹⁸ Jacobson, Whiteness of a Different Color..., p. 88.



Illustration 1.

Map of Scotland by County. Source: Putnam's Handy Volume Atlas of the World (New York and London: G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1921).



Illustration 2.

Top: Coastline of Lewis near Ness, at northern tip of the island. Photo taken by author.

Bottom: Typical Lewis landscape, pasture in the center of the island. Photo taken by author.

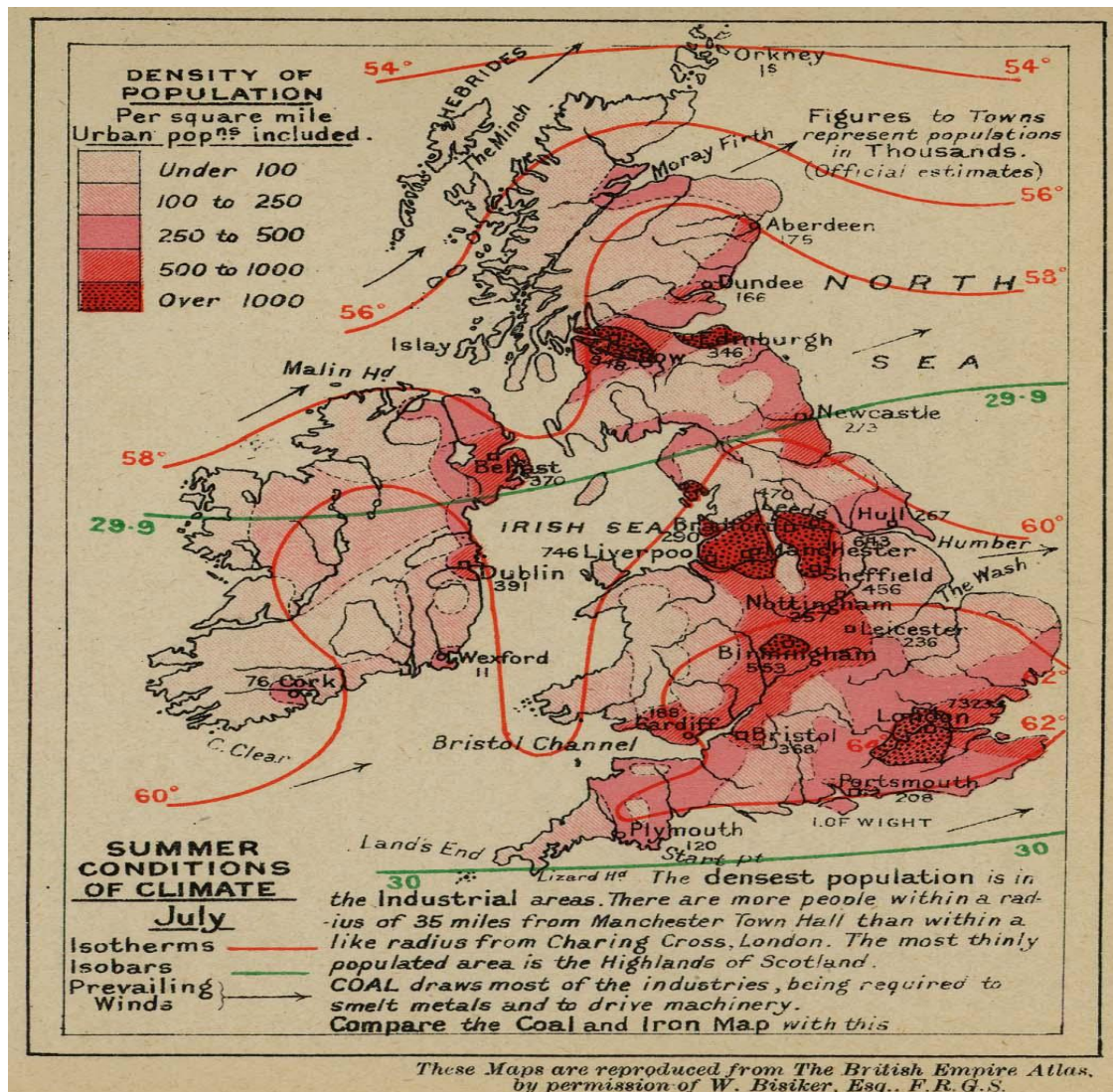


Illustration 3.

Population Map of the British Isles. Source: Edward Salmon and James Worsfold, eds., the British Dominions Yearbook, 1918 Edition (London: Eagle, Star and British Dominions Insurance Co., 1918), p. 44.

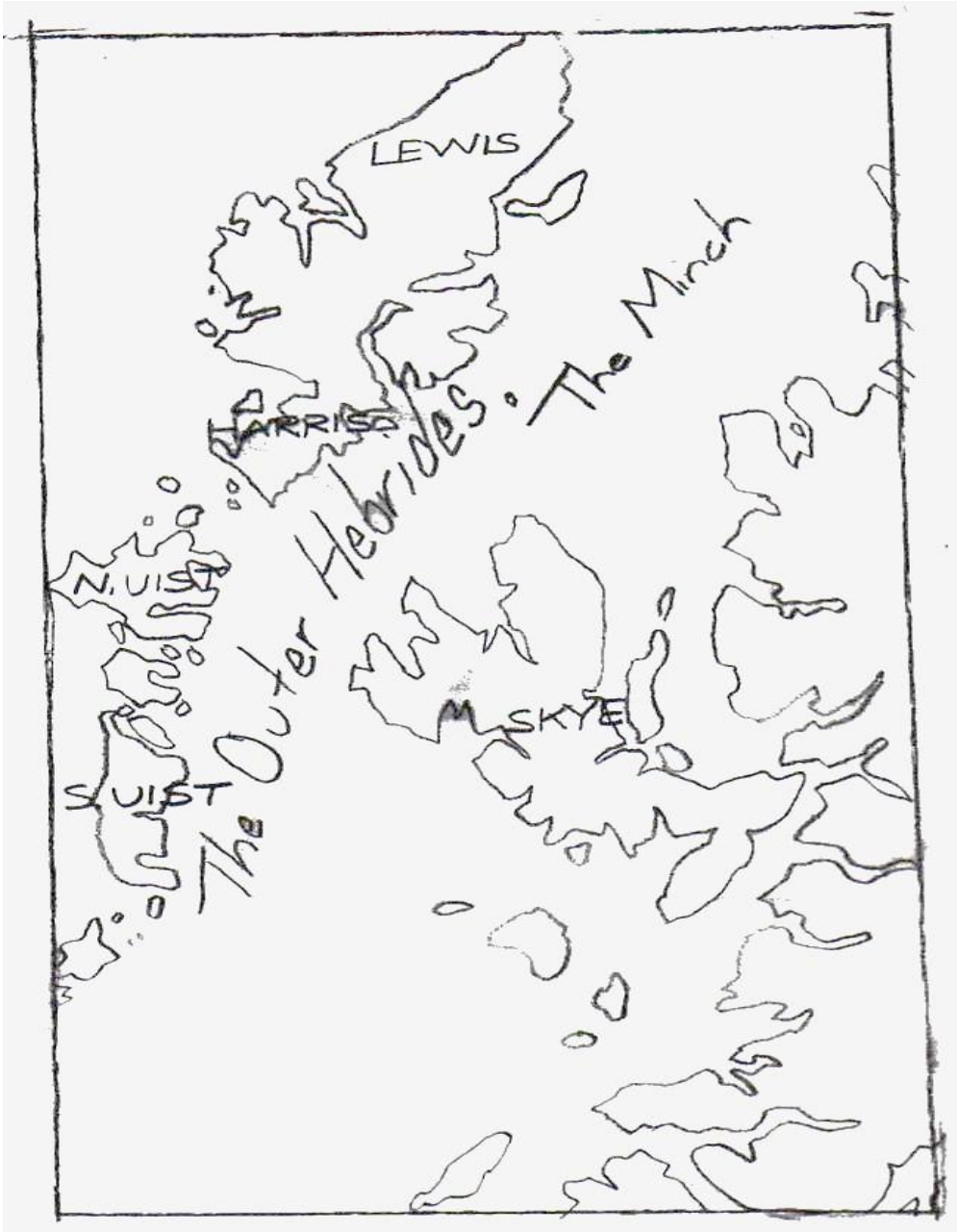


Illustration 4.

Map of the Outer Hebrides of Scotland. Illustration drawn by author.



Illustration 5.

“Index of Nigrescence.” In John Beddoe, The Races of Britain: A Contribution to the Anthropology of Western Europe (London: Trübner and Sons, 1883), p. 150.

Table 1.

Distribution of Scottish Counties into Regions According to Population Growth/Decline, 1861-1911

Region	County	Percentage Growth/Decline
Central Lowlands		
	Dunbarton	+168.73
	Fife	+72.99
	Lanark & Renfrew	+117.71
	Midlothian (Edinburgh)	+82.28
	Selkirk	+147.31
	Stirling	+75.13
	West Lothian	+107.41
Lowland Periphery and Northeast		
	Aberdeen	+40.89
	Angus	+37.66
	Ayr	+34.86
	Banff	+3.69
	Bute	+11.36
	Clackmannan	+45.09
	East Lothian	+14.93
	Kincardine	+18.98
	Nairn	+2.68
	Peebles	+33.75
Highlands		
	Argyll	-11.07
	Caithness	-22.14
	Inverness	-1.82

Kinross	-5.64
Orkney	-20.06
Perth	-6.86
Ross & Cromarty	-6.11
Shetland	-11.87
Sutherland	-20.07

Source: Jeanette Brock, The Mobile Scot: A Study of Emigration and Migration, 1861-1911 (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1999), p. 68. Note: The majority of the Outer Hebrides lay in the Highland county of Ross and Cromarty. Note: The Border counties of Berwick, Dumfries, Kirkcudbright, Roxburgh and Wigtown, located on or near the border with England, are excluded from this table.

Table 2.

Destination of Scottish Overseas Emigrants, 1853-1929

Period	USA		Canada		Australia	
	Average	%age of Total	Average	%age of Total	Average	%age of Total
1853-1854	6179	25.6	5950	24.5	12,050	49.9
1855-1859	4097	33.3	3102	25.2	5109	41.5
1860-1864	2384	22.1	2089	19.3	6325	58.6
1865-1869	9665	66.0	2283	15.6	2701	18.4
1870-1874	12,816	64.7	3903	19.7	3077	15.6
1875-1879	5231	45.5	1308	11.4	4963	43.4
1880-1884	15,959	61.2	3613	13.9	5532	21.2
1885-1889	19,794	71.9	3585	13.0	3598	13.1
1890-1894	14,465	75.6	1920	10.0	1814	9.5
1895-1899	9681	63.6	1533	10.1	960	6.3
1900-1904	13,512	50.1	6158	22.8	1712	6.3
1905-1909	21,426	43.5	21,002	42.7	3443	7.0
1910-1914	19,070	29.4	33,666	51.9	8965	13.8
1915-1919	2055	33.0	2904	46.7	821	13.2
1920-1924	18,556	38.4	19,592	40.6	8293	17.2
1925-1929	13,093	33.3	15,354	39.0	9727	24.7

Source: Michael Flynn ed., Scottish Population History from the 17th Century to the 1930s (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 451.

Table 3.

Illegitimacy and Illiteracy Rates per Region of Scotland as Defined by the Registrar-General, 1871

Region	Illegitimacy Rate	Illiteracy Rate	
		Male	Female
Northern	6.2	6.21	17.20
North-Western	6.2	31.61	49.12
North-Eastern	15.1	2.86	9.15
East Midland	10.4	6.58	16.19
West Midland	7.8	13.00	22.26
South-Western	8.4	15.15	29.85
South-Eastern	9.0	6.19	11.14
Southern	14.3	4.75	7.54

Source: Michael Flinn, ed., Scottish Population History from the 17th Century to the 1930s (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 356.

Note: The Northern Region consisted of the counties of Shetland, Orkney, Caithness, and Sutherland. North-Western: Ross and Cromarty, Inverness. North-Eastern: Nairn, Moray, Banff, Aberdeen, Kincardine. East Midland: Angus, Perth, Fife, Kinross, Clackmannan. West Midland: Stirling, Dunbarton, Argyll, Bute. South-Western: Renfrew, Ayr, Lanark. South-Eastern: West Lothian, Midlothian, East Lothian, Berwick, Peebles, Selkirk. Southern: Roxburgh, Dumfries, Kirkcudbright, Wigtown.

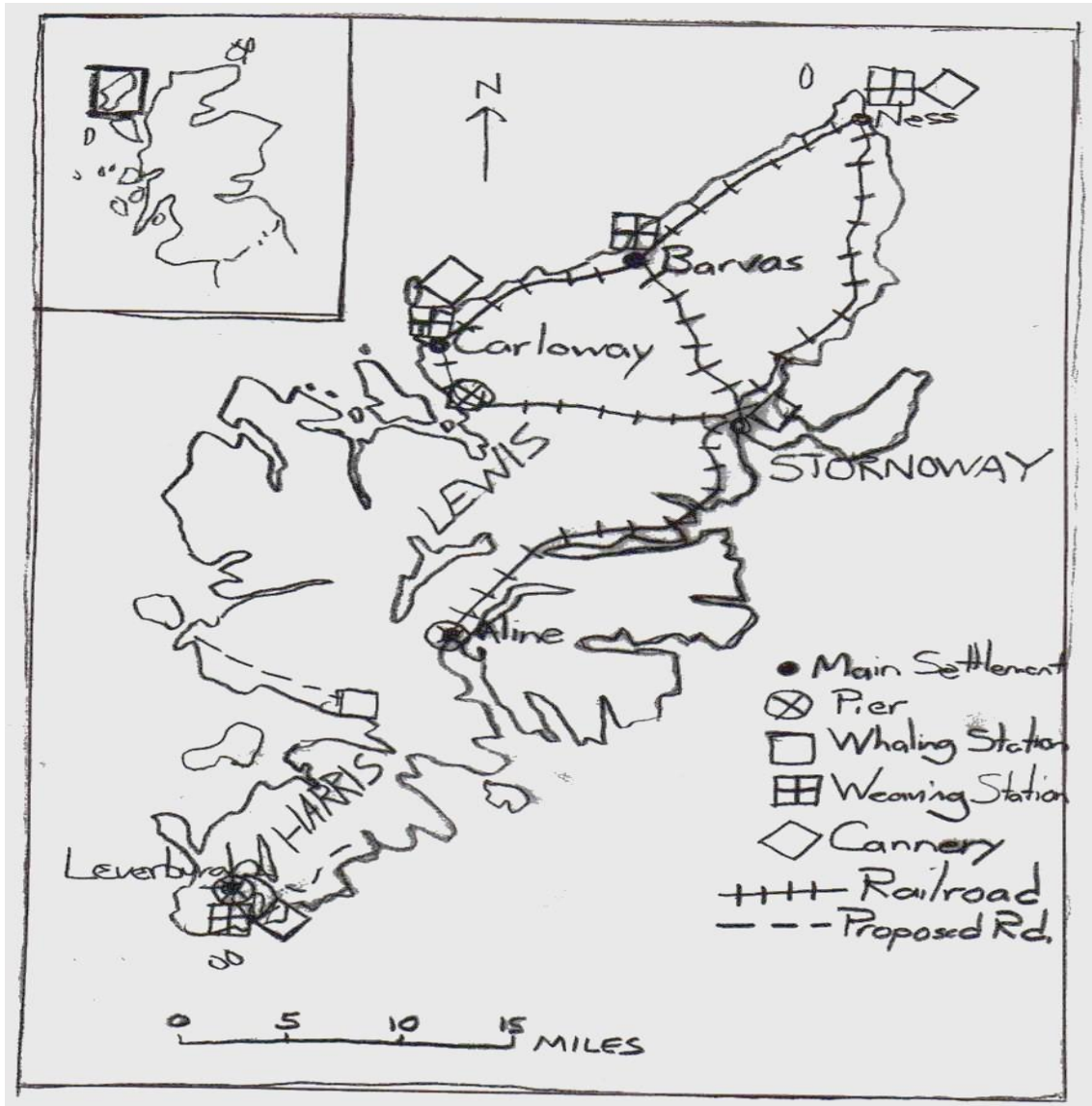


Illustration 6.

Map of Lord Leverhulme's Plans to Transform the Isles of Lewis and Harris.
 Illustration drawn by author.

CHAPTER II: THE “WEST BEYOND THE WEST:” BRITISH COLUMBIA IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Approximately thirty years after “The ’45” wreaked such havoc in Scotland and northern England, Britain was ready to resume its continued explorations in the Pacific Ocean. The British first encountered what would come to be known as British Columbia in 1778, when Captain James Cook first anchored the *Resolution* and the *Discovery* near present-day Nootka. For the next several decades they, save for a few intrepid explorers and fur traders, by and large ignored this vast territory. What was then known as the “Oregon Country,” a land that extended from the northernmost boundary of Mexico all the way to the Russian colony of Alaska, ultimately was organized under the Anglo-American convention of 1818 as a condominium. The United States and Great Britain shared sovereignty over the entire territory for the following three decades.

The Oregon Country, 1818-1848

This solution seemed to work well at first. As a whole, the Oregon Country was remote and offered little to potential immigrants as far as agriculture or mining interests were concerned. Also, the only ways to access the region were either via a lengthy sea passage around Cape Horn that took several months, or over an arduous crossing of the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains through difficult terrain populated by ofte n-

hostile Native Americans. Consequently very few “white” settlers migrated to the Oregon Country.

This started to change in the 1830s and the 1840s, as reports were sent eastward that touted the fertile soils and lush environment of the region, particularly in the Willamette River valley in the present-day U.S. state of Oregon. At the same time, well-worn and safer routes were blazed that allowed faster and safer means of reaching the territory. The Oregon Trail, arguably the most famous and well-used transcontinental road, opened in 1843. This combination of easier and safer access to the Oregon Country and a willingness to migrate there led to a substantial increase in the numbers of white settlers in the territory. In 1843, several hundred settlers made the trek using this new route. The following year, 1400 Americans arrived in the territory, and in 1845 3000 settlers poured into the Oregon Country.¹

Many of these newly arrived migrants bristled at the economic domination the British Hudson’s Bay Company had over the commerce of the condominium. They felt that this was patently unfair and unwarranted, considering the paucity of British settlers in the territory. Tensions were also running high over the current state of affairs between Britain and the United States over the Mexican War and American territorial expansion in general. In this context, many of these migrants pushed the American government to claim sole sovereignty over the entire Oregon Country, justified both by the “manifest destiny” of the United States to rule North America and the effective

¹ Jean Barman, The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), p. 148.

occupation of the condominium by the Americans. The issue was so grave that talks of war between Great Britain and the United States over the “Oregon issue” became prominent.

Fortunately, cooler heads prevailed. The war President James Polk promised with Britain to American voters in his 1844 election campaign was deftly avoided. In 1846, the Oregon Treaty was negotiated between diplomats from Britain and the United States. Under the treaty’s terms, the condominium over the Oregon Country was terminated, and the territory divided along the 49th parallel of latitude. The British, in agreeing to this partition, largely conceded the fact that their minimal presence in the region meant that it would be difficult to challenge the American justifications of both effective occupation of the area based on demographics and the concomitant claim of *terra nullis*, that the Americans were the first to exploit the territory. These two concepts would come to have a profound impact upon what would soon come to be known as British Columbia.

From the colony’s foundation, its political and economic elites realized that they needed to populate this new territory to ensure that its hold over the colony could not be challenged by a competing nation. British settlers must be encouraged to make the 12,000 mile journey to this nascent colony. Secondly, any immigrant who might be seen as a threat to British dominion over the region must be excluded, so that no “advance guard” could develop that would threaten this precarious outpost of British civilization, and British power in this distant imperial frontier.

The Colony of Vancouver Island, 1849-1858

The path was now cleared for the British to organize their new possessions they now held outright. On January 13, 1849, the British Government created the colony of Vancouver Island. They immediately granted it to the long-established Hudson's Bay Company, on the condition that the company establish towns populated by British settlers over the following five years.² Compared to the relative flood of settlers pouring into the lands south of the 49th parallel, however, the efforts of the Hudson's Bay Company to attract immigrants to populate its new possession (and to fulfill its mandate) were largely unsuccessful.

The Company in fact failed miserably at this task. It was hoped that the Company, with its over 150 years of experience in the exploration and colonization of British North America, would be best suited for the enormous task of settling the region. A side benefit for the British Government, having only so recently decisively swung towards free trade with the repeal of the protectionist Corn Laws in 1846, would be that it could establish this "window" on the North Pacific and through its effective occupation of this new territory at little cost to itself.

That said, despite advertising heavily in newspapers throughout England and Scotland, the Hudson's Bay Company found it difficult to recruit men and women who were willing to embark on a five-month-long journey to start a farm on uncleared and unsurveyed land. Even those who were willing to migrate to the region were dissuaded

² Martin Robin, *The Rush for Spoils: The Company Province, 1871-1933* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1972), pp. 13,14.

from doing so due to the high prices set for land purchase, which ran upwards of four times the amount charged for cleared and more accessible land across the border in Oregon.³

The Company's signal failure in this regard can be attributed in large part due to the policies of the first Governor and chief factor of the Company in the colony, James Douglas. Douglas had a very patrician and aristocratic vision for Vancouver Island. He looked scathingly at the "American land grabbers" actively at work in California and Oregon. To avoid their fates, Douglas sought to fill the region with men and women who "would hold high the social and ethical standards of mid-Victorian England and who could be counted on to despise the crasser values of 'the irregular squatters' who flocked to new lands in search of material benefit." This conversely meant that any immigrant who would possibly threaten the realization of this ideal should be rigorously excluded.⁴ Consequently, this "outpost of Empire," as the historian of British Columbia Margaret Ormsby termed the colony, remained just that – a sleepy, remote, relatively forgotten fort, its existence owed largely due to the need to forestall American expansionism rather than being based on any substantial economic or social rationales.

The Gold Rush of 1858 and the First Wave of Asian Immigration

On the morning of April 25, 1858, however, this "outpost" was jostled out of its isolation. That day, the *Commodore*, a wooden side-wheel American steamer, entered

³ Barman, *The West Beyond the West...*, p. 56.

⁴ Margaret Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History* (Vancouver: The Macmillan Company of Canada, Ltd., 1958), p. 101

the harbor of the main settlement, Victoria. On board were 450 miners, bound for the newly-discovered goldfields on the Fraser River on the adjoining and as-yet-unincorporated mainland territories. To put this figure in perspective, there were only approximately 450 white settlers on the whole of Vancouver Island in that year.⁵ The men who arrived on the *Commodore* were but the first of a wave of immigrants who subsequently poured into the region. By 1862, around thirty thousand men and women relocated to the colony.⁶ This population swell was substantial enough for the British government to create a separate colony on the mainland, named British Columbia, on August 2, 1858.⁷

While the vast majority of these immigrants were single white males from the United States who, to the surprise of men like Douglas assimilated quite readily into their new British colonial milieu, one significant group of settlers remained decidedly excluded from full membership in the society of the new colony. In 1858 and 1859, approximately 2000 Chinese immigrants arrived in British Columbia.⁸ Unlike most white settlers, who at this early stage in the colony's development were at least begrudgingly tolerated by a society that needed their labor so long as they "assimilated," the Chinese were seen as a threat to the "British" character and British

⁵ Kay Anderson, Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980 (Montreal and Kingston, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), p. 34.

⁶ Barman, The West Beyond the West..., pp. 66, 70.

⁷ The term "British Columbia" only referred to the mainland until 1866, at which time the colony of Vancouver Island and its mainland counterpart were merged into the single entity known today as British Columbia.

⁸ Edgar Wickberg and Harry Con, eds. From China to Canada: A History of the Chinese Communities in Canada (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, Ltd., 1982), p. 14.

control over the colony in a way even the more numerically significant “American” population was not, for they viscerally stood out from all other groups. One year into the gold rush, the first newspaper in the colony, the Victoria Gazette, already attacked these new arrivals.

It must be borne in mind that few Chinese work as miners for *themselves* being mainly employed in a species of slavery by companies, and they are, with few exceptions, not desirable as permanent settlers in a country populated by the Caucasian race and governed by civilized enactments. No greater obstacle to the coming of the class of immigrants needed in British Columbia could be devised, than the presence of Chinamen in large numbers throughout the upper mining region of British Columbia.⁹

Even in a colony that desperately needed laborers to build a modern society largely from scratch, clearly Asians were not even welcome for this task by several key segments of its population.

In 1864, anti-Asian sentiment was pronounced enough for the Chinese community to launch an appeal for relief directly to the British Crown. The petition they drafted protested an ultimately unsuccessful attempt by the provincial legislature to impose a licensing fee to be applied solely to Chinese miners. This bill was directly copied from one the California legislature had just passed. The Chinese authors of this address of loyalty wrote that “the Chinese are sincerely devoted to Queen Victoria for

⁹ The italics are original. I would like to point out that throughout the period in question, one of the most central arguments made for either the recruitment of certain immigrant groups or the exclusion of others was their ability to be self-made men (and women), to be independent of any excessive reliance on others. In addition, one of the main attacks launched on the Chinese, and later, though to a lesser extent, the Japanese was their servility and rumored effeteness, embodied in their assumed inability to be self-sufficient. Source: W. Peter Ward, White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy toward Orientals in British Columbia (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1978), p. 24

the protection and even-handed justice of His Excellency the former Governor, Sir James Douglas, so contrary to the laws of California as applied to its Chinese population.”¹⁰ Such appeals protesting the ever-increasing discriminatory measures against Asians passed by the provincial and municipal governments would be a constant motif in the history and politics of British Columbia for the next several decades.

*“Racism vs. the Railway”: Chinese Immigration and the Canadian Pacific Railway,
1871-1885*

Anti-Asian sentiment, however, gradually declined in British Columbia in the late 1860s and 1870s. To entice the fledgling colony of British Columbia to enter into the newly created Dominion of Canada rather than potentially becoming an American state, both the British and the Canadian governments promised the quick construction of a transcontinental railroad that would link the colony to Central Canada within a ten-year time span. Despite this pledge, which ultimately swayed the colony to enter into Confederation in 1871, very little railroad construction actually occurred in that decade. As the 1881 deadline approached, pressure mounted on the Canadian government to do whatever it took to ensure that the railroad be completed, so that the Dominion’s and indeed the British Empire’s window on the Pacific Ocean remained firmly within the Canadian and British aegis. Due to the high construction and labor costs involved in building such an ambitious project, especially when considering the rugged terrain that comprises most of British Columbia, the chief contractor for the Canadian Pacific

¹⁰ Source: Charles A. Price, The Great White Walls are Built: Restrictive Immigration to North America and Australasia, 1836-1888 (Canberra: Australian National University Press), p. 97.

Railway entrusted with the railroad's construction consistently lobbied for the importation of Chinese labor to lower its costs.

In 1882 Andrew Onderdonk bluntly informed Macdonald that, if the railway was to be completed within a reasonable amount of time, [Asian] labour would have to be employed. Accordingly the prime minister ignored all entreaties to the contrary. And when railway construction commenced in earnest, a new surge of [Asian] immigration soon followed.¹¹

Apparently business interests preferred Asian labor for its docility and cross over the supposed need to maintain British Columbia as a preserve for the “white” and “British” races.

The resultant wave of Asian labor into British Columbia in the 1880s led to a virulent backlash against their importation, especially following the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1886. Their very presence in the province came to be perceived as a direct threat to how the “British” element of the population conceived of themselves. The political elites of British Columbia had since its earliest days visualized their new home as a “British preserve,” a place where British civilization, gentility, and decorum triumphed over the ramshackle and rowdy Americans to the south, the “primitive” Native Canadians within their midst, and the “effete” and “depraved” hordes of Asia located across the Pacific. Most of the elites took pride in their local British institutions, such as the Church of England and the royal naval base at

¹¹ Ward, White Canada Forever..., p. 35.

Esquimalt, as proof of their effortless superiority and their legitimate right to control British Columbia.¹²

Such attachments to the traditional pillars of Victorian British society were especially concentrated in the provincial capital and its largest city, the aptly named Victoria.

‘The pressure of British loyalty and patriotism,’ Hobson wrote, ‘is probably stronger to the square inch in Victoria than in any other spot in the Dominion.’ ... Victoria was then a decorous Little England, housing a colonial bourgeoisie who spoke in delicate British tones, trailed ivy over their fences, attended chrysanthemum shows, and took their tea oblivious to the craze of expansion which soon seized the interior.¹³

To add to the manmade recreations, immigration pamphlets often emphasized the temperate, moderate weather year-round, similar to that which most of Great Britain experiences, as a chief reason why settlers should venture on the long journey to British Columbia. The climactic similarities, the plentiful rainfall, the verdant landscape, the meticulous construction of Victoria as an idealized nineteenth-century English utopia – all of these were either stressed or created to replicate “Home” as much as possible.

This insecurity that underpinned such depictions was only exacerbated by the new influx of the distinctly non-British Asians into the province in the 1880s. In response, two strategies of maintaining “British” control over the province emerged. This fear was exacerbated by British Columbia’s position on the frontier. The province was remote even within the immediate Canadian context, let alone the broader British

¹² Robin, *The Rush for Spoils...*, p. 42.

¹³ Terry Reksten, “*More English than the English:*” *A Very Social History of Victoria* (Victoria, BC: Orca Book Publishers, 1986), p. 142.

imperial one. The capital of Victoria lay over 3000 miles from Central Canada, where the majority of Canadians resided. The Rocky Mountains also proved to be a difficult barrier to traverse in both a physical and a psychological sense, which “multiplie[d] its problems and widen[ed] the scope of its interests.”¹⁴ Most immigrants were unwilling to cross the Rockies as long as the land remained expensive, mountainous and heavily timbered, the goldfields exhausted, and the valleys isolated. Since the heady days of the gold rush of the late 1850s abruptly ended early in the following decade, the province had little to offer prospective British immigrants.

In contrast, the only barrier that stood between the province and Asia was the Pacific Ocean, a body that seemed to be shrinking with the advent of reliable steamship services. Much like those immigrants from Europe who were unwilling to cross the Rocky Mountains, instead filling up the more fertile and cultivatable prairies to the east of the continental divide, few Asian settlers crossed those mountains for similar reasons, unwilling to migrate to an area with few Asians so remote from and climactically dissimilar to their homeland. As a result, most Canadians, especially in the demographically, politically and economically ascendant provinces of Ontario and Quebec, never even encountered any Asians in their everyday lives. Most of the new Dominion thus could not comprehend the apparently rabid fears of a “Yellow Peril” emanating from and threatening to engulf that distant province, for no such threat existed or could even be conceived of in Central Canada.

¹⁴ E.R. Gosnell, “British Columbia and British International Relations,” in Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Jan. 1913, p. 2

*The Arrival of the Railway, Attempts to Legislate Exclusion, and Tensions with
Ottawa, 1884-1888*

British Columbia's relative seclusion, however, ended in the 1880s. With the arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1886, the province went almost overnight from being an extremely remote outpost of Canada, let alone British imperium in the Pacific, to a potential trade and communications entrepôt between Great Britain and eastern Canada on one hand, and Asian markets and the British Australasian colonies on the other. Thousands upon thousands of white immigrants almost overnight suddenly arrived in British Columbia to take advantage of the opportunities that naturally arose as a consequence. Among those who arrived to participate in the flourishing economy were "young men grown impatient with the Irish nationalist agitation; from England, upper-class families; from Wales and Cornwall, unemployed miners; from Germany, bankers, investment dealers and brewers; from Italy, unskilled workmen; and from Hong Kong, boatload after boatload of Chinese coolies."¹⁵

This migration had a twofold impact on race relations in the province. First, the increased numbers of Asians in the province, particularly in its cities and in its burgeoning fishing, lumbering and agricultural enterprises that were traditionally "off limits" to non-whites increased their visibility, which in turn increased the anxiety surrounding what their presence meant for British Columbia. The boom in the numbers of Europeans and Euro-Americans resident in the province also decreased the need for

¹⁵ Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History*, pp. 299, 300.

Asian workers, or so provincial political elites and the burgeoning labor movement thought, now that a plentiful supply of “white” labor was available for the first time.

Initially the Chinese, whose presence was admittedly troubling, for the most part did not attract too much attention from the emerging white majority population. Even during and after the gold rush of the 1850s, while anti-Asian agitation was undoubtedly present and visible, it was more often than not held in check by the attitudes of the nascent economic and political elites of the province. In a province that was desperately short of labor, and in dire need of establishing urban centers, transportation routes, and the resource-extracting industries that would form the backbone of British Columbia’s economy, all hands that could be mustered were valuable, no matter what color they were. To take but one example of how, until the 1880s, the necessity of Chinese labor often outweighed an automatic aversion to their presence based on race.

The Chinese had not been without their defenders, men characterized by leading anti-Orientalist Arthur Bunster, a Victoria brewer, as ‘would be aristocrats who like to put on frills and are fond of having Chinese servants.’ Fitting that description was Henry Pelling Perew Crease, a Supreme Court judge and the owner of ‘Pentrelew’, a stately home on Fort Street [in Victoria]. Arguing against any policy of Chinese exclusion, Crease warned, ‘The wail of the housewife would sweep through the land, and find a very decided expression in every husband’s vote at the polls.’ Crease knew whereof he spoke. Without the Chinese the servant problem would have been acute.”¹⁶

Gendered stereotypes aside, not to mention the assumption on the part of the Hon. Crease that all voters had the means to employ domestic help, the fact remains that as long as there was a shortage of white labor in British Columbia, and that the numbers of

¹⁶ Reksten, *More English...*, p. 126.

Chinese settlers remained relatively small, their utility at least would help mitigate their exoticness.

A comparison with New South Wales in Australia proves instructive. There, “as the Cantonese population...decreased [following the end of the gold rush in the 1850s] it became more widespread and less conspicuous. With this, anti-Chinese feeling became less vocal and the terms ‘Mongolian’ and ‘Tartar’ dropped out of newspaper reporting; interracial conflict declined.”¹⁷ In British Columbia, Dr. Hamilton Gray, a judge on the Supreme Court of the province, concluded in an 1885 report on Asian immigration:

It may safely be said that there are several industries that would not have succeeded – perhaps it might be said undertaken – if it had not been for the opportunity of obtaining their labour...[There was] preponderating testimony as to the sobriety, industry and frugality of the Chinese as manual labourers...and up to this time their presence in the province has been most useful if not indispensable.¹⁸

Following such logic, to many employers, even the sudden presence of alternate “white” laborers would not deter them from continuing to hire Asian workers, based on these favorable characterizations.

¹⁷ At the time, very little distinction between the various nationalities and cultures of non-European peoples was made on the part of the imperial powers. This stands in stark contrast to the increasing gradations and differentiations that were being instituted with the rise of Social Darwinist theories to classify and rank even the minutest of European societies. The sublimation of Asian national differences in the nineteenth century meant that, once the Japanese began arriving in North American and Australasia *en masse* from approximately 1890 onwards, many of the negative stereotypes the Chinese acquired over the years were automatically transferred to the new Japanese immigrants, including “Mongolian.” For more information see Ward, *White Canada Forever*, pp. 97, 98, 102, 103; Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), pp. 180, 181; Price, *The Great White Walls...*, p. 88.

¹⁸ Dominion of Canada, *Sessional Papers*, “Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration: Report and Evidence” (Ottawa: Printed on Order of the Royal Commission, 1885), nos. 14, 49.

Moreover, many of these “white” immigrants arrived in British Columbia with little marketable expertise or skills. They quickly discovered that the only opportunities available to them were in the unskilled trades – the very occupations the Chinese hitherto were restricted to. As a result, “the alien status of settlers from China was more bluntly apparent in the conduct of white labourers, who saw Chinese workers as a direct threat to their efforts to establish a comfortable existence in the province.”¹⁹ The image of the Asian laborer quickly transformed in this period, as the increased numbers – and therefore visibility – of the Chinese “coolie” clashed with the exploding population of permanent white settlers.²⁰ As the electorate of British Columbia broadened with the overall immigrant influx, and became much more white and working-class in composition, the average interaction between the typical Euro-American and the Asians resident in the province changed. The same Chinese servant who was praised by a member of Victoria’s elite because “he does twice the work, he is far more cleanly in his manner of doing it, he is always sober, and fairly honest” was now savaged by many white laborers as being a member of “a huge docile workforce” that would undercut both their wage levels and their newly elevated status, above all others in the province.²¹

¹⁹ Anderson, Vancouver’s Chinatown..., p. 36.

²⁰ Robert G. Lee, Orientalism: Asian Americans in Popular Culture (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), p. 3.

²¹ Florence Grohman, “The Yellow and White Agony: A Chapter on Western Servants,” in Fifteen Years’ Sport and Life in the Hunting Grounds of Western America and British Columbia. By W.A. Baillie-Grohman, with a Chapter by Mrs. Baillie Grohman (London: Horace Cox, 1900), p.127.; Reksten, More English..., p. 126;

Under those circumstances, it was only a matter of time before politicians seized on the rising anti-Asian sentiment in the province to garner votes. As the noted historian of British Columbia Margaret Ormsby explains:

The wealthier residents of Victoria, who employed Chinese houseboys, Chinese gardeners and Chinese laundrymen, were inclined to share the romantic view of [well-to-do visitors]. Not so the legislators at James Bay. Conscious of the voting strength of the Victoria working-men and the Nanaimo coal-miners, members of the legislature studied more carefully the growing number of petitions [complaining about] ‘John Chinaman.’”²²

The laboring classes started to use the one power they possessed – the vote – to make their opinions on Asian labor felt in order for the threat such workers posed to the province was neutered. In 1884, the provincial legislature passed three measures aimed at curtailing, if not eliminating, the Asian presence in British Columbia. The first was an act forbidding all Chinese immigration to the province. The second imposed a \$10 annual poll tax levied on all Chinese residents in British Columbia. Lastly, the province attempted to ban the Chinese from acquiring Crown lands.”²³

The Canadian Pacific Railway at this time had still not been completed. In light of the aforementioned testimony on the part of Mr. Onderdonk, and with him and the railroad’s need for cheap Asian labor having favor with the then-prime minister Sir John A. Macdonald, the first measure listed above was declared *ultra vires* or extra-jurisdictional by the federal parliament six weeks later.²⁴ Shortly afterwards, the

²² Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History*, p. 303.

²³ Ward, *White Canada Forever...*, p. 38.

²⁴ According to the British North America Act (hereafter referred to as BNA) of 1867, which served as Canada’s constitution until 1982, Sections 55-57 and 90 granted the federal Parliament the right to

provincial courts ruled that the imposition of a poll tax was illegal.²⁵ The working classes of British Columbia interpreted these actions as a contravention of their democratic right to determine their own affairs and regulate their society.²⁶

Whereas the Dominion parliament was consistently aware of England's treaties [with China and Japan], British Columbia consistently ignored them in her legislature. At his early date, her powers of legislation were not clearly and definitely defined so she tried [to pass discriminatory laws aimed at the Chinese] every chance possible. If an Act was disallowed this year, perhaps it would pass Dominion scrutiny the following year!...She couldn't wait for a Dominion parliament thousands of miles away to legislate for her, especially on a question as important as immigration. She refused to sit dormant and watch thousands of aliens pour into her territory, and this isolation and frustration over lack of power to do something to check the tide of Oriental immigration led her in future years to legislate very harsh and often, inhuman, laws against the Chinese.²⁷

The province's electorate also came to realize that other methods of realizing their desire to create a "white" British Columbia might need to be devised.

In 1885, advocates of Asian exclusion again took their case to Ottawa. Since the poll tax was struck down by the courts, they decided to enact a law that would disenfranchise all Chinese in British Columbia, including those who born in the

disallow statutes passed by the legislatures of the various provinces. This normally occurred when a province passed a law that either contravened or attempted to overrule a statute passed or a treaty ratified by either the Dominion or the Imperial Parliament in London, or covered a competence that the BNA Act declared to be the sole prerogative of Ottawa. If the latter was applicable, the offending provincial piece of legislation was declared *ultra vires*, and would thus be struck down. In this particular case, the power to control immigration to Canada was one reserved solely for the federal government to regulate. This federal power of disallowance, as shall be seen, would be used repeatedly by the Canadian government to ensure that the increasingly rabid anti-Asian sentiment that the British Columbia Legislature and electorate espoused, would not jeopardize Canada's and Great Britain's international standing and official commitments. Such actions often exacerbated the feeling of isolation on the issue of Asian immigration that British Columbia felt, and often intensified its desire to act decisively in this arena.

²⁵ Ward, *White Canada Forever...*, p. 38.

²⁶ Ramdeo Sampat Mehta, *International Barriers* (Ottawa: Harpell's Press, 1973), p. 27.

²⁷ *Ibid* p. 27.

province. This would eliminate the need for politicians to downplay their racism due to their need to appeal to the burgeoning Chinese-Canadian electorate. These politicians thus would enjoy a much freer hand to implement their discriminatory program. In the words of the cultural geographer Kay Anderson, who quotes noted British Columbia entrepreneur and future Lieutenant Governor Robert Dunsmuir:

The disenfranchisement act officially sealed the alien or non-settler status of the category 'Chinese.' It also enabled and justified further social and economic closure. Robert Dunsmuir, one of the largest employers of Chinese labour in the province, actually conceded that the ascription of non-settler status by the state was an independent source of anti-Chinese sentiment, when he advised the commissioners of 1885, "If it were possible for Parliament to bring in a bill speedily to give the Chinaman the franchise, there would be less anti-Chinese agitation.' It was obvious to Dunsmuir that from the time Chinese were disenfranchised, politicians could vent any inflammatory opinions regarding their presence in order to gain popular legitimacy.²⁸

This act was passed in 1885, with the tacit endorsement of Ottawa. Not incoincidentally, the Canadian Government passed that very year the Act to Restrict and Regulate Chinese Immigration, which required \$50 or £10 from any Chinese immigrant entering Canada, diplomats, students, merchants and tourists excluded.

Conveniently enough for those opposed to Asian labor in British Columbia, 1885 marked a significant turning point in the attitude of the federal government towards this issue. Now that the single largest advocate for the continued importation of Chinese labor, the Canadian Pacific Railway (and by extension Ottawa), no longer required unfettered access to "coolies" to build the now-completed transnational

²⁸ Vancouver's Chinatown..., p. 47.

railroad, the Asian community in British Columbia found itself bereft of support. Indicative of this change was the new attitude Macdonald displayed towards this subject. The same man who disallowed provincial restrictions on Asian immigration while the transcontinental railroad was being built suddenly announced that he would support an amendment to the Franchise Act of 1885 that would disqualify all Asians residing in Canada from the vote. As Macdonald himself informed the House of Commons:

The Chinese are foreigners. If they come to this country, after three years' residence, they may...be naturalized. But still we know that when the Chinaman comes here he intends to return to his own country, he does not bring his family with him; he is a stranger, a sojourner in a strange land, for his own purposes for a while; he has no common interest with us.

The prime minister continues, making an interesting comparison between the typical Chinese immigrant and an "agricultural implement."

While he gives us his labor and is paid for it, and is valuable, the same as a threshing machine or any other agricultural implement which we may borrow from the United States or hire and return to the owner on the south side of the line; a Chinaman gives us his labor and gets his money, but that money does not fructify in Canada; he does not invest it here, but takes it with him and returns to China...[H]e has no British instincts of British feelings or aspirations, and therefore ought not to vote.²⁹

Just as Macdonald and others failed in their goal to disenfranchise all Chinese throughout Canada, largely due to the fact that no other province felt the need to discriminate *de facto* against the mere handful of Asians in their midst, his changed

²⁹ Government of Canada, Debates of the House of Commons (Ottawa, 1885), p. 1585.

stance on the issue is revealing of the intricate intersections between racist imperatives and economic and diplomatic priorities.

This news explains why, while British Columbia was successful in enlisting the limited support of Ottawa in restricting the provincial franchise and enacting a limited form of Chinese exclusion, the province was also hindered in its repeated attempts to enact further restrictions on its Chinese community. Bills passed by the provincial legislature in the 1880s that either attempted to ban all immigration from China – e.g. the 1884 Act to Prevent the Immigration of Chinese – or actively encourage the removal of the Chinese already resident in the province – e.g. the 1884 Land Act, which attempted to deny the Chinese of the right to access provincial water supplies – were either disallowed by the Governor-General or declared *ultra vires* by the courts.³⁰ Simultaneously, the Asian population of British Columbia continued to grow. By 1900, there were 16,000 Chinese residing in the province, compared to only 4300 in 1881.³¹

The reason for this is twofold. First, the vast majority of Canada had an almost uniformly “white” population located, just as Britain was, safely away from any “alien” threat to this demographic reality. Thus, the Dominion as a whole could afford to appear to be magnanimous in its immigration policy – at the time – because no one was arriving in sufficient numbers to Central Canada who would significantly challenge its “British” character. Secondly, even if it was so inclined to permit such discriminatory legislation, Ottawa was continually cautioned against taking such actions by the

³⁰ Anderson, Vancouver's Chinatown..., pp. 50, 51.

³¹ *Ibid* p. 61; Barman, The West Beyond the West... p. 380.

Colonial Office and the Canadian Government that would challenge the veneer of progress and equality that underpinned the British Empire. This was particularly true in matters that threatened the economic interests of key industries such as the railroads and the immigration recruiters that came to rely on Asian labor and Asian markets, even when they were afforded access to cheap European labor. To quote a Royal Commissioner who investigated the employment of Asians in British Columbia in 1902, “[Asians] are noted for their faithful observance of contracts, they are docile, plodding and obedient to servility.”³² So long as these vital prerogatives and interests remained in play, British Columbia remained stymied in its goals to create a thoroughly “British” province.

Consequently, the provincial legislature decided that another means of creating a “white man’s province,” one likely to encounter less diplomatic, political and economic resistance, needed to be found. Fairly quickly, the government of British Columbia decided to target and recruit “British” immigrants who would thrive in the province, who shared kith and kin ties with the United Kingdom, who would be hardy and experienced enough to be able to defend a tenuous frontier, yet pliable and obsequious enough to be relocated *en masse* without being able to mount any effective resistance to this. Politicians located such a population in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland. Their fate is the subject of the following chapter.

³² Dominion of Canada, Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1902).

**CHAPTER III: A MOST “GIGANTIC SCHEME:” PRELIMINARY
ATTEMPTS TO RECRUIT HEBRIDEAN SCOTS TO BRITISH COLUMBIA,
1887-1893**

In 1887, Alexander Begg was appointed as the unsalaried emigration commissioner for British Columbia.¹ Almost immediately, Begg threw himself into the task of promoting a scheme to transport approximately 1250 crofter families from the Outer Hebrides to the western coastline of Vancouver Island. By November of that year, only a scant two months in the job, the commissioner was able to secure the unofficial agreement of the Secretary of Scotland, Lord Lothian, to a tentative immigration program. The British Government, under the terms of the plan, would authorize a loan of £150,000 to fund this scheme, if the provincial government would guarantee its repayment should the prospective immigrants default on all or part of their loan repayments.²

*Scots on the Canadian Prairies: The Saltcoats and Killarney Schemes as
Models(?) for Begg*

This scheme surely was inspired by a contemporaneous attempt to transplant said crofters to what are now the prairie provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. In April 1888, Lord Lothian proposed to the British Treasury a modest immigration

¹ Jill Wade, “The ‘Gigantic Scheme’: Crofter Immigration and Deep-Sea Fisheries Development for British Columbia (1887-1893),” in *BC Studies*, No. 53 (Spring 1982), p. 31

² *Ibid* p. 31.

scheme for these Hebrideans. Under its terms, the British government would advance £10,000 (an additional £2000 would be raised via private subscription) for the transportation and establishment of approximately one hundred crofter families. Each family would be provided a homestead of 160 acres free of charge.³

The first subsidized Hebridean emigrants left for Canada in May 1888. Their relatively late departure meant that these settlers had scant time to establish themselves on what was then the virgin land at Killarney (in Manitoba) and Saltcoats (in Saskatchewan) before the unbelievably difficult winter of that year set in in October.⁴ This was but one of the plethora of difficulties that plagued this scheme.

Evidence was present that the funds were clearly inadequate to transport, house and establish the crofters on viable farms. The Napier Commission had questioned whether the larger sum of £150 [per family] would have been sufficient to settle crofters on the Canadian prairies. A guide book published by the Canadian government in 1885 had stated that £125 would be sufficient 'to enable a farmer to begin on a modest scale of comfort.' but this referred to the amount of capital required after the passage had been paid. Yet by the time the Killarney crofters arrived in Canada they had already spent, on average, over £50 on their passage, leaving them with less than £70 from the £120 assigned to them with which to start their homesteads.⁵

Stuart MacDonald, the author of an article chronicling the fate of these two settlements, questions the rationale behind the offering of such arbitrary and quite insufficient amounts advanced to these prospective settlers:

Why did the government allow only £120 per family? The main reason seems to be that the sum chosen was the maximum amount which could be secured by

³ Stuart MacDonald, "Crofter Colonisation in Canada 1886-1892: The Scottish Political Background," in Northern Scotland, v. 7, no. 1 (1986), pp. 51, 52.

⁴ *Ibid* p. 52.

⁵ *Ibid* p. 52.

a mortgage on a homestead in Canada under the Dominion Land Act.⁶ In reality the sum was far from adequate, and further advances had to be made in both 1888 and 1889.⁷

While few historians have dwelt on the fate of Killarney and Saltcoats, most of those, Stuart MacDonald included, have characterized the former as a modest success story, while labeling the latter group to be a complete disaster.

In Saltcoats, the Hebrideans were assumed to have “wrangled over the lots assigned to them, they rejected the idea of raising money by railway building, they complained to authorities about their difficulties...Most of them left the land within a few years.”⁸ In 1896, a British government report evaluating these colonization attempts found that not a single crofter was able to pay back the loan amounts advanced to him in under the terms of the agreement covering Saltcoats.⁹ Blame was quickly and squarely placed at the feet of the Hebrideans themselves, rather than on the almost insurmountable obstacles placed in the way of them ever achieving success, or on the very doctrines that motivated the conceiving of such schemes in the first place. For example, the editor of the Nor’West Farmer, a Mr. Richard Waugh, concluded in a report that “these Crofters are brought here, and provided with all the necessities, and

⁶ Passed in 1872, this act, modeled on the U.S. Homestead Act enacted a decade earlier, opened up recently acquired North-West Territory to mass settlement. It allowed for the free allotment of 160 acres of land (subject only to a CAD\$10 (approximately £2) registration fee) to any family that agreed to cultivate 40 acres of that parcel and reside there more or less permanently for at least three years.

⁷ *Ibid* p. 52.

⁸ Douglas Hill, The Scots to Canada: Great Emigrations (London: Gentry Books, 1972), p. 122.

⁹ “Seventh Report of Her Majesty’s Commissioners Appointed to Carry Out a Scheme of Colonisation in the Dominion of Canada of Crofters and Cottars from the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland” (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1896), p. 5

yet consider themselves ill-used. I have never seen Canadians settled under the same favourable conditions.”¹⁰

The relative success of Killarney, however, when combined with the still-smoldering tension over land distribution in the Outer Hebrides in the early 1880s and the simultaneous influx of Asians in British Columbia, inspired many in the Scottish Office, the Colonial Office and the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia to conclude that “Imperial Britain had, again, need of her soldiering Highlanders – who held their ‘thin red line’ during the Crimean War and who served also in India, especially during the mutiny in 1857.”¹¹ These developments, when combined, boded well for Begg’s own plans for his province. Begg, himself the son of crofters, saw the Hebrideans as capable of and in turn agents of rejuvenation, able to become unimpeachable assets to his province. Still, the commissioner did had to overcome some skepticism on the part of several members of the provincial legislature.

The Scheme Makes a Breakthrough: 1887-1892

Proponents of this scheme also pointed out the several fortuitous developments of the end of the 1880s and the early 1890s that rendered this scheme more attractive and feasible. The arrival of the transcontinental railway at Port Moody in 1886 sparked an economic and population boom that helped pour revenues into the provincial coffers. This obviated some of the financial objections to the provincial government assuming

¹⁰ “The Crofter Emigrants of 1888,” in *The Canadian Gazette*, January 10, 1889, p. 345. In the National Archives of Scotland (NAS), AFS 1/121.

¹¹ Hill, *The Scots to Canada...*, p. 117.

further debt. It also made British Columbia appear more solvent in the eyes of potential British investors, and, more notably, the British Treasury. In 1888, Begg's appeals to Major William Clarke of the Royal Colonial Institute and Col. W.J. Engledue led to the establishment of the Vancouver Island Development Syndicate (Limited). The involvement of a listed and creditworthy company meant to some previously skeptical potential backers of the scheme that those crofters who immigrated to Vancouver Island would procure gainful, guaranteed employment.¹² This naturally helped eliminate – though not entirely – the fear that these destitute settlers would not be able to provide a return on their investments.

The favorable economic circumstances of the 1880s in both British Columbia and Great Britain were accompanied by a fortuitous change in governments. In 1886, the Liberal Party fell from power over the explosive issue of Home Rule for Ireland. The leader of the Liberals, William Ewart Gladstone, was an avid proponent of laissez-faire economic policies, with the British Empire being no exception. This naturally caused him to be predisposed against involving the state in supporting emigration. To Gladstone, intra-imperial immigration had been taking place rather successfully for over two centuries for the most part without much official involvement, the transportation of criminals notwithstanding.

Gladstone, with his declared sympathetic tendencies towards the “oppressed” peoples of the Empire, also professed a reluctance to endorse what was tantamount to a

¹² *Ibid* p. 32.

wholesale eviction of such a population in order to secure any sort of improvement in their lot. In an age dominated by the ethos of “self-help,” many were of the opinion that the Hebrideans should be provided with assistance at home so that they could take the steps necessary to end the poverty and degradation of that archipelago. Besides, with the nation so bitterly divided over the issue of Irish Home Rule, Gladstone could hardly afford to remove or even alienate a population that was naturally sympathetic to programs endorsing wholesale land reform.¹³ With his defeat in the 1886 general election, however, the way was paved for a new administration, led by the Conservative Marquis of Salisbury, to assume office. Contemporaries concluded that “public opposition to emigration was linked with Gladstonianism, whereas support for it was connected with the Unionist cause.”¹⁴

In addition, the continued unrest in the Outer Hebrides led many in Whitehall, and the Scottish Office in particular, to see state-sponsored emigration as the best means to eliminate this strife that the archipelago had been experiencing since 1882. The still-smoldering Crofter’s War led many to agree with Malcolm MacNeill, the author of several reports commissioned in the 1880s that investigated these disturbances, who determined that “the time was propitious for introducing a scheme of colonization as the agitators had run out of money and could not offer any opposition to the scheme.” He

¹³ *Ibid* p. 37.

¹⁴ *Ibid* p. 37.

went on to argue that if this migration was successful ‘the Land League would soon be powerless to mislead the awakened intelligence of the people.’”¹⁵

As far as the Isle of Lewis was concerned, “emigration was required in order that essential state regulations could be enforced ‘without danger of successful resistance.’”¹⁶ These considerations were crucial in securing the endorsement of many parliamentarians who were naturally inclined to oppose the state directing or funding such schemes. In a letter marked “Private and Confidential” sent to Begg, the author, an Alexander Morrison wrote that “if I recommended Vancouver and British Columbia [the crofters] would most willingly migrate if assisted indeed I am now confident that 5000 people will go from Lewis if assisted with £100 for head of each family...[Parliament] are now unanimous regarding the urgency of [migration].”¹⁷

Matching this newfound enthusiasm for emigration on the part of British lawmakers, the political climate of British Columbia simultaneously and decisively swung in favor of such policies with the election of the new provincial premier John Robson in 1889. Almost immediately upon assuming power, Robson seized upon Begg’s project. In a letter addressed to the latter, the premier asked “if you could manage to come and bring with you one or two more representative crofters possessing

¹⁵ MacDonald, “Crofter Colonisation...,” p. 50.

¹⁶ *Ibid* p. 50.

¹⁷ City Archives of Vancouver (CAV), MSS 181, Nos. 69-71, letter dated December 14, 1887.

the confidence of those proposing to emigrate,” British Columbia’s case for securing British approval for this scheme would be greatly improved.¹⁸

Robson was a longstanding advocate of the development of his province. Part of this belief was the implementation of a vigorous immigration policy to build up the “British” element of the population as a natural check to his “abiding fear of American annexation” of the province.¹⁹ Two other concomitant benefits that appealed to Robson were highlighted by an article in the Victoria Daily Colonist. Its author emphasized that “one part of [the scheme] is to better the conditions of the Crofters, to make them self-sustaining and independent; and the other is to utilize the wealth of the sea that washes our shores.”²⁰

What is remarkable about this particular attempt at state-sponsored mass immigration, along with those of Killarney and Saltcoats, is that they were, as the historian of Empire Settlement Keith Williams observed,” the only state-financed Dominions land scheme [in existence] between 1880 and 1914.”²¹ Despite the rising sense of the tenuous hold Great Britain held over its overseas empire in the face of increasing indigenous resistance to colonial rule, heightened calls for “home rule” in Ireland and the colonies of settlement, and unprecedented threats to British global

¹⁸ *Ibid*, No. 85.

¹⁹ Margaret Ormsby, British Columbia: A History, (Vancouver: The Macmillan Company of Canada, Ltd., 1958), p. 309.

²⁰ March 22, 1892, p. 4.

²¹ The British State, Social Imperialism and Emigration from Britain, 1900-1922: The Ideology and Antecedents of the Empire Settlement Act (Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of London, 1985), p. 112.

hegemony by the new competing, state-directed imperialisms of the United States and other European powers, members of the British ruling classes remained loathe to spend government revenues on buttressing its empire through sponsoring imperial resettlement. Even sponsors of the scheme subscribed to the dominant ethos of “self-help,” “the glory of manly character.”²² Yet here, the governments of Great Britain and British Columbia seemed to make a glaring exception to this philosophy.

This “exception” can in large part be explained by the belief, confirmed by a contemporary hardening of accepted racial categories and boundaries and the continued destitution and violence of the Outer Hebrides despite over a century of “civilizing missions” and attempts at reform, in the inherent inferior status of the “Celtic” Hebrideans vis-à-vis their “Anglo-Saxon” compatriots. According to an Atlantic Monthly article from 1896, the Celts “lack[ed] the solidity, the balance, the judgment, the moral staying power of the Anglo-Saxon.”²³ If one subscribed as well to the notion popularized by James Logan in 1833 that “the Scots’ Highlanders are the unmixed descendants of the Celts,” then they were truly a people doomed by the onset of modernity.²⁴ Such characterizations meant that, unlike the English or the Lowland Scots, the Hebrideans were biologically unable to improve their lot in life through their own initiatives.

²² Robert D. Grant, Representations of British Emigration, Colonisation and Settlement: Imagining Empire, 1800-1860 (Houndsmills, Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 2005), p.106.

²³ As quoted in Matthew Frye Jacobson, Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 49.

²⁴ As quoted in Susan Parman, Scottish Crofters: A Historical Ethnography of a Celtic Village (Belmont, CA: Thomson and Wadworth, 2005), p. 37.

Yet the Hebrideans were, unlike the Africans, the Asians, or even the Catholic Irish with whom they were increasingly conflated at one level, at another level unquestionably Scottish and Protestant. The Scots enjoyed a reputation as being the builders of the Empire, and as members of this “race” the Hebrideans were part of an “in-group” in a way most other immigrants to the Dominions never could be.²⁵ They were concurrently “peaceful, patient and submissive” and ferocious men of the frontier, “idle, predatory barbarian[s]” ready to defend the integrity of the British Empire against all who threatened to encroach upon its vast landholdings.²⁶ Advocates of this scheme certainly privileged and publicized these valuations. Robson, in an interview with the Canadian Gazette, said, “a large percentage of the crofter fishermen belong to the Royal Naval Reserve of this country. They are trained for home defence, and it will be for the Imperial authorities to consider whether, in view of the growing importance of British Columbia as one of the keys to the Empire, it would not be desirable to establish a naval reserve base on the Pacific coast.”²⁷

With an unprecedented alignment of active advocates of imperial expansion and development in power in both Victoria and London, combined with a significant improvement in the global economic climate, it is not surprising that such a grandiose

²⁵ Murray G.H. Pittock, Celtic Identity and the British Image (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 65.

²⁶ T.M. Devine., The Great Highland Famine: Hunger, Emigration and the Scottish Highlands in the Nineteenth Century (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1988), p. 119; Devine, T.M., Clanship to Crofter’s War: The Social Transformation of the Scottish Highlands (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 154.

²⁷ British Columbia Archives (BCA), MS-1640, dated June 30, 1892.

project was able to proceed at this particular juncture, and not earlier. A final memorandum of agreement was signed between the Commissioner of Lands of British Columbia and the Vancouver Island Development Syndicate on August 25, 1892. Under its terms, “not more than 1250 families” were to be transported to the province.²⁸ This action enabled the release of funds in the amount of £150,000 authorized by the British House of Commons on June 17 of that year. The report as commissioned by the Treasury Chambers to announce this decision applauded the scheme.

With the funds, &c. provided it is proposed to take out gradually 1,250 families, and to settle them on locations variously suited for agriculture, fruit culture, sea fishing, and other industries... That project presents the rare recommendation that it demands from the public purse or from local funds no assistance beyond the Imperial Loan, the repayment of which is guaranteed by a solvent and promising Province, which seems to possess ample resources for the settlement of a large population.²⁹

Of course, according to this report, not all of the benefits would accrue solely to British Columbia.

In the respects of climate and seaboard it is well suited for the reception of a class accustomed both to land and sea pursuits... [The Select Committee of 1891 on Colonisation] can conceive of many considerations in which the colonization of British Columbia by a maritime population would appear to be desirable in the interests of the British Empire. They do not think that by any one scheme the adequate relief of the congested districts can be attained; and they recommend the offer of the Government of British Columbia to the early and favourable consideration of Her Majesty’s Government and Parliament.³⁰

²⁸ BCA, MS-1640.

²⁹ J.E. Gorst, “Copy of a Treasury Memorandum Respecting a Loan of £150,000 Proposed to be Made to British Columbia for Purposes of Crofter Colonization” (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1892), p. 3

³⁰ *Ibid* p. 3.

With signed agreements between all necessary levels of government secured, this most recent attempt to import Highland Scot crofters seemed destined for success.

The Unfurling of the Scheme, 1892-1894

In 1896, however, Begg was reduced to practically begging provincial and imperial officials for the revival of a program that was proverbially dead in the water.³¹ The first explanation for this outcome lies in the collapse of the favorable convergence of provincial and imperial regimes in the late 1880s and early 1890s. In 1892, the Conservative government of Lord Salisbury fell from power, only to be replaced the Liberals, still helmed by Gladstone. Gladstone in his fourth and final term as prime minister proved to be no more accommodating towards government subsidization of emigration schemes than he was earlier. Indeed, part of the Liberals' electoral strategy in this new age of mass politics involved criticizing the encouragement of emigration, which in 1891 was "denounced and detested in all directions. Politics has caused that as the Gladstonians are bidding for the votes against the Unionists."³²

This critique was in line with the dominant philosophy towards government expenditure of the Victorian age. Howard Malchow, in his article on publicly sponsored emigration in the nineteenth century, outlines the hurdles this scheme – and,

³¹ As evidence to this assertion, on April 17, 1895, a Mr. Malcolm McNeil of the Board of Supervision office in Edinburgh wrote to Begg stating that "as nothing has been done under (the Loan Act of 1892 which released imperial money to fund the scheme) H.L. is not prepared to advise Her Majesty's Government to re-open the position." BCA, MS-1640.

³² CAV, MSS-181, Begg Papers, Nos. 427-30, letter to Begg from Alexander Morrison, July 6, 1891.

it bears repeating here, *only* this scheme – managed to briefly surmount, before the Liberals revoked imperial support for this project.

Difficulties aside, there was the problem any program for expansion of state activity faced... – a cheeseparing attitude toward government spending entrenched in the minds of officials, and a corresponding belief that large-scale action required extraordinary circumstances. Emigrationists wanted a permanent system which would replace natural economic regulators with regular government action. They had to convince ministers first for the need for such a program, and second of its priority over other solutions – land or tariff reform, slum clearance and new housing, technical education, and so on...[Also], there was already a substantial emigration from England without state aid – about 250,000 a year.³³

No exceptions were to be made to this philosophy, not even for the long-suffering Hebrideans.

With the coming withdrawal of active British state support for this particular immigration scheme, the opportunity British Columbia had to import Hebridean crofter laborers certainly appeared to diminish. In a rather unlucky coincidence, Robson suddenly died on June 30 of a heart attack while in London negotiating the final particulars of the scheme. The premier knew that with the Gladstonians about to assume power, he had precious time before that transpired to realize his scheme.³⁴ As referenced earlier, Robson was an avid promoter of his province and thus worked tirelessly to ensure that British Columbia remained just that – a *British* preserve.

Sometimes, visitors who came to Canada...declared that British Columbia was the most ‘British’ of all the Canadian provinces. In some communities on Vancouver Island and in the Interior, private schools modeled on English public

³³ “Trade Unions and Emigration in Late Victorian England: A National Lobby for State Aid,” in The Journal of British Studies, v. 15, no. 2 (Spring 1976), p. 115.

³⁴ Wade, “The ‘Gigantic Scheme...,’” p. 38.

schools flourished as never before; ‘ranchers’ clubs’ and ‘bachelors’ clubs’ served as a haven for English ‘Bank-boys’ and others; and meetings of hunt clubs, cricket matches, croquet tourneys, garden parties and band concerts were more popular diversions than a Canadian sport like lacrosse.³⁵

The importation of a “British” population, it was hoped, would reinforce naturally and effortlessly this recreation of Victorian England on the fringes of the Empire.

To Robson, one of the most attractive reasons why these crofters should be brought to the west coast of British Columbia was their “Britishness.” They would serve as a natural bulwark against any “alien” or “foreign” encroachment or dilution of this essential identity. Unfortunately, with the loss of scheme’s main champion, the Hebrideans discovered, much like the Chinese in British Columbia had when their biggest advocate, the Canadian Pacific Railway, abandoned them, few others would stand up on their behalf. An official observation of how entwined this immigration scheme and the personal reputation and efforts of the premier became lies in the response given by the British Government four years later to the musings of a member of the British Parliament, Alan Seton-Carr, over the slow demise of this “gigantic scheme.”

The British Columbia scheme was not dropped in favour of the Manitoba Scheme... The real reason the British Columbia scheme fell through was that the Premier of B.C. who succeeded, after a hard struggle, in passing the two Colonial Acts bearing on the subject, came over to this country on our invitation to assist forth in passing the B. Columbia Colonisation Act 1892 and unfortunately died here a week after his arrival and a few days after our Act was passed. Since then, as I understand, the Government of B.C. have not approached the Imperial Government because the political parties in B.

³⁵ Ormsby, British Columbia..., p. 329.

Columbia are equally divided as to the desirability of introducing crofter fishermen into the Province. I am strongly of the opinion that Wm [sic] Robson's policy was the right one, both as regards the future of B. Columbia and the interests of this country, but I may be wrong.³⁶

Indicative of this turn of events, mere months after Robson's passing, the provincial minister of finance, J.H. Turner, admonished Begg's repeated inquiries as to the status of the disbursement of the approved loans. He told Begg that the ministry had indeed received "many letters" from Begg and that the commissioner should "be patient and hope for the best."³⁷ The wait would turn out to be an permanent one.

The third explanation as to why this particular scheme never came to fruition is the frosty reception many British Columbians extended it. This reason actually covers a host of social, political, and economic causes. Each of these interrelated aspects had sides that advocated proceeding with the scheme, as well as those that hindered its approval and potential implementation. Part of the reason why the loan advanced by the British government was so attractive was the guaranteed rate of interest the province secured on the principal. Under the terms of the 1892 agreement, the province would have to repay the loan at a fixed interest rate of three percent.³⁸ Even this low rate was a constant point of contention between the governments involved. In the years preceding the final authorization of the loan, Begg constantly sought to lower that percentage. H.B. Smith, a clerk based in the British Treasury in London, wrote to Begg

³⁶ BCA, MS-1640, letter dated March 17, 1896.

³⁷ CAV, MSS-181, Begg Papers, Nos. 496-498.

³⁸ Gorst, "Copy of a Treasury Memorandum..." p. 4.

to inform him of the difficulties his government faced in meeting the demands of British Columbia:

With reference to your letter of June 6 [1891], the Chancellor of the Exchequer directs me to say that interest at 3% is a necessary condition of your loan. The cost involved is not large, but the question of principle is important, The Government are unable at present to borrow for a term of years at 2 ³/₄%, and they could not commit to setting the precedent of lending to a Colonial Government at a rate lower than that at which they can themselves borrow. The letter embodying the conditions discussed in your interview with W. Goschen is being sent to you at the same time as this.³⁹

The British Government initially used this as grounds to reject loaning any money to British Columbia. It argued that no funds could be disbursed without levying an interest rate of 3 ¹/₈% at the very least.⁴⁰ Even after both sides acquiesced on this point, many parliamentarians in British Columbia publicly worried that the province would not be able to repay the loan even at the negotiated rate.⁴¹

Marjory Harper argues that “the provincial government feared not only that the impecunious settlers would be unable to repay their advances but also that they would become a public charge on the province.”⁴² Well before the British government authorized the disbursement of funds, officials and the like raised serious doubts about the colonists’ ability to repay their advances.

Altogether I should say that the scheme is well worth trying, and if it fails it will only be because of the crofters themselves. If they really are industrious and have things to sell the Co. or some one else will find their account in providing a

³⁹ CAV, MSS-181, Begg Papers, Nos. 396-399, Private letter to Begg from H.B. Smith, June 10, 1891.

⁴⁰ MacDonald, “Crofter Colonisation...,” p. 51.

⁴¹ BCA, MS-1640, letter from J.H. Twigg to Sir Colin, April 18, 1893.

⁴² Emigration from Scotland between the Wars: Opportunity or Exile? (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 82.

market. But there is a risk that they will be content with living on the fish they catch and the things they grow, and idling their time away – even if they don't become homesick and want to get back to the reek of the auld home.⁴³

Many members of the provincial legislature were “generally concerned that the province might have to spend public money on the relief and debts of unsuccessful colonists.”⁴⁴

The laudatory statements Begg made on their behalf evidently did not assuage such worries. In a pitch to the British Columbia legislature made in 1897 in hopes of re-launching the scheme, Begg wrote:

By the plan of emigration proposed by me [Hebridean crofters] would not be paupers. They would leave their native land, being lifted out of the state of poverty into which they had involuntarily drifted, placed upon a firm commercial basis, with sufficient capital at their credit, secured by health and robust constitutions and a firm determination to labor so as to earn a comfortable livelihood, and enable them to pay back the indebtedness which they had agreed to meet, and they would arrive in British Columbia, not as paupers, but as industrious settlers, on an equal footing with the businessman.⁴⁵

A straightforward reading of this passage indicates that the scheme proposes to ameliorate the poverty and suffering that the Hebrideans suffered in Scotland, by enabling them to make a fresh start in the Pacific province. The language Begg employed to craft this picture, however, is in and of itself rather instructive. Words such as “involuntarily drifted,” “health and robust constitutions and a firm determination to labor” and “arrive...not as paupers” were obviously carefully selected

⁴³ The “Co.” refers to the Vancouver Island Development Syndicate, Ltd. Source: BCA, MS-1640, letter from W. Gleadowe, May 3, 1892.

⁴⁴ Wade, “The ‘Gigantic Scheme’...,” p. 39.

⁴⁵ BCA, MS-1640, Alexander Begg, “An Open Letter to Members of the Honourable Legislative Assembly of British Columbia: Colonization and Deep Sea Fisheries, Etc., March 4, 1897.

to address and deflect popular criticism of these immigrants. Begg knew that he had to confront the widespread notion that the Hebrideans were weak and lazy, conditions that were perceived to be inherent within this particular crofting population. Indeed, Malcolm McNeill, a man mentioned earlier in this chapter, rejected the inclusion of Highlanders from the Loch Erisort district in any assisted passage scheme on the grounds that “they are much more backward and depressed than other people; they are more purely Celtic than others.”⁴⁶

Proof that these preconceptions were on the minds of many British Columbians can be found in contemporary newspaper articles and parliamentary speeches. In fact, members of the Legislative Assembly and the press alike worried these Hebrideans would lack the character, habits and skills to settle well. Many considered the crofters’ poverty a moral failing. In fact, “James Baker, a government supporter from East Kootenay, decried the crofters’ degradation.”⁴⁷ Some members of the political opposition went even further in attacking the Hebrideans. C.A. Semlin, the representative from Yale in the provincial legislature, publicly condemned these “thriftless, discontented, mutinous and idle people.”⁴⁸ “Even the Victoria Daily Colonist, which generally promoted the scheme, lacked confidence in the ability of the first generation of Hebridean immigrants to succeed.”⁴⁹ Indeed, although Ottawa was

⁴⁶ “Testimony of Malcolm MacNeill,” June 22, 1889, British Parliamentary Papers, Colonization, Report from Select Committee on Colonisation, 1889, IX, 23.

⁴⁷ Wade, “The ‘Gigantic Scheme’...,” p. 41.

⁴⁸ The Times (Victoria), July 31, 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁹ Wade, “The ‘Gigantic Scheme’...,” p. 41.

not a party to this particular scheme, the federal Minister of the Interior, Frank Oliver, is quoted as saying “there is nothing [the westerners] more earnestly resent than the idea of settling up the country with people who will be a drag on our civilization and progress.”⁵⁰

Compounding these anxieties was the widespread fear on the part of the fishermen and other segments of the laboring classes that these “British” immigrants, with their perceived inherent listlessness and indolence, would actually dilute their newly-won status as British subjects and more broadly “whites” by corroding it from within. Such opinions were prevalent enough for Robson to feel the need to reassure a doubting public by saying that “it will be the duty of the Government to treat these colonists in a paternal spirit.”⁵¹ It quickly emerged that this “paternal spirit” might be interpreted as being practically tantamount to maintaining the Hebrideans in an almost permanent state of tutelage. A leading provincial newspaper, the Daily Columbian of New Westminster, worried that the Hebrideans would be “serfs” to the Vancouver Island Development Syndicate.⁵² Such perceptions were so widespread that Begg himself had to indirectly address these claims by insisting that “the interests of the province [are] that [the Syndicate] should use every legitimate means in their power to make the colonists prosperous, contented and comfortable, so that eventually they may become independent.” In fact, far from the Hebrideans being in a feudalistic

⁵⁰ As quoted in Freda Hawkins, Critical Years in Immigration: Canada and Australia Compared (Montreal and Kingston, ON, Canada: McGill – Queen’s University Press, 1991), p. 8.

⁵¹ BCA, MS-1640, interview by the Canadian Gazette, June 30, 1892.

⁵² April 1, 1892, pp. 1, 2.

relationship with their employers, the crofters would find that “there is no hardship on this any more than in fulfilling any other business transaction.”⁵³

Evidently such proclamations were not, immediately at least, accepted by the general public. An author in “The Scottish Canadian” attacked this supposed magnanimity. He emphasized the fact that “there is a surplus population even now in British Columbia, as in Ontario, only too willing to work... Why does not the syndicate employ those already on the spot? One answer may be suggested and it is not an improbable one. It is that the free labour thus afforded could not be controlled so completely as the enslaved crofters would be.”⁵⁴ As seen in the previous chapter, the working class was one of the main segments of the population in favor of restrictions against Asian immigration to British Columbia, and would continue to be up to and through the interwar period. As the above quote intimates, however, these same white laborers surely did not welcome the importation of yet another immigrant group who would essentially undercut their wages and standard of living just as much, if not more so, than the Asian population already resident in the province. Other white immigrants were seen as assets. They were considered to be men and women who would not only prosper themselves, but through hard work and sacrifice would also allow the province to collectively flourish. The Hebrideans, as is evident in working class opposition to the scheme, denigrating remarks by legislators about them, and quite disparaging comments printed in the popular press of the day, were denied this same agency.

⁵³ CAV, MSS-181, Begg Papers, No. 499, article in The People’s Journal, 1893.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, No. 499, 1893.

The reasons for the Highlander's apathy and uncertainty become clearer. Living and working in new conditions uncongenial to his temperament, with the foundations of his economy undermined, competing with producers able to work on a larger scale, financially stronger, more efficient...it is little wonder that he exhibits signs of distress and his economy evidence of disintegration. Neither personal effort nor government intervention seems likely to raise him from his slough of despond.⁵⁵

British Columbia, in the eyes of the working classes, needed sturdy immigrants who "would not be a burden on the country and who would not water down Canada's sacred Anglo-Saxon heritage."⁵⁶

The Hebrideans, it was thought, failed here on both counts. Even in Hong Kong, one of Britain's trading entrepôts *par excellence* in Asia and one with an overwhelming majority Chinese population, "those from Scotland were at times derisively referred to as 'Scotch coolies.'"⁵⁷ Thus, there was no need to bring in immigrants who were thought of as white equivalents of "John Chinamen." Echoing this sentiment, a popular voice of the working class of the province, "The People's Journal," pointed out to its readers that:

When the question is between the big syndicate and the poor crofters we know very well who is going to have the pick of the land, and when it is remembered that the crofter will have to look for his supplies – for everything, literally – to the syndicate, we are not much at a loss to guess into whose pockets the big share of the profits will go...[T]here will be nobody to sell to within his reach except the syndicate, [and] only he syndicate will own every depot of supplies

⁵⁵ Adam Collier, *The Crofting Problem* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1953), p. 9.

⁵⁶ Pierre Berton, *The Promised Land: Settling the West, 1896-1914* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1984), p. 106.

⁵⁷ Gerald Horne, *Race War! White Supremacy and the Japanese Attack on the British Empire* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), p. 25.

within [the crofters' reach]...The Syndicate will own everything in the shape of a harbour, every possible station, every coin of vantage.⁵⁸

As so described, and as surely was the intent of Begg and others, the crofters would be completely beholden to their employers and the provincial government. This was completely at odds with “the desire to better oneself, [which] was completely consonant with the overriding rhetoric of mid nineteenth century colonial promotion, permeating the whole field of this kind of writing in the projection of the labourer’s progress to tenant, smallholder and then successful landowner through hard work.”⁵⁹ Thus, the average white British Columbian had both a moral and an economic imperative to oppose this immigration scheme. This was certainly not lost on the elected representatives in the provincial legislature.

Those on the exact opposite side of the economic spectrum also attacked this proposal, but for entirely different reasons. In the words of John G. Woods, superintendent of the Moodyville Sawmill Company on Vancouver Island, “we pay white men from \$30 a month and board up to \$140 for foremen; Japanese 90 cents and board to \$1.25 and board. Board costs 35 cents a day. In most positions [the Japanese] are as good as whites.”⁶⁰ James W. Hackett, owner of a local sawmill, concurred. “We tried to run our mill without Japanese. We found that it was necessary to have a certain

⁵⁸ CAV, MSS-181, Begg Papers, No. 499, article dated 1893.

⁵⁹ Robert D. Grant, Representations of British Emigration, Colonisation and Settlement: Imagining Empire, 1800-1860 (Houndsmills, Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 2005), p. 106.

⁶⁰ Canada. Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1902), p. 362.

amount of cheap labour; besides cheap labour white labour is very unsteady.”⁶¹ While many workers in the province were opposed to Asian immigration in part due to the fact that it tended to drive the price of their own labor downwards, the employers, often favored the employment of Asians for that very reason. Indeed, as the historian/ethnographer Kay Anderson argues:

The class divisions of Canada’s emerging industrial base ensured that owners of capital had good reasons for using Chinese labour – reasons that when translated into employment practices entrenched occupational segregation along colour lines and boosted profits to owners...As long as the mutually beneficial arrangement with [the industrialists] existed, then the protests of BC members in Ottawa, against the ‘worse than worthless element,’ ‘the greatest pagans on earth,’ and the like, were simply deflected.⁶²

Many employers in the province actually privileged their Asian workers, and continued to hire them instead of the crofters.

One of the main selling points Begg made to the province’s economic elites was the fact that the Hebrideans would be the ideal instrument through which the province could rid itself of its Asian inhabitants. The crofters would be paid the same rates and could be dominated in the same paternalistic fashion as the Chinese had been. As Begg argued:

There is another reason why crofter emigration should be done...because white people are needed very much; British Columbia is at present a good deal beholden to the Chinese population for assistance, and they are not a desirable class of people to have kept in the country if they could not be rid of and done without: and the best way of getting rid of them is to bring in a healthy

⁶¹ *Ibid* p. 362

⁶² Vancouver’s Chinatown..., pp. 55, 56.

population of peasants, such as this scheme proposes to do and plant them at different places along the coast.⁶³

Underlying this is an assumption that a consensus existed that only if cheap, pliable white labor was made available to them, then the employers would automatically replace their Asian laborers. Seeing as no one would hire them in the province, they would have no choice but to return to Asia.

Employer after employer, however, failed to demonstrate such preferences. The experience of James Dunsmuir, the largest collier and railroad magnate in the province, and its future premier and lieutenant governor, is indicative of this. In the 1890s, Dunsmuir, anticipating a run for political office, attempted to replace his Chinese workers with whites. At first, he advertised the new vacancies in the province's newspapers, but most of the openings went unfilled. He next looked at Great Britain as a potential source of workers for his coalmines.⁶⁴ What he found was most certainly disappointing.

Two hundred Scottish miners were found, each of whom agreed to work for at least as long as it took to repay the \$70 it would cost the company to bring him out. 'They were no good,' [Frank] Little complained. A few months after their arrival, only twenty remained. As for the others, 'I do not know where they went and I don't care,' Little muttered. 'I do not think one-third of them ever dug coal in their life... Very few paid their passage... Many of them went to Seattle at once. They never came here at all. Mr. Dunsmuir spent \$15,000 on them. I do not think he got \$3000 back. I paid \$3 a day for a \$1 day's work to some of them. I was longing for the Chinamen.'⁶⁵

⁶³ Report from Select Committee..., p. 170.

⁶⁴ Terry Reksten, The Dunsmuir Saga (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1991), p. 166.

⁶⁵ *Ibid* p. 166.

This experience certainly, at least in the eyes of many employers, “made nonsense of the union’s claim that the Chinese were depriving willing workers of jobs.”⁶⁶

Certainly, if the largest company and arguably the richest and most dominant business magnate in the province had such a dismal experience with substituting Chinese laborers with Scots, then employers with fewer resources than the Dunsmuir would not take such an apparently profligate risk. Begg himself had to admit that the canneries of British Columbia actively sought the importation of Asian workers, who preferred their work ethic and industriousness over that of the laborers available locally.⁶⁷ These employers reversed the racial hierarchies that so preoccupied the proponents of this immigration scheme and those like-minded. For example, Henry O. Bell-Irving, the manager of the British Columbia Packing Company, testified that “the Japanese as fishermen are not very reliable, but I think they will favourably compare with the whites, because they work hard when the fish are scarce.”⁶⁸ Far from being “of a low, degraded, and servile type” whose presence “degrade[s] the [white laborer],” many employers praised the “industriousness, quiet and sober” traits they apparently possessed.⁶⁹ In this context, the typical employer was offered the choice between an Asian employee imbued with these traits and a Hebridean crofter who was seen as so lazy and destitute that the British government had to take the extraordinary step of

⁶⁶ *Ibid* p. 166.

⁶⁷ CAV, MSS-181, Begg papers, Nos. 186-189.

⁶⁸ Canada, *Report of the Royal Commission...*, p. 340.

⁶⁹ Ward, *White Canada Forever...*, p. 10; Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was...*, p. 39.

subsidizing his or her emigration. Increasingly, employers opted for the former, if the cost of their labor was identical.

Taking all of the inherently contradictory assumptions, priorities and beliefs into account, it is not difficult to see why this scheme ultimately did not come to pass. In fact, in what would come to be seen as a last-ditch attempt by Begg to secure the approval of the British Columbia legislature, he attempted to include Scottish crofters from the northeastern counties of Scotland, in particular Aberdeenshire.⁷⁰ These easterners were to be included because they were deemed to be “successful” colonists, due to their “Teutonic” blood. According to popular belief, they would serve as exemplars and instructors, to ensure that their Scottish brethren did not simply reproduce the sloth and penury they experienced at home, and thus default on their loan obligations. Indeed, Scottish Office officials acknowledged that the crofters needed to live amongst “Canadian[s], Lowland Scotch and English”⁷¹ if any improvement in their lot was to occur. A few years later, Begg again attempted to get an evidently recalcitrant British government to amend the terms of its initial loan guarantee. In a letter written to the new Secretary for Scotland, Lord Balfour, he requests that “the local govt [sic]...would prefer that the crofters be selected from the fisher settlements along the east coast of Scotland, as well as from the west coast and western isles...the

⁷⁰ While this region lies at almost the same latitude as the Hebrides, and is situated directly east of (and is indeed in a geographical and geographical sense inclusive of) the Highlands, for historical, economic, and cultural reasons this particular part of Scotland (what otherwise might be known as the Grampians) is considered part of the Lowlands.

⁷¹ National Archives of Scotland (NAS) AF 51/18, letter from W.B. Search to W. Peacock Edwards, June 23, 1888.

Imperial Act only referring to ‘crofter parishes.’”⁷² The “local government” felt that even restricting sponsoring immigrants to Scotland as a whole would be too risky. It found that it would be “desirable that the operations under the Acts should not be limited to the Crofter parishes of Scotland but that it should be open to the Provincial Government and the Company to include families from other portions of the United Kingdom among the Colonists to be transferred to the Province.”⁷³

Such an amendment, however, ran contrary to the aims of the British Treasury and the Scottish Office. The recommendations of the Napier Commission only applied to relieving the immediate distress that caused the Crofter’s War in the Highlands and Islands. Seeing as such problems did not, or more accurately were not perceived to, exist in the northeast of Scotland, there was no pressing need to remove this population from the British Isles. In light of this, the reply to Begg was far from encouraging, to the chagrin of his scheme’s proponents. It stated, “I have laid before [Lord Balfour] your letter of the 8th instant enquiring whether he would consider a proposal from the Govt [sic] of BC for the renewal of the Colonisation Scheme under the conditions laid down in the BC Loan Act, 1892.”⁷⁴ The author also pointed out that “I am directed to reply that as the Act was passed for a specific purpose, viz. ‘to assist emigration from the crofter Parishes’ and as nothing has been done under it H.L. is not prepared to

⁷² BCA, MS-1640, letter written April 8, 1896.

⁷³ National Archives of Canada (NAC), RG-15, D-11-1, v. 678, File 313136, “Copy of Report of a Committee of the Honourable the Executive Council, approved by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor,” dated October 24, 1892.

⁷⁴ BCA, MS-1640, dated April 17, 1895.

advise [Her Majesty's] Govt to re-open the position apparently for the sole purpose of changing the class to be benefited.”⁷⁵

No final agreement was ever secured; those Hebrideans who did arrive in British Columbia came, as the episode involving James Dunsmuir reveals, under the auspices of private arrangements, and they quickly vanished from the historical record. Yet, as shall be seen in the following chapters, the idea of recruiting these very same crofters, these “valuable imperial building-blocks for the British race and nation” to defend the frontiers of British Columbia against Asian encroachment from across the Pacific and from within via its immigrants, was by no means extinguished.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Pion, Exporting “Race” to the Colonies...., p. 243.

Table 4

British Columbia Population by Ethnic Origin, 1871-1931

Year	British Total	European	Asian	Native Canadian
1871	36,247	8576 (23.7%)	1548 (4.3%)	25,661 (70.8%)
1881	14,660 (29.6%) 49,459	2490 (5.0%)	4350 (8.8%)	25,661 (51.9%)
1891	n.d. 98,173	n.d.	n.d.	27,305 (27.8%)
1901	106,403 (60.0%) 178,657	21,784 (12.2%)	19,524 (10.9%)	28,949 (16.2%)
1911	266,295 (67.8%) 392,480	69,799 (17.8%)	30,864 (7.9%)	20,174 (5.1%)
1921	387,513 (73.9%) 524,582	72,743 (13.9%)	39,739 (7.6%)	22,377 (4.3%)
1931	489,923 (70.7%) 694,263	127,246 (18.3%)	50,951 (7.3%)	24,599 (3.5%)

Source: Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), p. 379. Note: The 1871 census did not distinguish between “British” and “European.” n.d.: no data available.

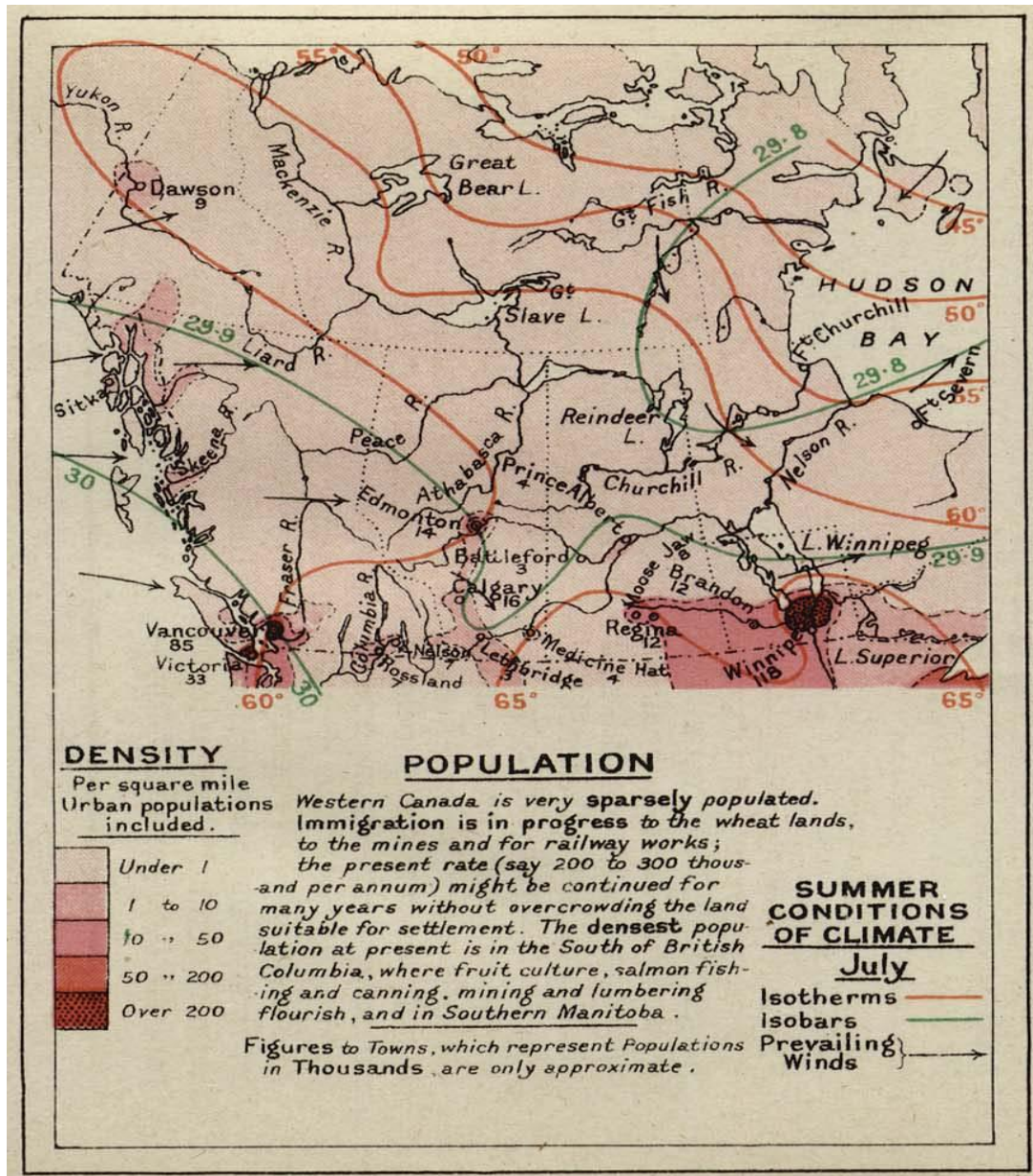


Illustration 7.

Map and Information on Western Canada. Source: Edward Salmon and James Worsfold, eds., the British Dominions Yearbook, 1918 Edition (London: Eagle, Star and British Dominions Insurance Co., 1918), p. 46.

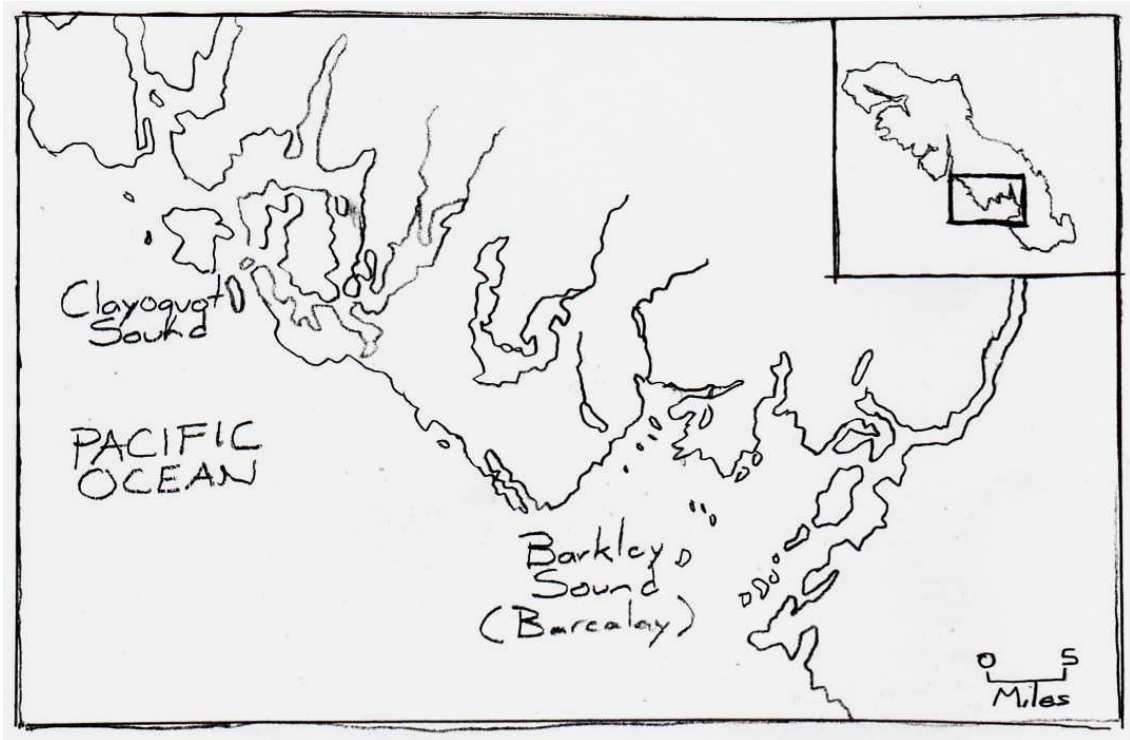


Illustration 8.

Map of Barcalay Sound on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Illustration drawn by author.

CHAPTER IV: “EMPIRE ASCENDANT”: THE RISE OF JAPAN AND THE JAPANESE IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The first Japanese person to migrate to Canada, Manzo Nagano, came to British Columbia in 1877.¹ It is a testament to how quickly the numbers of Japanese in that province grew that within twenty years of Nagano’s arrival, petitions were introduced in the federal parliament that requested that the head tax levied on immigrants from China be extended to those from Japan. Throughout the 1880s, few Japanese immigrants migrated to Canada. Many of the immigrants from Japan were either students who returned to their homeland on the completion of their studies or laborers who arrived temporarily on contracts to perform specified services for employers for a fixed period, and returned home when those tasks were completed. British Columbia at the time, with its lack of any institutions of higher education and its relatively small and undeveloped economy, afforded few opportunities for any immigrant, let alone the Japanese. As late as 1886, it was reported that only twelve persons of Japanese extraction were resident in British Columbia.²

The Meiji Restoration and Its Impact on Emigration, 1868-1885

Two other reasons account for the paucity of Japanese immigrants at this time. The first involves Japan itself. Ever since the Meiji Restoration of 1868, which

¹ Ken Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), pp. 9,10.

² *Ibid* p. 23.

replaced the insular shogunate that had ruled Japan for centuries with a modernizing government centered around the rehabilitation of the Emperor, the nation's elites decided that Japan had to do whatever it took not only to avoid the fate of its Asian neighbors – dependency on if not outright colonization by the West – but, perhaps more dramatically, to become a power in its own right.³ That year, the Japanese emperor proclaimed the “Charter Oath,” which clearly stressed the new aim of Japan: “Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world, so that the foundation of the Empire may be strengthened.”⁴ To acquire the skills needed to achieve such a task, especially considering the country's virtual isolation from the technological advances of the Industrial Revolution lasting into the 1850s, Japan at first only issued passports to merchants and scholars considered most capable of learning and importing Western skills and processes.⁵ These restrictions would ease with time, but only once Japan had developed to a sufficient level internally so that it could rebuff any potential encroachment on its sovereignty by the West.

Japan also confined emigration largely to men and women of means throughout most of the late nineteenth century so that it could cultivate its reputation in the Western world. Japanese leaders were well aware that Chinese and Malay laborers in Hawaii

³ *Ibid* p. 14.

⁴ As quoted in Yamato Ichihashi, Japanese in the United States: A Critical Study of the Problems of Japanese Immigrants and their Children (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1932), p. 3

⁵ Charles A. Price., The Great White Walls are Built: Restrictive Immigration to North America and Australasia, 1836-1888 (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974), p. 152, 153.

were thought of as little more than slaves.⁶ They feared that such racist attitudes would be extended to them as well.

The image [of Japanese] drew heavily upon older Chinese stereotypes and generalized assumptions about the nature of Asian society. This could be traced to the fact that nineteenth-century western images of Asia often failed to distinguish clearly among its component parts and also to the similar physical appearance and socioeconomic status of the two immigrant groups.⁷

As in countless other initial encounters with the new, the exotic, the different, first impressions mattered a great deal in determining how future relations between the parties involved would develop and progress. At this delicate stage in its interaction with the West, the Japanese government was reluctant to allow people to emigrate who would sully Japan's image. Or, more worryingly, such representatives might risk Japan being more or less permanently associated with the servility, decadence and effiteness that the West associated with China and the Chinese.⁸

For the time being, Japan's reluctance to permit the large-scale migration of its laboring classes lined up neatly with the interest of employers in British Columbia. Until the final decade of the nineteenth century, not only was Japan reluctant to send out its agricultural and other manual laborers, employers in North America and Australasia had no need to seek them out. At the time, the demand for cheap contract labor was sufficiently met by importing Chinese workers. Up until the 1880s, there were virtually

⁶ Adachi, *The Enemy...*, p. 8.

⁷ W. Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy toward Orientals in British Columbia*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978), pp. 102, 103.

⁸ Howard Sugimoto, *Japanese Immigration, the Vancouver Riots, and Canadian Diplomacy* (New York: Arno Press, 1978) p. 22; Paul Spickard, *Japanese Americans: The Formation and Transformations of an Ethnic Group* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), p. 27.

no *de jure* restrictions on the importation of Chinese laborers to North America.

Employers who required manual labor thus naturally looked to the source most likely to provide what they needed at the lowest possible cost to them.

To provide but one example, in the early 1880s, the Canadian government, despite appeals from many white British Columbians to the contrary, approved the importation of 15,701 Chinese laborers to complete the transcontinental railroad. In contrast, no records exist of any attempt to recruit Japanese to help build the railroad. Many employers at the strenuously lobbied their governments to ensure that their access to Asian labor remained unfettered.

The employers of labor on a large scale welcomed the Chinese worker as cheaper, more dependable, and sometimes even more productive than his white competitor. Charles Crocker was one of California's 'Big Four' and the man responsible for the introduction of large numbers of Chinese workers into railroad construction [the Chinese were often called 'Crocker's Pets']. Crocker testified that although he had been initially skeptical about the ability of Asians to do heavy construction work, 'today if I had a big job of work to do that I wanted to get through quick with, and had a minimal time to do it in, I should take Chinese labor...because of its greater reliability and steadiness, and their aptitude and capacity for hard work.'⁹

With the supply of Chinese still flowing strong, there was little need for an alternate source of "cheaper" and "dependable" labor, regardless of skin color. Why look elsewhere, considering that "the main attraction of Asian labour was that it could be obtained for considerably less than aboriginal labour and at as little as a third of the price of white labour...As well, the Chinese were said to be easier to discipline than

⁹ Roger Daniels, Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), p. 48.

white or native labourers, and their unofficial holidays were fewer than those taken by the British,” to quote leading labor historian John Belshaw.¹⁰

The “Push” Factor: Emigration from Japan, 1885-1900

Starting in the late 1880s and the early 1890s, the barriers to Japanese immigration to North America that existed ever since the Meiji Restoration, from both the “push” of changing conditions in Japan and the “pull” side of the need for a new and plentiful source of exploitable labor, subsided. By the 1890s it was increasingly evident that Japan’s strident efforts to modernize and industrialize so that it could join the ranks of the world’s elite nations finally were bearing fruit. Even the most ardent of European racial supremacists stopped and took note of Japan’s quick and crushing defeat of China in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95. With its acquisition of Taiwan as a colony, Japan became a colonial power in its own right and gained international recognition as being the preeminent nation in Asia.¹¹

The fact that Japan progressed from a state of near-total isolation and having no industry or modern armed forces to speak of in the 1850s to its emergence as a serious military and industrial power in its own right a scant forty years later impressed – and even scared – many Europeans and North Americans. Japan by the 1890s no longer obsessed as much about the insult to its reputation that the migration of some of its “surplus” population might engender in the eyes of Western military and political elites.

¹⁰ Colonization and Community: The Vancouver Island Coalfield and the Making of the British Columbia Working Class (Montreal and Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), p. 119.

¹¹ Linda Tamura, The Hood River Issei: An Oral History of Japanese Settlers in Oregon’s Hood River Valley (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), p. 2.

Its standing in the international community, especially when compared to other Asian nations that were increasingly besieged by almost constant Western encroachments on their very sovereignty, seemed secure. Likewise, Japan's achievements were seen as a credit to their distinct biological heritage, unique for Asia. This perception of Japan, as being "Asian" at one level but almost "honorary European" at another, was not lost on recruiters of labor in North America and elsewhere, who eagerly sought such enterprising workers for their farms, factories and mines.

Such entrepreneurs seized on the sudden emergence in Japan of a large "surplus" population following the completion of the successful Japanese colonization of Hokkaido around 1890. Much like the United States, which only started to expand its direct influence overseas shortly after its frontier was famously declared "closed" by the superintendent of the U.S. Census Bureau in 1890, Japan too was preoccupied with its own internal expansion.

Japan looked closer to home for lands to which she could send some of her people. Political as well as economic motives prompted the Meiji government to embark on a rapid colonization programme on the northern[most] island of Hokkaido, virtually a new frontier with its unexploited resources...A quasi-military settlement of former samurai and their families was launched very early in the Restoration period after the Japanese government realized the strategic importance of the island in checking the southward thrust of Russian expansion. Other settlers, drawn largely from the dregs and the rejected of the main islands, were given subsidies to reclaim land and to develop mineral resources. Nearly 40,000 soldier-colonists and 557,000 civilian immigrants settled on the island in the quarter century ending in 1900.¹²

¹² Adachi, The Enemy..., p. 8.

Compared to the 105,000 people who migrated to Hokkaido between 1869 and 1884, only 15,416 Japanese emigrated overseas in this period, mostly to other nations in East Asia.¹³ This significant population movement suggests that even with such a large, impoverished “surplus” population generated by a crash industrialization program and the thorough and rapid implementation of a modern commercial economy, the Japanese government decided that the best solution to this problem was to create what in essence became a military reserve of Japanese settlers who would serve the purpose of consolidating and defending the Empire from foreign encroachment, particularly from nearby Russia.

Ever since the Meiji Restoration, Hokkaido served as a vital safety valve for Japan’s political elite. In a society that experienced a dramatic reorientation of its entire economy in such a short period of time, obviously large swathes of the population were displaced from ways of life that had hitherto remained unchanged for centuries. At this time, Japanese landlords launched their own version of the Clearances. The quasi-feudal ties of patronage that bound landowner and tenant alike in a mutually dependent relationship and sustained the power of the shogunate for centuries were quickly swept away in favor of cash-based transactions. A mass wave of dispossessions in the 1880s was the inevitable result.

The almost singleminded [sic] emphasis upon modernizing industry, shaped and dictated by Japan’s ambition to become a major world power, was accompanied by a neglect of agrarian interests. The new industrial developments,

¹³ Charles Young and Helen Reid, The Japanese Canadians (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1938), p. 5.

superimposed on a basically feudal culture, had little direct bearing upon the lives of the mass of the population, except insofar as the peasants had to bear the brunt of the taxation to pay for industrial development, since at least 70% of all households were engaged in agriculture as late as 1885. A new centrally-administered land tax in cash meant that the peasant had to pay a fixed sum annually...[L]and owning peasants increasingly became tenants, paying very high rent in kind to landlords, and ownership of land naturally fell into progressively fewer hands.¹⁴

Just as in Highland Scotland, the majority of peasants, while freed from virtual serfdom by these changes, also found themselves cut off from the protection from the vagaries of the marketplace that the lords also provided.¹⁵ Many Japanese peasants, no longer under the paternalistic watch of their landlord and without any security of tenure, barely eked out a subsistence existence.

The disastrous harvests of 1889 throughout Japan proved to be the proverbial last straw for peasants and elites alike. The rice crop that year failed miserably. This caused even those peasants who continued to farm to go hungry. Without even the ability to feed themselves through subsistence cultivation, many farmers moved to the teeming cities of Japan. There, they often were forced to become “rickshaw-men, longshoremen, coolies, in a word the lowest stratum of unskilled labor.”¹⁶ Throughout the 1870s and 1880s, this was exactly the sort of class that the Japanese elites sought out and used to colonize Hokkaido. This island, only 32,221 square miles in area, simply could not sustain a seemingly never-ending influx of destitute immigrants ill-

¹⁴ Adachi, The Enemy... pp. 14, 15.

¹⁵ Robert Wilson and Bill Hosokawa, The Japanese Canadians (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1938), p. 46.

¹⁶ E. Herbert Norman, Japan's Emergence as a Modern State: Political and Economic Problems of the Meiji Period (New York: International Secretariat, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1940), p. 157.

suited for its cold and blustery climate. The safety valve for the “cleared” classes slowly but surely came to a halt, just as the numbers of those displaced started to skyrocket.

The swelling numbers of the dispossessed and destitute can also be explained by the large expansion of Japan’s population in the late nineteenth century. The total population of Japan rose by almost a third between 1872 and 1900, from 35,000,000 to 44,000,000.¹⁷ The same processes that abrupt industrialization and modernization wrought in Europe in terms of tremendous population growth, a sharp decline in death rates, an increase in the numbers of dispossessed, and unprecedented geographic mobility that provided a steady stream of immigrants to North America and elsewhere, simultaneously also transformed Japan in a like fashion.

Immediately following the Meiji Restoration, however, the numbers of those affected adversely by these changes remained small. Those who were displaced had some domestic avenues through which they could progress economically, most notably in the new industrial opportunities opening up in the cities and in the colonization of Hokkaido. These outlets, as the 1880s and 1890s progressed, started to close, just as the numbers of those dislocated and dispossessed who desperately sought and needed to utilize these channels increased dramatically. While the Japanese economy grew exponentially in these decades, it did not do so fast enough to employ all those who required work, nor did it provide jobs that paid decent wages or matched the skills of

¹⁷ Adachi, The Enemy..., p. 15.

the formerly agrarian workers who constituted the bulk of Japan's urban population. Much like the members of the Napier Commission who looked at the demographics of the Outer Hebrides and saw only further strife if the population continued to expand without enacting any structural landholding reform, elites in Japan turned to accept mass emigration as a solution to their own security woes.

Fortunately enough for those in Japan who grew increasingly worried about their "surplus" population, commercial interests in North America in the 1880s and 1890s suddenly emerged and offered them a solution to their woes. Throughout the nineteenth century, there was a tremendous need for cheap labor in western North America to build its urban centers, to develop its mining, fishing and agricultural industries, and to construct the vital rail links through a difficult topography that connected these "Wests" to the metropolises of power in the east. Until the 1880s, much of this need was met through the importation of Chinese workers. When there were relatively few Asians on the west coast, or when they only occupied particular niches in the economy that white settlers could not or would not work in, there was little agitation against their presence.

Chinese immigration was a business to shipping companies crossing the Pacific Ocean and it was to their advantage that no restrictions were placed on bringing Chinese to [North America] as immigrants. For every immigrant they brought across, they charged \$97.50, and the more they could bring or encourage to come to Canada, the more money they could earn. But it was not only a business for these shipping companies, it also meant money for the tongs or

masters who had Chinese immigrants brought over. And, of course, it meant cheap labour for the governments and private companies in Canada.¹⁸

These powerful forces that worked in tandem to increase the Asian population of the west coast also started to catch the notice of the white working class, against whom the vast majority of these immigrants were now arrayed.

The “Pull” Factor: North America turns to Japanese Immigration, 1885-1900

Seeing as poorer white settlers comprised the numerical majority of the population, and they held little economic clout, they started to take to the polls to demand action from their government on the issue of immigration restriction. The latent racism that many British Columbians possessed at the time was now buttressed by the direct challenge to their livelihood that these “aliens” represented.¹⁹ Add in the slow growth in the provincial economy in the 1880s, and it comes as little surprise that the first widespread calls for Chinese exclusion appear at this time.

In 1885, a poll tax of \$50 was imposed by Parliament on every Chinese resident in Canada.²⁰ This was but the first of a slew of laws passed by either the federal or the provincial governments that restricted or attempted to circumscribe the political and economic liberties of the Chinese community in British Columbia. In 1890, the provincial legislature passed a law that banned Chinese workers from working underground in coal mines. The following year, a “Chinese-exclusion clause” was

¹⁸ Ramdeo Sampat Mehta, *International Barriers* (Ottawa: Harpell’s Press, 1973), p. 36.

¹⁹ Gillian Creese, “Exclusion or Solidarity? Vancouver Workers Confront the ‘Oriental Problem,’” in *BC Studies*, no. 80 (Winter 1988-89), p. 48.

²⁰ Mehta, *International Barriers*, p. 37.

inserted in the act passed that incorporated the British Columbia Dyking and Improvement Co. that prevented them from hiring “Orientals.” This type of restriction would become commonplace for any company wishing to incorporate within or do business with the province. In 1893, 1894, 1897 and again in 1899, the provincial legislature made entreaties to Ottawa to tighten immigration from China even further than it already had in 1885. In 1900, Victoria “unanimously carried a motion ‘that this House views with alarm the admission of Mongolians to the rights of citizenship, and that the Dominion Government be requested so to change the naturalization laws that it will be impossible for any Mongolian...to become British subjects.’”²¹ In the face of such an onslaught, it is little wonder that the numbers of Chinese immigrants to British Columbia dropped precipitously in the final years of the nineteenth century. In fact, starting in the late 1880s, only around 300 Chinese immigrants per year arrived on the Canadian west coast.²²

Yet these actions did little to stem the growing visibility, or even the numbers, of Asians who resided in British Columbia. This can be explained by the business and commercial interests of British Columbia locating an alternate source of cheap labor in Asia – Japan. Their arrival in North America *en masse* can be traced back to 1884. In

²¹ The use of the term “Mongolian” here is an interesting one, and it in itself bears a brief analysis here. Much like the word “Tartar,” “Mongolian” carries with it two rather paradoxical connotations. While the typical Asian in the province was seen as automatically inferior to any white resident, being an “unfree and servile” coolie, an astute and knowledgeable observer cannot fail to note that the Mongolians and Tartars at one time ruled over empires that covered a significant portion of the world’s surface area, and had conquered and ruled over the powerful Chinese and Russian empires in the past. Such representations managed to produce a rather bifurcated image that “allowed for both sympathy and revulsion” simultaneously. For more information please read Lee, Orientals..., pp. 9-12; 53.

²² *Ibid* p. 53.

that year, the Hawaiian government signed a contract with its Japanese counterpart allowing the sugar plantation owners in Hawaii to import Japanese labor under contract. This marked the first significant migration of Japanese laborers from Japan proper to the Americas.

In 1885, Japan allowed the unrestricted emigration of agricultural laborers, which opened the door for the first time to immigration agents and steamship lines eager to secure new sources of labor and streams of revenue.²³ Almost immediately, 943 Japanese immigrants set sail for North America.²⁴ As small as these initial numbers might seem, they marked a rather inauspicious start to a migration that quickly changed from a trickle to a torrent. By 1908, 178,927 Japanese had arrived in Hawaii, with an additional 91,740 resettling on the North American mainland.²⁵

Canada absorbed its fair share of this migration, especially so in the final half of the 1890s. In the last five years of that decade alone, 14,000 Japanese entered British Columbia.²⁶ This can in part be explained by the economic boom that that province experienced following the arrival of the transcontinental railway in 1886. This, coupled with rapid improvements in transoceanic shipping technology, meant that British Columbia could now trade its timber, fish, minerals, and produce cheaply and competitively with both “Easts,” the one across the Pacific and the one across the

²³ Price, *The Great White Walls...*, p. 153.

²⁴ Masako Iino, “Japan’s Reaction to the Vancouver Riot of 1907,” in *BC Studies* v. 60 (Winter 1983-84), p. 30.

²⁵ *Ibid* pp. 30, 31.

²⁶ Young and Reid, *The Japanese Canadians*, pp. 6,7; Martin Robin, *The Rush for Spoils: The Company Province, 1871-1933* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1972), p. 32.

Rocky Mountains. The resultant increase in demand for the province's natural resources, combined with it being easier to migrate to, necessarily led to a concomitant need for workers to extract and process these goods.

With access to Chinese workers restricted since the mid-1880s, employers looked to Japan as a possible substitute to meet their need for cheap contracted labor. It was easier then to locate and transport workers on a global scale than ever before. Also, because all of the discriminatory legislation that the British Columbia legislature passed at the time specifically referred to the Chinese, labor recruiters and employers could recruit all the contract workers they desired from Japan.

The Orientals, of course, had their friends, mainly the employers who benefited from cheap labour. Labour being in short supply in a pioneering economy, the Oriental performed indispensable functions in the sawmills, canneries, railroad gangs and mines. Without hem the company province would have made little headway. 'He will transform less food into more work, with less administrative friction, than any other animal,' reported the learned Professor Chester H. Rowel... 'That they are employed in many industries is readily understood,' wrote a Royal Commissioner in 1902, 'they are noted for faithful observance of contracts, they are docile, plodding and obedient to servility.'²⁷

Despite the best efforts of Japanese officials and Japanese nationals in residence in Canada to the contrary, most white British Columbians failed to differentiate between East Asians. They turned to Japan as a cheaper legal "Mongolian" source to meet their

²⁷ Quoted in Robin, *The Rush for Spoils*, p. 33. Robin quotes here first from the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, September 1909, and next indirectly from the 1902 report of the Royal Commission that was called into existence to investigate the recent increase in Japanese immigration to British Columbia. This commission will be discussed in greater detail in the next few pages.

need for cheap reliable labor.²⁸ Those who did note the difference between the Chinese and the Japanese actually stressed their preference for the latter, for the Japanese supposedly were imbued with deference, punctuality, cunning and aptitude that their fellow Asians lacked.

The Walls are Built: The Rise of Anti-Japanese Sentiment in British Columbia, 1895-1904

Much like the wave of Chinese immigrants that preceded them earlier in the nineteenth century, the first Japanese settlers who arrived in British Columbia attracted scant attention. At the time, those Japanese who were present in British Columbia were often assumed to be Chinese. Also, as long as the actual numbers of Japanese residents in British Columbia remained insignificant, they attracted little attention from the majority white population of the province. British Columbia could afford to be magnanimous on the issue of Japanese immigration, for there was no “problem” that needed correction.²⁹ Lastly, Chinese and Japanese labor was seen as essential if the province’s infrastructure and economy were to be built practically from scratch. So long as the province suffered in its inability to attract immigrants from Britain and

²⁸ Ward, *White Canada Forever...*, pp. 102, 103.

²⁹ Gerald Horne, *Race War: White Supremacy and the Japanese Attack on the British Empire* (New York: New York University Press, 2004) p. 43. An interesting discussion about when an immigrant population reaches that “critical mass” that starts to draw public attention, followed quickly by a political debate on their restriction – in this case, referring to the movement of West Indians and South Asians to Great Britain in the late 1940s and 1950s and the increased attention and scrutiny this engendered in a nation that up until then, as far as immigration is concerned, made no distinction between British subjects with “unrestricted rights of entry and settlement” – can be found in Bob Carter’s, Marci Green’s, and Rick Halpern’s article “Immigration Policy and the Racialization of Migrant Labour: The Construction of Racial Identities in the USA and Britain,” in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, v. 19, No. 1 (January 1996).

Europe, then Asians were “of value.” Economic necessity mitigated against blatant racism for much of British Columbia’s early history.

This scenario changed dramatically once a critical mass of Japanese emerged in British Columbia in the closing years of the nineteenth century.

By 1900, then, the Japanese were entering the major industries involving heavy labour and a modicum of skill. Railroad construction also drew Japanese in increasing numbers, and several hundred were imported as contract labour to work for the Canadian Pacific, Canadian Northern and Grand Trunk Railways in heavy construction, maintenance-of-way and the yards, in station and hotel service and in the dining cars. And slowly, the fields of employment expanded. The six occupations which the Japanese entered prior to 1893 had included jobs as cooks, domestic servants, sailors and hotel boys, but by 1900 the field had expanded to twelve, including the operation of a pool room and a few confectionary and dry goods stores.³⁰

One can chart the increase in numbers of Japanese settlers in British Columbia with the amount of attention paid to their presence by the legislators of that province. In 1895, the provincial legislature passed an act that disenfranchised all Japanese resident in British Columbia. This was the first time the Japanese were specifically mentioned in a bill of an exclusionary nature. While the legality of this act was challenged in the federal and imperial courts, the Privy Council, the final court of appeals for the Dominion, upheld the controversial legislation.³¹ As more and more Japanese immigrants arrived in British Columbia, and the “threat” they increasingly posed to the province’s traditional British identity and self-conceptualization swelled, attempts by

³⁰ In an aside, and one that directly lends itself to the visibility of the average Japanese immigrant at the time, these professions are typically characterized as having little day-to-day interaction with the general public. Thus, their increased numbers in these occupations would have gone generally unnoticed by the average working-class voting member of British Columbia society. Quote: Adachi, *The Enemy...*, p. 27.

³¹ Sugimoto, *Japanese Immigration...*, pp. 56, 57.

the legislature to limit their presence or to eliminate it altogether multiplied in both their scope and their intensity.³²

In 1897, the provincial legislature passed a bill that outright prohibited the employment of all Asians on all public works authorized by the government. The Japanese were specifically included in the ban.³³ That same year, the provincial legislature asked the federal government in Ottawa to extend the length of residence in Canada required in order to be naturalized as a British subject from three years to ten. It also requested Ottawa to make the disenfranchisement of all Asians that it had enacted at the provincial level applicable nationwide.³⁴ Not stopping there, the following year, British Columbia sought to “[make] the Chinese Immigration Act applicable to the Japanese, and [increase] the poll tax to five hundred dollars.”³⁵ Two years later, in August 1900, the provincial legislature “passed an immigration act, similar to the Natal Act earlier recommended by [British] Colonial Secretary [Joseph] Chamberlain, authorizing a language test for persons entering the province.”³⁶ This bill would have “prohibited” the entrance into Canada of “any person who, when asked to do so by an officer appointed under this Act, shall fail to himself write out and sign, in the

³² Jean Barman, The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), p. 139; Public Archives of Ontario (PAO), RG 3-6, Memorandum, “A Method of Selected Immigration”.

³³ Adachi, The Enemy...., p. 41.

³⁴ *Ibid* p. 41, Sugimoto, Japanese Immigration...., pp. 55, 56.

³⁵ In a letter from “His Imperial Japanese Majesty’s Consul” in Vancouver, S. Shimzu, to Canadian Prime Minister Sir Wilfred Laurier, dated March 14, 1898. Source: Documents Relating to the Recent Disallowance of Certain Statutes Passed by the Legislature of British Columbia (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1899), p. 4

³⁶ Adachi, The Enemy...., p. 43.

characters of any language of Europe, an application to the Colonial Secretary.”³⁷ This provision, of proving limited proficiency in any European language, to be chosen at the discretion of the exam’s administrator, while appearing to be “color-blind,” was designed and understood to be applied solely to non-white immigrants.”³⁸

*East vs. West vs. East: Tensions between Victoria, Ottawa, London and Tokyo
on Exclusion*

Unfortunately for the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia and those like-minded, none of these bills ever became law. All of them were eventually disallowed or declared *ultra vires* by the federal parliament. Regulation of immigration and the rights a British subject possessed as a rule were, based on the British North America Act that created the Dominion of Canada, under the sole purview of Ottawa. The Canadian government was well aware both of the controversy, both within the Empire and overseas, such attempted legislation might arouse, and of the threat such actions represented to its powers in such matters vis-à-vis the provinces. It thus acted to preserve its supremacy over such renegade actions, and to maintain a diplomatic equipoise.

Ottawa acted in such a manner in large part because such patently discriminatory legislation ran afoul of powerful interests in not only Ottawa, but also in London, both in Whitehall and at the Colonial Office. At both the federal and the imperial levels of government, there was a stiff allegiance to the preservation, at least

³⁷ Disallowance of Certain Statutes... p. 15.

³⁸ Adachi, The Enemy..., p. 43.

on paper, of an officially race- and color-blind Empire, with all persons enjoying equal protections under the law.³⁹ As the historian Daniel Gorman emphasizes, “The liberal outlook evinced by Whitehall did not reflect a progressive position on immigration per sé. Rather, it reflected the fact that Britain herself faced no large influx of Asian immigrants, and thus could study the issue in terms of imperial unity, rather than national interest.”⁴⁰

In addition, the British Government primarily concerned itself with maintaining its standing and position in a rapidly changing global environment. Even with the British Empire supposedly at its zenith of power and prestige in the years preceding World War I, Britain could no longer in essence impose its will worldwide in an era in which several world powers actively competed with it in matters of trade, diplomacy and conquest. If given the option between permitting an outpost of the British Empire to enforce its Social Darwinist ideals by blatantly discriminating against Japanese nationals, thus provoking the ire of Tokyo, and encouraging good trade, diplomatic and military relations with Japan to further the broader economic, political and military goals of the broader British Empire, officials in the Foreign Office often had their way, and the Canadian Parliament acted accordingly.

³⁹ Robert A. Huttenback, Racism and Empire: White Settlers and Colored Immigrants in the British Self-Governing Colonies, 1830-1910 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976), p. 23.

⁴⁰ In “Wider and Wider Still?: Racial Politics, Intra-Imperial Immigration and the Absence of an Imperial Citizenship in the British Empire,” in the Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History, v. 3, no. 3 (2002), p. 9.

In addition, it is important to note that throughout this period, and indeed lasting into the 1920s, Canada did not exercise its own foreign policy. While the British North America Act of 1867 established the important precedent of granting self-government to Canada, with practically no imperial interference in Ottawa's ability to pass laws that applied to matters of purely domestic concern, London zealously preserved its prerogative in all areas of intra-imperial and international affairs. Whenever London signed a treaty or drafted a declaration of war, to name but two examples, it was automatically assumed on both sides of the Atlantic that that policy would automatically apply as equally to Canada as it did to the "mother country."

For example, in 1894 Great Britain and Japan negotiated and signed the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation. One of the introductory clauses explicitly granted "the subjects of either country the right to enter, travel, and reside in any part of the Dominions and possessions of the other."⁴¹ Canada was a party to this treaty, and as a result had to abide by its terms. Indeed, the Dominion was able, under Section 132 of the British North America Act, to compel a province to comply with treaty obligations that Canada entered into as part of the British Empire.⁴² Seeing as the discriminatory bills mentioned above that the legislature of British Columbia passed clearly infringed on the rights Japanese nationals acquired under the terms of this treaty, the federal Parliament felt the need to toe the imperial line on such matters.

⁴¹ Source: Young and Reid, The Japanese Canadians, p. 8.

⁴² Adachi, The Enemy..., p. 55.

Ottawa also, though to a lesser extent, failed to comprehend, at least in the eyes of many British Columbians, the scale and the immediacy this threat represented to the province. Many Canadians expressed puzzlement as to why British Columbia pursued with a zeal bordering on paranoia an issue that by and large they had no direct experience with. Canada was a nation of immigrants, and British Columbia in particular at the time was experiencing a well-publicized labor shortage. This indifference on the part of the Canadian Government, or reluctance to act on the issue of immigration restriction, flummoxed many British Columbians.⁴³ Those who resided on the west coast of Canada knew that because the province was located so far from Britain and Northern Europe, immigrants from there were less likely to settle on a western coastal frontier. British Columbia, while situated so far away from Britain, conversely saw itself as located perilously close to Asia.⁴⁴

Indifference aside, Ottawa found itself in a tenuous position, between the Scylla of public opinion in British Columbia and the Charybdis of British imperial commitments and prestige.

The Dominion government executed with dispatch, and with great credit, its duties which [sic] fell between the narrow local prejudices of the provincial government and the intricate network of imperial responsibilities throughout the world. Its course of action was a difficult one, and, between its two loyalties, it sought to direct its course in a harmonious and profitable manner, with a view to improving its position both within the empire and with the nation in which it had become so vitally interested. Such was the complex relationships of the various

⁴³ Agnes Laut, Am I My Brother's Keeper? A Study of British Columbia's Labor and Oriental Problems (Original Date and Place of Publication: "Saturday Night," Toronto, January 1913). (Republished: Vancouver: Subway, 2003), p. ii.

⁴⁴ Japanese Immigration..., p. 98.

governments which [sic] determined Canada's course of action with the Japanese in British Columbia.⁴⁵

Normally Charbydis prevailed, much to the consternation of Canada's westernmost, most distant province. Patricia Roy, a noted historian of race relations in British Columbia, sums up all of these frustrations that perpetuated what would become a self-fulfilling cycle of provincial reenactment of discriminatory legislation and repeated federal disallowance of said bills.

In an effort to halt [Asian] competition, the legislature began trying to forbid the employment of 'Chinese or Japanese' in mines and transportation companies incorporated under provincial law. Such regulations offended the government of Japan, ran afoul of federal jurisdiction over trade and commerce and aliens, and upset British diplomatic considerations. Thus, the federal government regularly disallowed such legislation.⁴⁶

The way such actions were interpreted by many British Columbians can be found in the remarks made by the Reverend Dr. H.W. Fraser in a sermon delivered to his congregation. He lambasted Ottawa's reluctance to offend British sensitivities on the issue of Asian exclusion by supporting one of its constituent parts. He declared, "we are vassals of Britain and England runs things in the Dominion of Canada pretty much as she chooses."⁴⁷

Ottawa Makes a Concession: The Royal Commission of 1902

This is not to say that Ottawa was not totally unsympathetic to the increased fervor and agitation in British Columbia over the issue of unrestricted Japanese

⁴⁵ Sugimoto, *Japanese Immigration...*, p. 55.

⁴⁶ In John Schultz and Kimitada Miwa, eds., *Canada and Japan in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 4.

⁴⁷ *Vancouver Daily Province*, October 7, 1907.

immigration. As the twentieth century dawned, the number and visibility of the Japanese in the province swelled. To give one example, between April 1 and June 30, 1900, 7682 Japanese arrived in British Columbia, which then had a total population of about 150,000. While these numbers appear to be rather small, most of these immigrants worked in one industry – fishing. By 1901, they held about forty-one per cent of the fishing licenses on the Fraser River.⁴⁸ Four years later, “they held 85% of licences on the Fraser, [and] dominated the Skeena River...Moreover, the Japanese had ‘practically’ taken over the building of fishing boats...Their success in the fishery seemed to demonstrate that the Japanese could easily take over any industry they sought to master.”⁴⁹ The figures published in the 1901 federal census revealed that in that year, the Asian population in British Columbia stood at 19,524, or 10.9% of the total.⁵⁰

By 1902, the unrest over the “peaceful penetration” of the province’s fishing industry by the Japanese had grown to such a pitch that Ottawa felt the need to alleviate the pressure somewhat. In response to two labor strikes in 1900 and 1901 in the Fraser River fisheries, the federal government convened a royal commission to investigate the status of Asian immigration in British Columbia.⁵¹ Its report reflected the established attitudes of those like the manager of the Northern Pacific Lumber Company, who stated that “they employed Japanese because [out of the total number of 91 employees –

⁴⁸ Schultz and Miwa eds., *Canada and Japan...*, p. 5.

⁴⁹ *Ibid* p. 5.

⁵⁰ Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Population for Electoral Districts by Enumeration Areas: British Columbia 1870, 1881, 1891, 1901* (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, n.d.). As quoted in Barman, *The West Beyond the West...*, p. 379.

⁵¹ Adachi, *The Enemy...*, p. 57.

46 Japanese and 45 white], 16 [Japanese] do as much [work] as [all of the] white men.”⁵² Another employer divulged that, in his opinion, “the Japanese are expert fishermen, having followed the calling in their own land,”⁵³

The Commission also heard almost the exact opposite from the white laborers who were also called to testify for the Commission. For example, the collector for the city of Vancouver, W.L. Fagan, suggested that “there is but one way to drive the Japanese out of the [Fraser] River, and that is by the immigration of some fishing races from Ireland [and] Scotland...bring those men here and give them fifty acres each to cultivate. If [so]...they would soon be able to compete with the orientals [sic].”⁵⁴ Ultimately, the report on the whole sided with the laments of the white fishermen and the politicians who represented them. The final report decided that “it is not right that this important industry [the fisheries] should fall into the hands of a class who are foreigners and who do not assist in settling the country with a permanent class of citizens.”⁵⁵

The Commission, however, stopped well short of endorsing any official restriction on immigration from Japan, largely to avoid offending that nation’s powerful sensitivities. Predictably, with no codified legal barriers standing in the way of their importation Japanese settlers continued to arrive in the ports of British Columbia.

⁵² Dominion of Canada, Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1902), p. 358.

⁵³ *Ibid* p. 355.

⁵⁴ *Ibid* p. 350.

⁵⁵ *Ibid* p. 357.

Despite Japan implementing a voluntary restriction on the number of emigrants allowed to leave that country annually for Canada in 1900, “employment agencies” in British Columbia managed “to manoeuvre their way around every obstacle placed in their path” to secure these highly desirable workers.⁵⁶ For example, private agencies seeking to profit from the demand for cheap but skilled labor lobbied both the Japanese and the Canadian governments, with the strong backing of corporations like the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, and the Dunsmuir Coal Mines, to block any attempts by either legislature to impede this flow of labor.⁵⁷ By suggesting that these workers had specific jobs awaiting them in Canada, the companies managed to recruit laborers well and above the few hundred allowed by Japan’s self-imposed and unofficial restrictions on emigration, for the Japanese government did not count laborers bound by contract against its quota.

Big business in the province also revealed itself as often clearly siding with the Japanese against the whites. The politicians they elected, and the discriminatory legislation their legislators passed, were revealed to be impotent to counteract the continued influx of Japanese immigrants. British Columbia, so they thought, was repeatedly sacrificed on the altars of domestic and international goodwill by remote governments in Ottawa and London that neither understood the province’s unique plight nor particularly cared to even really try to. It seemed to many in British Columbia that

⁵⁶ Donald Avery and Peter Neary, “Laurier, Borden and a White British Columbia.” In the Journal of Canadian Studies, v. 12, no. 4 (1977), p. 27.

⁵⁷ *Ibid* p. 27.

nothing was being done to stop what to them was amounting by the early 1900s to be a onslaught on the part of the Japanese on their very security and identity.



Illustration 9.

Top: Japanese child dressed in Scottish costume at war memorial. Source: City Archives of Vancouver (CAV), Record No. 99-924.

Bottom: Delegation from Japan with local Japanese community in Vancouver, 1910. Source: CAV, Record No. 7-204.

CHAPTER V: THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR, THE VANCOUVER RIOTS OF 1907, AND ANGLO-JAPANESE RELATIONS TO 1914

In the first decade of the twentieth century, British Columbia experienced a powerful explosion in both the scope and the intensity of anti-Asian and anti-Japanese sentiment in particular throughout the province. Such tensions came to an abrupt and violent head in September 1907, when a full-scale riot erupted in Vancouver. Several Japanese-owned businesses and homes were destroyed or severely damaged. Calls for the total exclusion or even expulsion of Asians from British Columbia grew louder and more vehement. This incident encapsulated the grave insecurities many in the province felt regarding the Japanese in their midst and the threat Japan posed to their society, and stimulated more activist approaches to minimize that challenge in the years following the First World War.

The Russo-Japanese War and Its Fallout, 1904-1905

Much of this unrest was motivated by the recently concluded Russo-Japanese War. In 1904, the long-simmering question surrounding whether Russia or Japan would emerge as the dominant power in Korea and Manchuria led to the outbreak of war. When the conflict started in February, most observers at first assumed that Russia would emerge victorious. Up until then, Russia was widely viewed by many in the British military and diplomatic establishment as its primary and most powerful rival in

East Asia.¹ Russia had greatly expanded its position in northeastern China in the late 1890s and early 1900s. It was also determined to establish a protectorate over Korea. Doing so would provide Russia with the permanent warm-water base on the Pacific it had long coveted. It would also mean that Japan would face Russia to the north and to the west.

If Russia was seen as the main threat to the British Empire in the Pacific Ocean at the start of the Russo-Japanese War, the events of May 25 and 26, 1905 would shatter this consensus. Over the course of those two days, the Japanese navy completely annihilated the Russian Baltic Fleet off the Japanese coast in what came to be known as the Battle of Tsushima.² Suddenly, long-held assumptions about automatic and effortless “superiority to, and dominance over, a world of dark skins” were irrevocably destroyed.³

After Japan’s victory over Russia in 1905 a rising note of alarm [emerged]. The thought that Asians had defeated Europeans in battle proved a sobering one in the West and it quickly prompted a reassessment of recent Japanese history. No longer an antique empire in the earliest stage of development, Japan suddenly seemed a modern, aggressive, expansionist power, driven by avarice, overpopulation, and desire for international prestige.⁴

¹ For more information, see Ian Nish’s chapter in Phillips Payson O’Brien, ed., The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1922 (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), especially pp. 40-41.

² B.J.P. McKercher, “Diplomatic Equipoise: The Lansdowne Foreign Office, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, and the Global Balance of Power,” in the Canadian Journal of History, v. 24, no. 3 (December 1989), p. 331.

³ Eric Hobsbawm, The Age of Empire 1875-1914 (New York: Vintage Books, 1987), p. 70.

⁴ W. Peter Ward, White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy toward Orientals in British Columbia (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1978), p. 99.

Suddenly, “backward Japan was obviously not so backward after all.”⁵ The Japanese went overnight from being a race that while intuitive and admired for the most part was still considered to be only slightly more elevated in status than the Chinese, to a race that was now capable of challenging European global hegemony.

Now, far from automatically lumping all Chinese and Japanese together as “Mongolians,” something that the Japanese consuls in Vancouver fought vociferously against in the 1890s, many Canadians started to subscribe to views such as those expressed in the *Victoria Colonist* that argued that the “virile, civilized and intellectual Japanese is even a more dangerous rival than the Chinese. He can live as cheaply, can work as cheaply, and he is more aggressive and adaptable as a rival. He is more desirable as a citizen, it is true, but not less disturbing as a factor in the labour market.”⁶ The federal parliamentarian H.H. Stevens echoed such sentiments when he argued that in Hawaii, “the native Hawaiian was too lazy, so they tried Chinese, Portuguese and Japanese. The Jap proved the best, with the result that Japan seized the opportunity and sent thousands of her people to these beautiful islands...they are rapidly changing the Hawaiian islands into a ‘little Japan’...What Japan has accomplished [there] they are endeavoring to accomplish in British Columbia.” These opinions most likely would have been scoffed at had they been published in say 1890. Now, following Japan’s

⁵ *Ibid* p. 99.

⁶ As quoted in John Schultz and Kimitada Miwa, eds., Canada and Japan in the Twentieth Century (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 6.

decisive victory over a European power, such warnings suddenly gained in both frequency and in credibility.⁷

A Japan Triumphant: Immigration and Identity, 1905-1907

Accordingly, most popular depictions of the Japanese in Canada shifted as a result of the war to focus on the insidious nature of the Japanese, the only Asian people considered to be capable of using Western ideas and Western technology successfully against the West. A genuine fear of Japan and the Japanese spread throughout the Pacific Rim, a paranoia that was exacerbated by a bellicosity that was now attributed to the Japanese elite.

After her victory in the Russo-Japanese War, a confident Japan began to direct her energy to expansion...An influential journal at the time (Katsudō no Nohon, or Active Japan) argued that ‘our expansive energy, now busting out after a long period of polishing up and waiting, should not be channeled only in the direction of Asia, but should cover the whole of mankind. Nor was Japan’s expansion limited to the economic sphere. Scholarly books and articles on the subject of emigration and colonization...advocated the necessity of Japanese expansion. Emigration and settlement overseas were clearly part of the postwar expansion envisioned by those writers. Apparently the government also began to show an interest in emigration, with the idea that it was just the right opportunity to promote settlement of Japanese overseas.⁸

Xenophobes in British Columbia often cited Japan’s decision in 1906 to lift its voluntary restriction on the numbers of its citizens who could immigrate to Canada as a direct result of its victory in the Russo-Japanese War. The Japanese government came to this conclusion based on the fact that Canada in 1905 became a signatory to the

⁷ In “The Oriental Problem Dealing with Canada as Affected by the Immigration of Japanese, Hindu and Chinese,” (Vancouver, ?, 1911), p. 4.

⁸ Masako Iino, “Japan’s Reaction to the Vancouver Riot of 1907,” in BC Studies, v. 60 (Winter 1983-84), p. 36.

Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Negotiation, which accorded Japanese subjects freedom of entry and movement throughout the British Empire.⁹ Suddenly, “boat after boat laden with working-men from the Orient arrived in Vancouver.”¹⁰ In the first seven months of 1907, 5571 immigrants arrived in British Columbia; in the month of July alone, 2300 landed in the province.¹¹

This influx occurred in part because many Japanese laborers were no longer able to immigrate to the United States. On February 18, 1907, Congress amended its statutes to accommodate an executive order issued by President Theodore Roosevelt that halted the migration of Japanese workers from Hawaii to the mainland. Because movements from Hawaii to the United States were technically “domestic” in nature since the islands were annexed in 1898, Hawaii was used by many unscrupulous labor recruiters as a Trojan Horse of sorts to use to eventually bring Asian labor to North America.¹² Immigration agents, suddenly deprived of their largest “market,” now envisioned British Columbia as possibly being a substitute customer for their “goods.” To put it another way, the province would function as a “second Hawaii,” for no official restrictions regulated either the importation of workers from Hawaii to Canada, nor from Canada to the United States.¹³ Right when Japan abandoned its voluntary

⁹ *Ibid* pp. 36, 37, Schultz and Miwa eds., Canada and Japan..., p. 7.

¹⁰ Margaret Ormsby, British Columbia: A History (Vancouver: The Macmillan Company of Canada, Ltd., 1958), p. 350.

¹¹ Schultz and Miwa, eds., Canada and Japan..., p. 7; Ward, White Canada Forever..., p. 65.

¹² Yugji Ichioka, “Japanese Immigrant Labor Contractors and the Northern Pacific and the Great Northern Railroad Companies, 1898-1907,” in Labor History, v. 21, no. 3 (1980), p. 347.

¹³ Such an action was certainly not lost on advocates of exclusion in British Columbia. In what was even at this time a recurring theme, most advocates of Asian exclusion looked longingly at the “strides” the

restrictions on emigration, the American decision to in essence close the door on immigration from Asia sparked an outright panic amongst many white British Columbians, who feared that their province would be overrun by this redirected Asian labor.

This angst was also bolstered by the decision in 1906 by the British navy to abandon its sole naval base in British Columbia in Esquimalt. While the closing of this base, and the termination of the British security guarantee such an action represented, would have been worrying in and of itself to the majority of white British Columbians, the fact that Britain of all powers decided to close the base so shortly after the Russian defeat was particularly troublesome. To make matters worse, the implicit explanation of the decision to close Esquimalt was that under the terms of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, the British came to depend largely on the Japanese navy to protect imperial interests in the Pacific Ocean. This dependence on Japan only increased now that the main threat to both Japan and Britain in that theater, Russia, was no longer a significant cause for concern. Britain was now free to concentrate its naval forces in Europe, to counter the increased naval threat there that Germany increasingly posed. While such

United States, and in particular the neighboring west coast states of California, Oregon and Washington, were making, both in enacting their own discriminatory legislation and in convincing their federal government of the need for such action. In addition, the United States, not being a part of any larger entity and being a sovereign nation in its own right, and more pertinent here not saddled with a military alliance and commercial treaties with Japan, could act in a *Realpolitik* fashion, without worrying about earning the enmity of a countervailing power such as Whitehall. For more information see Daniel Gorman, "Wider and Wider Still: Racial Politics, Intra-Imperial Immigration and the Absence of an Imperial Citizenship in the British Empire." In the *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, v. 3, no. 3 (2002)," and Patricia Roy, "British Columbia's Fear of Asians, 1900-1950," in *Histoire Social/Social History*, v. XIII, no. 25 (May 1980), p. 163.

reliance on Japan made sense to the British Colonial Office and Whitehall, most British Columbians, with their more proximate sense of Japan and the Japanese as representing the preeminent military and bio-cultural threat to its identity and security, felt that the abandonment of Esquimalt was foolish at best and downright dangerous at worst. Many British Columbians fretted over the thought that Japanese “fast enemy raiders might strike at Canadian trade and ports while British warships were engaged thousands of miles away.”¹⁴

The Vancouver Anti-Japanese Riots of 1907

All of these tensions that had emerged over the past two years created a virtual powder keg over issues of race, immigration, labor, capital and identity that threatened to explode, provided the proper spark. This immediate catalyst came in the form of the fate of British Columbia’s most recent attempt to restrict migration from Asia, the Immigration Bill of 1907. This bill represented yet another attempt to introduce a Natal Act that would by stealth exclude all Asians from the province.¹⁵ The law, however, was set aside by the province’s Lieutenant Governor, mining magnate James Dunsmuir. Dunsmuir, in reserving the bill, hoped that the reasons he offered in taking this action, namely that this act violated federal treaty obligations and legislated on a subject that

¹⁴ Roger Sarty, “‘There Will Be Trouble in the North Pacific’: The Defence of British Columbia in the Early Twentieth Century,” in *BC Studies*, v. 61 (Spring 1984), p. 9.

¹⁵ Debates of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, Session LXXII (1907-08), v. 1, col. 1754

was exclusively the purview of the Canadian government, would be “debated only as an interesting constitutional legislation,” as they had been in the past.¹⁶

1907, however, would diverge significantly from this pattern. The lieutenant governor, the Crown’s representative in each province, was an appointed position, chosen by the Canadian Governor General. While royal assent to legislation was required for any bill to become law, convention dictated that it would be granted automatically if the bill won the approval of the legislature. In his reserving of a bill that was passed by an overwhelming majority in the provincial house, Dunsmuir was thought of by many as acting as an unelected despot riding roughshod over the collective will of British Columbia to remain a bastion of British culture in the North Pacific.

Not only was the Lieutenant Governor’s action seen as contravening the democratic will of the province, his disallowal was widely attributed to his vested interest in the continued importation of as many Asian laborers as possible trumping the interest of the majority of the province’s voters who clamored for exclusion.

Dunsmuir, as President and chief stockholder of the Wellington Colliery Company which operated coal mines at Wellington, Comox and Alexandria, was himself an employer of Oriental labour. A wealthy industrial magnate, his empire also included iron works, several railway companies and a fleet of steamers. At his palatial Hatley Castle, the largest private residence of its time on the Pacific coast, he employed a gardener named Noda who created and took care of the Japanese-styled landscaping around the 650-acre estate. He also used a regular staff of 100 Chinese to make part of the estate a self-sustaining farm.¹⁷

¹⁶ Terry Reksten, *The Dunsmuir Saga* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1991), p. 218.

¹⁷ Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was...*, p. 72.

Unfortunately for Dunsmuir, news leaked that shortly after this, the Lieutenant Governor completed negotiations with the dreaded Canadian Nippon Supply Company, the leading provisioner of Japanese contract labor to the province, to furnish his mines with 500 workers.¹⁸

Here was the ultimate sign of a distant magnate, acting solely based on his own self-interest, without any clear responsibility to either the provincial assembly or to the people of British Columbia. All of the frustrations over the lack of control the province had over the matter of regulating the composition of the province, the powerlessness British Columbia felt over Tokyo, over London, over even Ottawa – were now seen as extant in the one body they surely had power over – the provincial government. Despite all of the strides this British outpost on the Pacific had made in creating its ideal society, its sacrifices and achievements were now seen as being betrayed from within. Just as the mere presence of the Japanese was seen as a latent threat to the security and identity of British Columbia, the fact that the province’s economic elite prioritized their own selfish economic interests rather than the collective will of the province to be a “White British Columbia” was viewed as unconscionable.

¹⁸ A sign of the wrath that this company incurred by many white British Columbians comes in the observations made by none other than William Lyon Mackenzie King, who chaired the Royal Commission convened to investigate the anti-Asian riots in Vancouver that happened in September 1907 – the “explosion” of the “powderkeg” referenced earlier. In his official recommendations as to how to alleviate racial tensions on the Canadian West Coast, he remarked that “the Canadian Nippon Supply Company and other like concerns...unless methods are adopted sufficiently effective to prohibit...the importation of contract labour from Japan...will carry on a traffic in Japanese labour the like of which has not been equaled in the importation of any class of coolie labour that has ever been brought to our shores.” Source: Donald Avery and Peter Neary, “Laurier, Borden and a White British Columbia,” in the *Journal of Canadian Studies*, v. 12, no. 4 (1977), p. 28; Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was...*, p. 72.

If political avenues could no longer be relied upon to stem the threat Japan and the Japanese posed to British Columbia, then perhaps extralegal means might need to be employed.¹⁹ On the evening of June 24, 1907, immediately following the arrival of almost 2000 immigrants from Japan on board the *Kumeric* earlier that day, the Asiatic Exclusion League was founded in Vancouver.²⁰ The League opposed all immigration from Asia. That said, it targeted the Japanese in particular because they were seen to be “excessively aggressive, and [the League] feared that they look[ed] forward to ultimately controlling [British Columbia],” a fate that Japan was now seen as capable of realizing.²¹ In the increasingly fervid anti-Asian atmosphere that characterized the summer of 1907, they quickly attracted popular support. Fuelled with assistance from such publications as the Vancouver World, which charged that “the largest employers of labor in British Columbia signed contracts with a Japanese agency for thousands of men and among the copies of those agreements produced was one bearing the signature of Lord James Dunsmuir...The hidden workings of a conspiracy to flood the province with Japanese were laid bare,” the League quickly attracted popular support.²² Based on this sudden upsurge in membership, its leaders decided that the time had come to

¹⁹ Ward, *White Canada Forever...*, p. 66.

²⁰ Reksten, *The Dunsmuir Saga*, p. 218.

²¹ Schultz and Miwa eds., *Canada and Japan...*, p. 9.

²² “Results of Second Royal Commission: Evidence Shows that Great Corporations Contracted for Japanese Labor, Thus Bringing about Influx,” January 8, 1908, p. 4.

organize what promised to be the largest anti-Asian demonstration in the history of British Columbia.²³

On September 7, 1907, a Saturday, some 2000 men congregated on Cambie Street in Vancouver to protest the sudden explosion of Japanese immigration, in an attempt to show the unsympathetic Dunsmuir and business interests just how widespread opposition to this influx was.²⁴ From there, these men marched, as was the plan, to City Hall. By the time the parade reached its destination, approximately six or seven thousand men had joined the protest, out of a total city population of slightly over 26,000.²⁵ At City Hall, prominent anti-Asian activists made a host of inflammatory speeches. They whipped up the crowd with such utterances as “if something is not done to stop the influx, it will go so far as to see the pulpit in the hands of the Japanese.”²⁶ Playing in the background were the sounds of “Rule Britannia,” and an effigy of Dunsmuir was burned to popular acclaim.²⁷ Very shortly thereafter, a young boy threw a brick through the window of a Chinese-owned shop located close to City Hall.²⁸

The Chinese, however, were not the immediate target of the crowd, by now more aptly characterized as a mob. This is revealed by its rather swift relocation to “Little Tokyo. There, approximately one thousand men, egged on by numerous

²³ Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was...*, p. 72.

²⁴ *Ibid* p. 72; Howard Sugimoto, *Japanese Immigration, the Vancouver Riots and Canadian Diplomacy* (New York: Arno Press, 1978), p. 115.

²⁵ Ward, *White Canada Forever...*, p. 68; Vancouver Island History, <http://www.vihistory.ca/content/documents/abstract1901.php>, accessed March 12, 2008.

²⁶ Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was...*, p. 73. This is a quote from a speech made by the Rev. H.W. Fraser, whose anti-Asian sentiments have been outlined earlier in the chapter.

²⁷ Ormsby, *British Columbia...*, p. 351; Reksten, *The Dunsmuir Saga*, p. 219.

²⁸ Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was...*, p. 73.

onlookers, proceeded to destroy many of the stores owned by Japanese proprietors. At first, the Japanese residents “employed restraint.” As the damage to their homes and businesses mounted, however, they started to unleash a barrage of stones, bricks, bottles and wood on their attackers.²⁹ The police, who initially were impotent in curtailing the violence the mob inflicted on the Japanese – either unwillingly or not – finally gained the upper hand after several hours of unrest transpired. The marauders, in the face of this official restraint of their vandalism and the tenacity of the Japanese in countering their attack, finally dispersed as dusk descended on the city.³⁰ Based on figures compiled after the riots had ended, \$1,553.58 in actual damages and \$7,482.42 in indirect losses (such as missed business revenue) were suffered by the Japanese community as a consequence of the mob’s violence.³¹

The Royal Commission of 1908 and Its Recommendations

The federal government quickly ordered an investigation into the riot and the conditions that caused it to erupt. The Canadian Prime Minister at the time, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, was eager to quash any affront in Japan such as that expressed by the Hochi Shimbun, which claimed that “the humiliation [to Japan] accompanying the damage caused by [the riot] was beyond words,” not to mention the need to reassure Whitehall of Canada’s loyalty to imperial interests, Laurier “made it clear that his government

²⁹ Sugimoto, Japanese Immigration..., pp. 123-126.

³⁰ *Ibid* pp. 126, 127; Adachi, The Enemy that Never Was..., pp. 74, 75; Patricia Roy, A White Man’s Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989), p. 195.

³¹ Adachi, The Enemy that Never Was..., p. 127.

would spare no effort to prevent recurrences of such riots, and it quickly began work on compensation for damages caused.”³² Laurier dispatched his deputy Minister of Labor, the future Prime Minister William Mackenzie King, to serve as the head of a royal commission in charge of assessing the damage caused by the riots and recommending solutions to prevent any future racially motivated violence.

King initially held reservations about heading to Vancouver. Even after he resigned himself to heading the commission, he did so already knowing what the ultimate solution should be. In his diary, over a week before he left for Vancouver, he wrote, “most of the talk was on the Oriental labour question & the obligations of Empire it involved. It becomes plainer every day we are at the dividing of the ways. Must hold to the Empire or become part of the U.S. I am for the preservation of the Empire.”³³ He knew that Canada had to adhere to its imperial obligations as spelled out in the alliance and commercial agreements in place between the British Empire and Japan. King also understood that he had to placate the obvious concerns of the Japanese diplomatic community in Vancouver over not only the physical safety of the Japanese

³² The Governor General of Canada at the time, the 4th Earl Grey, wrote to the Colonial Secretary Lord Elgin indicating that “in B.C., the people appear to have lost their heads,” in an attempt to localize and thus minimize such anti-Asian sentiment on the part of the Canadian people. National Archives of Canada (NAC), MSS 85, letter dated October 1, 1907. Whitehall evidently needed to be assuaged. The assessment of the riots in the British press, which undoubtedly weighed heavily on the Colonial and the Foreign Office, lambasted the recent violence in Vancouver. “The Times of London ridiculed the idea that a few thousand Japanese were likely to turn British Columbia into a Mongolian province, and the Daily Telegraph eviscerated ‘the sheer savagery’ of the ‘shameful and unprovoked attacks.’” Source: *Ibid* p. 78; Iino, “Japan’s Reaction...,” pp 38, 40.

³³ William Lyon Mackenzie King, The Mackenzie King Diaries, 1893-1931 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, c. 1973), p. 102 (September 24, 1907). The “talk” referred to here was a dinner party held at the Hanbury-Williams.

in the city but also regarding the significant damage inflicted on Japan's honor and Japanese relations with both Ottawa and London.

By the same token, King also sympathized with the position British Columbia held towards Asian immigration, and he shared their opinion that even the mere presence of Japanese immigrants would naturally dilute the ties of tradition, kinship and ancestry that bound Canada to the Empire. In addition, he realized that something had to be done to regain some confidence on the part of the British Columbian electorate in the ability of the federal government to at the very least regulate and control the numbers of Japanese immigrants who arrived in the province, if only to forestall the repeat of such ugly incidents.

Such conflicting priorities certainly occupied his mind when he officially inaugurated the hearings of the commission in Vancouver on October 22, 1907. Over the next eleven days, the commission reviewed 107 separate claims for reimbursement for damages incurred as a result of the riot. This fulfilled the first mandate established by Ottawa for the commission – to determine the amount of damage inflicted by the rioters and to compensate those directly affected by the riots.³⁴ Once this relatively straightforward matter was completed, King then moved on to the second item on the commission's agenda; namely, the need "to conduct an inquiry into the methods by which the said Oriental workers have been induced to migrate to Canada during the

³⁴ Sugimoto, Japanese Immigration..., p. 160.

present year.”³⁵ Starting on November 11, 1907, and lasting through the 30th of that month, King and his aides attempted to ascertain how many Asians, in particular Japanese, had arrived in Canada, why they decided to leave Japan in the first place, and how and who recruited them to immigrate to British Columbia.³⁶

The commission found that 11,440 Asians arrived in Canada between January and October inclusive of 1907. Out of this figure, 8125 were Japanese.³⁷ The Commission then proceeded to lay much of the blame for this explosion in the numbers of Japanese immigrants to British Columbia squarely at the feet of the Canadian Nippon Supply Company, Ltd., an organization that serendipitously was chartered on December 17, 1906.³⁸ This company, according to the findings of the commission, managed to trick the Japanese government into issuing passports above and beyond its self-imposed limitation because the Canadian Nippon Supply Company convinced it that the extra immigrants were needed to fulfill contracts between emigration companies in Japan and Canadian companies who needed their labor, for example the Dunsmuir Coal Company.³⁹ The Japanese government considered contract workers to be exempt from any unofficial restrictions on emigration it either respected or would honor.

³⁵ *Ibid* p. 165.

³⁶ *Ibid* p. 167.

³⁷ William Lyon Mackenzie King, “Report by W.L. Mackenzie King, C.M.G., Commissioner Appointed to Enquire into the Methods by Which Oriental Labourers have been Induced to Come to Canada,” 3-8-20. Source: Iino, “Japan’s Reaction...,” p. 42.

³⁸ Sugimoto, Japanese Immigration..., p. 169.

³⁹ *Ibid* pp. 174, 175.

The commission also found that despite the appearance of an influx of Japanese immigrants that the above numbers imply, the truth was that the majority of the Japanese who arrived in British Columbia were either in transit, en route to the United States or returning to Japan, or they arrived on ships departing from Hawaii. This latter point-of-fact is important, because according to the unofficial quota restricting Japanese immigration to Canada that had been in place for most of the decade, only those Japanese migrants traveling directly from Japan to British Columbia were considered by Japan as being covered by that agreement. In making this distinction, the Royal Commission apparently intended to mitigate the scale and scope of the “yellow invasion” in the eyes of the public.⁴⁰ When this is coupled with the findings that placed much of the blame for this “influx” on the hands of unscrupulous commercial interests, it becomes rather clear that the commissioners certainly strove to downplay any significant role the Japanese government may or may not have played in encouraging its subjects to immigrate to Canada. This distinction allowed diplomatic niceties to be followed and imperial priorities as far as maintaining the Anglo-Japanese Alliance were concerned to be preserved.

On the other hand, the commission conceded, for British Columbia’s sake, that that province was incapable of absorbing the numbers of immigrants from Japan that had been arriving there in recent years, and that steps needed to be taken to ensure that such an influx of Japanese would not be repeated. By the same token, this perceived

⁴⁰ Ormsby, British Columbia..., p. 352.

“invasion” was not considered to be a deliberate act on the part of a rising, aggressive power bent on making the province an overseas prefecture of the Japanese Empire. The riot was declared an aberration, a by-product of unusual circumstances, rather than being indicative of long-standing rivalries and prejudices between whites and Japanese, between West and East, and between labor and capital that had been simmering in the province for the past several decades.

The “Gentleman’s Agreement of 1908”

The path was now cleared for the third plank of Ottawa’s strategy to proceed. In stark contrast to the public hearings and resultant high visibility of the Royal Commission and its findings, this particular solution would be achieved in a much less public and more subtler fashion. While King was in British Columbia collecting his data and assessing blame as to who and what caused the riots to erupt in the first place, his boss, Minister of Labor Rodolphe Lemieux, was dispatched to Tokyo to conduct talks with the Japanese government and the British ambassador there. He was sent to impress to the Japanese authorities the urgent need for stricter control over the emigration of its laborers, so that the good relations that Canada, the British Empire, and Japan enjoyed could continue unabated.

Remarkably, in light of the riots, the Canadian and Japanese envoys understood the delicate nature of these issues. They agreed that an unstated (and consequently unpublicized) policy that met the needs of all parties involved would be the best

solution to defuse the situation.⁴¹ As the negotiations progressed, this “spirit of compromise” manifested itself in two important fashions. The Canadian delegation early on conceded the point that the only practical solution was to accept Japan’s proposal for voluntary self-imposed controls, rather than to follow the futile attempt to negotiate an absolute numerical limit that British Columbia and many Canadians clamored for.⁴² Canada’s initial request to impose a quota on the numbers of Japanese immigrants rested on shaky ground at best. On the one hand, the royal commission operating in Vancouver led by King uncovered unspecified evidence that some emigration companies in Japan had “as managers and stockholders...the leading businessmen and politicians of Japan,” who thus had a vested interest, as Dunsmuir and others were similarly accused, in allowing unrestricted immigration to continue unchecked.⁴³ King himself said that “the Japanese government was privy to the evasion of the understanding with the government of Canada on the subject of immigration.”⁴⁴ This information only confirmed the suspicion of many, especially in British Columbia, that Japan simply could not be trusted to keep its word on this matter, especially seeing as it only took that nation five years to turn a blind eye to the voluntary caps on emigration to Canada it had previously negotiated.

⁴¹ Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was...*, p. 81.

⁴² Sugimoto, *Japanese Immigration...*, p. 192.

⁴³ Donald Avery, *Reluctant Host: Canada’s Response to Immigrant Workers, 1896-1914* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995), p. 49.

⁴⁴ Source: Sugimoto, *Japanese Immigration...*, p. 190.

On the other hand, the federal government from an early stage was careful to stress that the basis for any regulation on immigration from Asia rested solely on economic grounds, and not on those of race or biology. This stood in stark contrast to the “great white wall[s]” based explicitly on racial grounds that Australia immediately surrounded itself as soon as that dominion was created in 1901, widely known as the “White Australia” policy, and that the western states in the United States were starting to erect piece by piece in that very decade.⁴⁵ While the subtler Canadian approach certainly helped in avoiding diplomatic clashes with Tokyo and was more palatable to those in the Colonial and Foreign Offices in London, it made it much more difficult to justify restrictive quotas on immigration from one nation in particular.

Unlike Australia which at the federal and at the state levels conceived of that Dominion as being a “British” preserve in a bio-cultural sense, Canada, with its large French population and historic exchange of population with the United States, could not be so selective, to the chagrin of British Columbia. Throughout the first decade of the twentieth century Canada had in place a policy of almost unrestricted immigration from Europe. Indeed, “between 1895 and 1913 over 2.5 million immigrants arrived in Canada – an enormous number relative to Canada’s 1911 population of 7.2 million.”⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Patricia Roy, The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man’s Province, 1914-1941 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003), p. 6.

⁴⁶ Wayne Cornelius, Philip Martin and James Hollifield, eds., Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 122. This figure of 2.5 million includes a sizeable number of immigrants who used Canada as a transit point and who ultimately settled in the United States.

In light of this policy, it would be problematic for Ottawa to justify immigration quotas based on nationality at this particular juncture.

While Canada continued to oppose immigration restrictions solely based on racial criteria, to the consternation of British Columbia, Ottawa did raise the head tax imposed on all Chinese immigrants to a prohibitive \$500 per person in 1903; this effectively ended immigration to Canada from China.⁴⁷ The Japanese worried such a levy would be extended to them. They posed the following question to both Canadian and British legislators: would Japan be accorded the same respect given to a European power, or did she rank lower than a Balkan nation in the eyes of Ottawa? If Canada, according to the Ottawa Citizen, risked “being turned into a social sewage farm to purify the rinsings and leavings of rotten European states,” then how could it reckon that it was not, in the words of Japanese consul to Vancouver Shimzu, “unfair and unjust to legislate, or even attempt to legislate, discriminately against the subject of the country which I have the honour to represent here, whose progress in civilization has excited the admiration of the world, and who has been internationally recognized as the equal of any country[?]”⁴⁸ A compromise position had to be found that would not

⁴⁷ Kay Anderson, Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980 (Montreal and Kingston, ON, Canada): McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), p. 109.

⁴⁸ In Dominion of Canada, Documents Relating to the Recent Disallowance of Certain Statutes Passed by the Legislature of British Columbia (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1899), p. 4. Letter to Prime Minister Laurier, dated March 14, 1898. See also Pierre Berton, The Promised Land: Settling the West, 1896-1914 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1984), p. 54.

disrupt the veneer of magnanimity in Canada's immigration policy, which reflected in principle "the imperial philosophy of equality of all."⁴⁹

Japan too also felt pressure to modify its position on accepting no hindrances of the free movement of its subjects. This stance largely rested on the fact that Canada was a signatory to the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation of 1894.⁵⁰ During the negotiations with Japan, Lemieux cabled Prime Minister Laurier and informed him of the Japanese view that "to enter into a formal written contract [regarding immigration restrictions], as this would be to cancel without compensation a part of the rights to which [Japan] is entitled by treaty and which to forego would, in her eyes, be to submit to a national indignity."⁵¹

Japan also knew that while the federal Liberal government acted quickly in convening a royal commission and dispatching Lemieux to Tokyo, the national Conservative Party and even the Liberal Party in British Columbia started to "court the exclusionists" who demanded an explicit federal restriction or an outright ban on Asian immigration.⁵² Japan was well aware of the winds of change should the Conservatives win the next national election, due within the year. As such, Japanese officials sought to strike a deal while a more accommodating government was still in office.

⁴⁹ Robert A. Huttenback, Racism and Empire: White Settlers and Colored Immigrants in the British Self-Governing Colonies, 1830-1910 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976), p. 248.

⁵⁰ Sugimoto, Japanese Immigration..., p. 186.

⁵¹ NAC, MSS 91 (Laurier Papers), No. 132183.

⁵² Indeed, in the 1908 federal election, the Conservative Party seized on the issue of continued Japanese immigration to gain a majority of the province's seats in the federal Parliament, the first time this had occurred in seventeen years. Source: Avery and Neary, "Laurier, Borden..." pp. 24, 75.

The Japanese also initially counted on Great Britain's ability to put pressure on the Canadian government to fully comply with the notion of "fair play" and equality of treatment as enshrined in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation. Unfortunately for the Japanese, public opinion in Britain had changed from championing Japan as a valuable ally in the Pacific during the Russo-Japanese War to fear of Japan itself as a power with expansionist designs on Britain's Pacific possessions.⁵³ Such hopes in Britain's ability to rein in its Dominions' more racist tendencies had on occasion worked, most notably with Canada. As the Dominions matured in the early twentieth century, however, the influence of the Colonial Office, particularly over matters of purely local domestic concern, diminished.⁵⁴ After all, while Britain on occasion made its protests against the "White Australia" policy, it ultimately held little sway over that Dominion's tenacious determination to remain an exclusively "British" preserve. Under these circumstances, Japan was ready to strike a deal while the window of compromise still existed.

The middle ground that Canada and Japan arrived at, with the approval of Whitehall, was a "Gentleman's Agreement" which "limited and regulated immigration" from Japan to Canada.⁵⁵ On January 21, 1908, Lemieux issued his report on the negotiations to the House of Commons. According to the compact brokered by

⁵³ O'Brien, The Anglo-Japanese Alliance..., p. 58; Iino, "Japan's Reaction...", p. 44.

⁵⁴ Huttenback, Racism and Empire..., p. 318.

⁵⁵ Margaret Regina Murphy, Inter-group Attitudes and International Trade: A Study of Vancouver's Attitude Towards the Japanese, (Ottawa: Unpublished thesis, Carleton University, 1998), p. 63.

Lemieux and his counterparts in the Japanese Foreign Ministry, all immigration from Japan to Canada would cease, with the following exceptions:

1. Prior residents in Canada and their wives and children;
2. Those engaged by Japanese residents for bona fide personal and domestic service;
3. Contract emigrants whose names and the standing of their employers were satisfactorily specified; and
4. Agricultural laborers brought in by Japanese landholders in Canada.⁵⁶

Within those proscribed categories of permissible immigrants from Japan, even further limitations were imposed. For example, “Japanese consuls in Canada were not to issue certificates for contract laborers unless those contracts were approved by the Canadian government.”⁵⁷ Also, for each one hundred acres of land owned by the Japanese in Canada, only ten laborers could be imported.⁵⁸

Lemieux was able to make known to his parliamentary colleagues and to the electorate of British Columbia the reaching of an understanding between him and the Foreign Ministry that the combined total of domestic and agricultural laborers allowed

⁵⁶ Source: Klaus H. Pringsheim, Neighbors Across the Pacific: The Development of Economic and Political Relations Between Canada and Japan (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), p. 18.

⁵⁷ This provision was inserted to avoid any sort of misunderstanding, like that which existed in, for example, the particular case regarding the Dunsmuir Coal Company’s dealings with the Canadian Nippon Supply Company, Ltd., over how many workers were actually imported with guaranteed jobs awaiting them in Canada. With the requirement that the Canadian government must approve all labor contracts, it was hoped that only laborers with legitimate jobs promised them by certifiable employers would immigrate, thus limited the activities of unscrupulous companies who earned their profits by transporting as many Japanese as possible, an activity that was seen as directly contributing to the tensions that drove the Vancouver riots.

⁵⁸ *Ibid* p. 18.

to migrate from Japan to Canada would be capped at 400 per year.⁵⁹ Due to Japanese sensitivity on this topic, this number would never appear in any formal document. This quota of “400,” however, was widely circulated by the popular media and referenced regularly in numerous political speeches. This was done in order to ensure full compliance by all parties concerned so that future public censure in British Columbia would occur if that number was breeched.

The failure to codify this limit led to great consternation on the part of those who objected to placing what in essence would be a blind faith in Japan’s ability (or willingness) to restrict emigration. After all, Japan had only recently been caught turning a blind eye to its previous attempt to restrict the movement of its subjects to Canada. The federal leader of the Conservative Party, Robert Borden, insisted on adding an amendment to the resolution before the House of Commons that read:

That in the opinion of this House, Canada should not enter into or accede to any treaty which deprives Parliament of the control of immigration into this country....That this House...desires nevertheless to record its strong protest against a policy under which our wage earning population cannot be protected from destructive invading competition except by entreating the forbearance and aid of a foreign government⁶⁰

This ultimately unsuccessful motion represented an attempt to reassure those, especially in British Columbia, who feared that Japan could not be trusted to keep its word. It was generally accepted as common knowledge there that “their word is not dependable and their motives always ulterior. They have the gloss of politeness and extreme courtesy, a

⁵⁹ Sugimoto, *Japanese Immigration...*, p. 198.

⁶⁰ *Debates of the House...*, LXXIII (1907-8, v.2), col. 2044. Source: *Ibid* pp. 203, 204.

Frenchified exterior of conduct; but remove ever so little of cuticle and you reveal the Tartar.”⁶¹ The Vancouver World, in a special “Exclusion” edition, made it known that “should...a change in policy be adopted...by the Japanese government whereby Japanese laborers may again be permitted to emigrate to Canada the welfare of the Province of British Columbia imperatively demands that effective measures be adopted to take the place of the inhibition now imposed by the Japanese government.”⁶²

These skeptics eventually were won over by the passage, ironically enough on the very same day that the “Exclusion” edition was published, of a new order-in-council promulgated by the governor-general that embodied Canada’s more, it was supposed, “benign” methods of restricting immigration. It introduced the notion of the “continuous journey.” The order-in-council stipulated that “whenever in the opinion of the Minister, the condition of the labour market in Canada is such as to...render [it] necessary...immigrants may be prohibited from landing or coming into Canada unless they come from the country of their birth or citizenship by a continuous journey and on through tickets purchased before leaving the country of their birth or citizenship.”⁶³ In plainer English, this meant that potential immigrants had to purchase their passage in their native country, and they had to arrive directly from there in order for them to legally enter Canada. This in effect halted the efforts of immigrant recruiters who, in their previous attempts to circumvent previous quotas Japan had imposed on emigration

⁶¹ E.R. Gosnell, “British Columbia and British International Relations,” in the Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science (Jan. 1913), p. 12.

⁶² January 8, 1908, p. 2.

⁶³ Source: Huttenback, Racism and Empire..., p. 187.

to North America, first transported them to Hawaii.⁶⁴ Also, very few steamship companies ran ships that sailed directly from Japan to British Columbia without making a stop for fuel or further trading opportunities, a respite that would render that vessel ineligible to transport Japanese immigrants to Canada under the order's provisions.

While this order was initially disallowed because the governor-general did not possess the power to regulate immigration, it became law two months later when the federal Parliament passed a broader immigration act that contained the exact same provisions, with the extra stipulation that all immigrants from Asia were now required to possess \$200 upon disembarking.⁶⁵ This coincided with the passage in Japan of new regulations that required emigration companies to pay a steep deposit of ¥50,000 in order to recruit laborers in that country. The combination of these actions immediately had the effect of reducing the number of recruiting companies in Japan to plummet from seventeen or more practically overnight to three.⁶⁶ With the Hawaiian loophole closed, fewer companies involved in the recruitment and transportation of Japanese immigrants, a paucity of ships now eligible to provide the required "continuous journey," and a solemn pledge by Japan to restrict the emigration of its own citizens – to both Canada and the United States – the Canadian negotiators were sufficiently placated.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Ward, *White Canada Forever...*, p. 76.

⁶⁵ Huttenback, *Racism and Empire...*, pp. 187, 188.

⁶⁶ Sugimoto, *Japanese Immigration...*, p. 202.

⁶⁷ The agreement concluded with the United States, which came into effect in the summer of 1908, restricted the granting of passports by the Japanese government to its subjects who wished to go to the United States to "merchants, students, diplomats, and tourists; bona fide Japanese residents in the United States who returned to visit Japan and wished to go back to the United States; parents, wives and children of such residents; and so-called 'settled agriculturists' who were special farmers bound mainly for

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Any initial worries that Japan would once again renege on its pledge to restrict emigration partially dissipated when it was announced that immigration from Japan fell dramatically, from 7601 in the fiscal year ending in March 1908 (which would have covered the period immediately before and during the riots) to 495 total the following year.⁶⁸ In fact, over the course of most of the following decade, more Japanese actually left Canada than there.⁶⁹ With fewer Japanese arriving in the province, and consequently fewer competitors for jobs, the intensity of anti-Asian agitation dimmed somewhat in the years immediately preceding World War I. Compared to the years immediately preceding the riots, the number of articles devoted to the “Yellow Peril” in the newspapers of British Columbia, and the fiery rhetoric they encapsulated, started to fall after the efficacy of the Gentlemen’s Agreement seemed secure. Indeed, even Earl Grey, the Governor General, forwarded to Lord Elgin a copy of a report he received a few months after Lemieux’s recommendations were implemented stating that, as far as

Texas.” With the simultaneous implementation of restrictive covenants with both the United States and Canada, yet another means to evade exclusionary measures on either side of the 49th parallel to meet the demands for Japanese labor in North America – by simply increasing the supply to whichever country had in place the laxer restrictions at the time, and then importing Japanese laborers over a border that was completely unregulated as far as immigration was concerned – was now closed to the less scrupulous. For more information on the American gentlemen’s agreement, please see Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924* (New York: The Free Press, 1988), pp. 71, 72, and Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), pp. 124-126.

⁶⁸ Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was...*, p. 82.

⁶⁹ “Many Japanese Leave Canada,” in the *Vancouver Daily Province*, May 6, 1922, p. 7.

the situation in the ground in Vancouver was concerned, “for the present the glass is set fair.”⁷⁰

Racial tensions were undoubtedly dampened by a change in the economic winds the province then enjoyed. British Columbia started to experience an economic boom from 1908 onwards. Capital poured into the province from the United States and Europe, and new enterprises were founded apace. The pressing need for labor the province had experienced since its very founding, a need that hitherto could apparently only be met by importing Asian workers, was suddenly less of a problem, as the European immigrants who poured into western Canada started to spill into British Columbia. As the historian Douglas Cole points out, “the wave of immigration that flooded the province in the years before the First World War reaffirmed British Columbia’s Britishness.”⁷¹ This truly was a “prosperous, expansive and tranquil Edwardian age.”⁷²

Yet, important questions remained unanswered. Would Japan continue to adhere to its informal obligations? Would the boom times that British Columbia was experiencing, which concomitantly reduced drastically competition for jobs, continue unabated? Would Sifton’s policies of practically unrestricted immigration from Europe and the United States, coupled with apparently effective caps on the importation of

⁷⁰ Source: Ormsby, British Columbia..., p. 352.

⁷¹ In Hugh J.M. Johnston, ed., The Pacific Province: A History of British Columbia (Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1996), p. 355.

⁷² Ormsby, British Columbia..., p. 371.

Asian labor, finally produce the long-sought after goal on the part of many to create a “White Man’s Province”?

Just as that picture to many seemed attainable, clouds were gathering on the horizon.

Prior to 1907, Japanese immigration consisted mainly of adult males, but now the ‘gentlemen’s agreement’ effectively limited their entry. But since it placed no limit on the number of wives entering Canada, large groups of women began to migrate under the ‘picture bride’ system, changing the nature of the life of the Japanese. And with the natural consequence of the high birth rate, packed within a short period, another argument for exclusion or expulsion was ready for exploitation.⁷³

The author continues, noting the precarious state of this tranquility:

If the agitation had begun on the premise that the Japanese were ‘invading’ the province as part of a plan to engulf the whites, now their natural fecundity was to be cast in the lurid light of a sinister bent on the part of the ‘scheming’ Orientals to flood the Pacific coast with babies. Because they were orderly, thrifty and energetic, because they married, set up homes and raised children, the Japanese became more dangerous, more of a menace, more of a threat to white supremacy. This was the supreme paradox.⁷⁴

This contradiction lay partially dormant for the time being. But it still existed. Once the economic boom British Columbia was enjoying prior to and during the conflict collapsed, the “Japanese menace” would once again rear its ugly head. So, too, would attempts by the provincial government to recruit Scottish crofters in order to counter this “Yellow Peril.”

⁷³ Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was...*, p. 85.

⁷⁴ *Ibid* p. 85.

CHAPTER VI: EMPIRE PROBLEMS: THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH

When Great Britain declared war on Germany on August 4, 1914, it did so automatically on behalf of the entire British Empire. To make this official in Canada, the Governor General, the Duke of Connaught, issued a proclamation the following day, urging Canadians to rapidly organize and mobilize to defend the “mother country” in both the emotional and often in the physical sense. Their response can be epitomized by citing the words of the former Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier, who said that Canada “goes at once, and it goes in the classical language of the British answer to the call of duty: ‘Ready, aye, ready.’”¹ In Australia, not even that action was taken. Britain was at war, so Australia was as well, no questions asked.

World War I and British Columbia

As far as Canada was concerned, almost nowhere in the Dominion was this call more heeded than in British Columbia.² The province’s males eagerly enlisted in the Canadian armed forces, at a rate in 1914 of ninety per thousand population, far higher than any other province.³ Pride in being loyal members of the British Empire certainly

¹ Source: Philip Wigley, Canada and the Transition to Commonwealth: British-Canadian Relations, 1917-1926 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 53.

² Hugh J.M. Johnston., ed. The Pacific Province: A History of British Columbia (Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1996), p. 197.

³ Jean Barman, The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), pp. 198, 199.

explains this eager response. To quote the then-provincial premier Sir Richard

McBride:

Just so soon as war was declared, there was absolutely no time lost...in taking an active and lively interest in what the province might undertake to help the Dominion and the Motherland. I would not for one moment suggest that British Columbia was at all in advance of other sections of Canada, but I would emphasise the fact that she did not by any means lag behind.”⁴

A sense of exuberance and exhilaration swept across British Columbia in those halcyon days of August, as the province stepped up to fight this “righteous war.”⁵

Part of the enthusiasm that surrounded the news that war had erupted in Europe can be explained by the almost universal certainty that this war would be brief and relatively “painless.” For the past one hundred years, all wars waged between European powers had been limited affairs, often fought far afield, between professional armies, with minimal disruption to civilians or to national economies. When this was combined with a near-absolute faith at the time in the efficacy of technology and a certain swagger and confidence in the British Navy (not to mention in Britain itself), it was assumed that an Allied victory would come shortly, and the *pax Britannica* would continue unabated and unchallenged. The historian George Woodcock describes the ebullient rush to arms the province experienced, with a touch of sarcasm:

The remittance men – those reprehensible young English who had been ‘sent to the colonies’ for the benefit of their disapproving families – volunteered almost to a man to defend the land that had expelled them. Other more purposeful

⁴ Excerpt from a speech delivered to the Royal Colonial Institute on May 9, 1916. Source: Sir Harry Wilson and H.T. Montague Bell, eds., *United Empire: The Royal Colonial Institute Journal*, v. VII (1916) (London: Sir Issac Pitman and Sons, Ltd., 1917), p. 404.

⁵ Barman, *The West Beyond the West...*, p. 198.

Englishmen who had already put down roots in their new country were equally eager; the tale told of Wallachin, the fruit-rearing settlement of genteel English people established under Lord Aberdeen's patronage, where all 43 younger men in the little group of 150 people left their new orchards and young wives and children and never returned, is not an exceptional one. A fifth of students in the newly opened University of British Columbia left immediately after registering, and four members of the legislative assembly exchanged their comfortable benches for dugouts in Flanders.⁶

Almost everyone at the time was of the opinion that "all would be over in a few months, if not in a few weeks."⁷

By November of that year, however, after the long lines of trenches had been dug across northern France and the casualties had mounted, it became readily apparent that such expectations had proven to be premature.⁸ The economies of all combatants had to be dramatically and suddenly reoriented to support the overarching war effort. Men and women had to be recruited and later conscripted to wage the war, industry and agriculture ramped up to feed the troops and support the war machines, transport redirected to supply the armies. Furthermore, this had to occur right when most ships were commandeered for military use and available labor forces shrank due to enlistment. Somehow, however, this quick transformation was by and large achieved.

In British Columbia, this reorientation had the side effect of creating opportunities for certain sections of the population that were previously viewed as either unassimilable or redundant. The Asian community of the province, particularly the

⁶ British Columbia: A History of the Province (Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1990), pp. 191, 192.

⁷ A.J.P. Taylor, English History 1914-1945 (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 4.

⁸ *Ibid* p. 12.

Japanese, suddenly became necessary to both labor and capital. With such a large percentage of the white male population of the province absent, even those employers who had up until the outbreak of war been the most loathe to hire Asian workers now found themselves suddenly forced to do so, seeing as no other alternative was available to them. The immigration boom from Europe in the late Edwardian Era that hitherto had provided these employers with cheap white workers was one of the first victims of the conflict; migration came to a halt during the war. This new scarcity of labor created a sudden demand for Asian labor throughout Canada.⁹ So severe was this shortage that the Canadian Government seriously considered in 1916 importing 50,000 Chinese laborers to work in its factories and mines. This scheme ultimately was abandoned, but its very proposal in and of itself marks a dramatic shift in attitudes towards Asian labor that the war engendered.¹⁰

With many white British Columbians serving overseas, promoted to management positions or entering the vastly increased government bureaucracy that the war generated, the Japanese were prevailed upon to fill the vacancies these “white” workers left, most notably in retail and in agriculture. Nowhere, however, did new opportunities emerge in greater numbers than in the province’s teeming fisheries. Prior to 1914, Japanese fishermen were almost exclusively relegated to the most onerous and least remunerative sectors of that industry, such as gutting or catching sardines and

⁹ Ken Adachi, The Enemy that Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), p. 101.

¹⁰ *Ibid* p. 101.

other small fish. During the war, however, with their “Anglo” competitors gone, and with demand for canned fish to feed the troops soaring, the Japanese rushed in to fill the vacuum. In doing so, they came to enjoy unprecedented earnings.¹¹ In fact, the Japanese were so successful in making inroads in the province’s fisheries that by 1919, Japanese fishermen received 3267 fishing licenses. This accounted for over half of all the permits issued by the provincial government that year.¹² This is a remarkable number, especially when considering the fact that the Canadian census of 1921 indicated that the Japanese population of British Columbia was approximately 15,000, out of an overall provincial population of 524,582.¹³ So long as the Japanese performed a vital service and were “of value,” then their presence was tolerated by the white population of the province.¹⁴ As the historian J. Arthur Lower rather succinctly observes, “opposition to the Orientals was not as extreme during the First World War as labourers were needed in the short-handed war industries.”¹⁵

Ironically enough, the Japanese community in the province expanded its presence in and contribution to the provincial economy largely due to their being excluded from serving in the armed forces. In 1914, the Canadian Japanese

¹¹ *Ibid* p. 105.

¹² Charles Young and Helen Reid, The Japanese Canadians (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1938), p. 43.

¹³ Source: Canada, Census of Canada, 1921-1941. As cited in Patricia Roy, The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man’s Province, 1914-41 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003), p. 242 and Barman, The West Beyond the West..., p. 379.

¹⁴ Charles A. Price., The Great White Walls are Built: Restrictive Immigration to North America and Australasia, 1836-1888 (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974), p. 88; Young and Reid, The Japanese Canadians, p. 34.

¹⁵ Canada on the Pacific Rim (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1975), p. 183.

Association, the leading organization for the Japanese community in British Columbia, asked the wartime prime minister Sir Robert Borden to allow British subjects of Japanese origin or descent to enlist in the Canadian army and navy. The federal government denied this request, due in large part to the fear in British Columbia that the enlistment of the Japanese might lead to their clamoring for the franchise as a reward for their military service, which might in turn lead to the end of legal discrimination against them.¹⁶ Many in the province were also afraid of the dangers of arming a population that supposedly was working towards the goal of “the conquest of [North America].”¹⁷ Lastly, a substantial number of white British Columbians realized that in allowing the Japanese to serve side-by-side with white troops in the trenches in Europe, they would in essence be conceding equality in status to them, a concept many of them felt to be as ludicrous as it was anathema to even entertain.¹⁸ Consequently, the Japanese remained in British Columbia, where they eagerly reaped the rewards the booming wartime economy afforded them.

The war, while it lasted, also led to a rehabilitation of sorts of the image Japan held in British Columbia. In August 1914, there was widespread fear the German Pacific fleet, based in their Chinese port of Tsingtao, would strike at British interests throughout the Pacific. The British were well aware that their naval forces in that

¹⁶ Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was...*, p. 102.

¹⁷ “The Future of the Republic at Stake: Article I,” in the *Sacramento Bee*, June 9, 1919. Source: Valentine Stuart McClatchy, ed., *Four Anti-Japanese Pamphlets* (New York: Arno Press, 1978), p. 23.

¹⁸ E.R. Gosnell, “British Columbia and British International Relations,” in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (Jan. 1913), p. 12.

theater were at best only equal to those the Admiral Maximilian von Spee, head of the German East Asia Squadron, commanded.

Recognizing this, the British thus relied on their ally Japan to redress this imbalance. The British Government asked the Japanese almost immediately after the war erupted to invoke the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 to counter potential German aggression in the Pacific Ocean. On August 15, Japan issued an ultimatum demanding Germany withdraw its “vessels from Japanese or Chinese waters” and surrender their leased territory of Kiaochow [in China] within one month.¹⁹ The ultimatum was rejected, and Japan entered World War I on the side of the Allies a week later.²⁰ Almost immediately, Japan dispatched two warships – the *Izumo* and the *Asama* – to protect British Columbia from German attack. Many white British Columbians were privately aghast that the Japanese, seen until then as the primary military and racial threat to their security, were now actually entrusted with its defense. For the time being, however, and with the vaunted Royal Navy preoccupied with the war in Europe and thus unable to fulfill its mandate to provide for the province’s defense, such fears were brushed aside – so long as Japan was “of value.”

World War I in the Outer Hebrides

Over 7000 miles away, World War I wrought similar transformations in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland. In 1914, the economic situation of these islands looked

¹⁹ Phillips Payson O’Brien, ed. *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1922* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), p. 163.

²⁰ Ian Nish, *Alliance in Decline: A Study in Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1908-1923* (London: The Athlone Press, 1972), pp. 122, 123.

grim. J.P. Day, a British bureaucrat dispatched to survey the archipelago, painted a remarkably dreary picture about the continued destitution that plagued the Hebrides.

Today rates are higher than they have ever been and continue to increase; the fishing industry of the west coast has...stagnated and, if anything, declines. More serious still, the inadequate minute holdings, from which the Napier Commissioners hoped to have the people 'firmly but gently' withdrawn, still exist in very large numbers and the population remains congested. Arrears of rent, both on private and State-owned property, continue to accumulate, though the Land Court is busy canceling them and reducing and re-reducing the rents. The crofters refuse to purchase their holdings, and State purchase has not been a success.²¹

Day continues, describing the acute plight of the Isle of Lewis on the eve of World War I:

Meantime the owners have their income reduced on the one hand by the Land Court and on the other by the increasing rates. Some, at least, are finding it impossible to afford to live on their estates, nor can they get rid of them by selling, since none, not even the State, is willing to buy. There are more landless cottars and squatters in Lewis to-day than ever before, and the population continues to increase.²²

For many Hebrideans, the situation even after the "reforms" of the 1880s could best be described with words like "grief, anger, aspiration, sudden destitution, despair."²³ Their suffering continued to be exacerbated by the unceasing growth of the population of the isles, even in the wake of substantial emigration over the previous century encouraged and at times directed by the British Government.

²¹ Public Administration in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (London: University of London Press, 118), pp. 393, 400. Source: Marjory Harper, Emigration from Scotland between the Wars: Opportunity or Exile? (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 73.

²² *Ibid* p. 73.

²³ John Macleod, Highlanders: A History of the Gaels (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1996), p. 299.

Take for instance the island of Lewis alone, the largest of the Outer Hebrides. In 1911, the population exceeded 35,000 inhabitants.²⁴ Despite the fact that the island possessed a small scale fishing industry and produced Harris tweed, neither of those trades could sustain a growing population. Conditions were so bad that Lewis came to be known throughout Great Britain as “a watchword for poverty and squalor and vulnerability.”²⁵ With its isolated location, scant resources, and a government in power with little inclination to alleviate the plight of those crofter/farmers, the Outer Hebrides in the early 1910s was a place of limited prospects.

The outbreak of hostilities in 1914, however, provided the Hebrideans with new economic opportunities that brightened their horizons considerably, just as the war had for the Japanese in British Columbia. As various European governments had done countless times over the past several centuries in times of war, the British state again turned to the Highland Scot to defend the frontiers of the Empire. Military recruiters descended upon the Hebrides, where they enlisted men at a rate almost unmatched by any other part of Britain. This drive certainly was motivated by the prevailing stereotype of the Highlanders constituting more or less as a reserve of “expendable colonial auxiliaries.”

In 1914 [the Hebrideans] knew only that their country called upon them once again...Lewis men fought in France, Italy, Russia, Egypt, Mesopotamia,

²⁴ *Ibid* p. 304. It should be pointed out that this figure also includes the population of the southernmost third of the island, which due to mountains and fjords practically cutting it off from the rest of the isle is normally considered the separate island of Harris.

²⁵ Eric Richards, The Highland Clearances: People, Landlords and Rural Turmoil, (Edinburgh: Birlinn, Ltd., 2000), p. 189.

Palestine, Greece, Bulgaria and the Dardanelles – many youngsters who had joined up straight from the Nicolson Institute secondary school in Stornoway distinguished themselves at Gallipoli. Lewis sailors died at the Battle of the Falklands, at Jutland and on the Dover Patrol. Their regular Ross-shire regiment, the Seaforth Highlanders, won seventy decorations, including five Military Crosses and four DSOs.²⁶

In fact, the casualty rate of the Highland regiments spanning World War I was “double [that of] the English level.”²⁷

Commenting shortly after the war had ended, the long-serving member of Parliament for the Outer Hebrides, Sir Ian MacPherson, reflected on the significant contributions the Hebrideans made to the British war effort. He reminded his colleagues that “the Highlander is a law-abiding citizen, patriotic, brave and gallant. The minds of most people must go back to about eight years ago, when the country was in dire need, and the most responsive answer came from that part of Scotland.”²⁸ The Hebrideans certainly did not disappoint their English superiors in fulfilling the stereotype assigned to them, though it should be pointed out though that the secure paychecks that came with their service prompted many to enlist, so that they may secure an economic opportunity that had so long been denied themselves and their families. Whatever their motivation, so many Hebrideans answered the call to arms that one sixth of the entire population served their country in the armed forces, a higher proportion, it

²⁶ Roger Hutchison, The Soap Man: Lewis, Harris and Lord Leverhulme (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2003), pp. 64, 65.

²⁷ Murray G.H. Pittock, Celtic Identity and the British Image (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 108. This author also here cites the rather gruesome statistic that, over the centuries, “of the 3 million or so men who served in the Scottish regiments (a good number of whom, it is true, were not Scots) 50 per cent have been killed or wounded.”

²⁸ Journals of the House of Commons (London: Parliament, 1924), v. 169, col. 189, January 16, 1924

was said, than in any other part of the British Empire.”²⁹ In addition, many young women of the Hebrides chose to take part in the war effort, seeking work in the munitions factories in Lowland Scotland and elsewhere in Great Britain.³⁰

The mobilization of such an enormous portion of the local population opened up new opportunities for those who remained on the islands. Seeing as numerous crofts in the Hebrides were vacated for the duration of the conflict, often the children and the elderly stepped in to keep up their cultivation.³¹ This broadening of the labor force could not have come at a more fortuitous time for the Hebrideans. Those who remained on the islands were quickly called upon to boost dramatically their production of fish and other staples. The British, who since the protectionist Corn Laws were repealed in 1846 had relied on the global marketplace and the cheapest and most efficient suppliers to meet its food needs, were suddenly isolated from their trading partners as a result of German submarine warfare. These disruptions to British trade networks occurred just when the nation was struggling to organize and supply its own war engine. These exigencies, combined with an artificially stimulated domestic economy, translated into an explosion in demand for home-grown food and supplies.³² The Hebrides, one of the few parts of Britain that remained rural and pastoral in the 1910s, suddenly found itself to be “of value” to the wider British economy.

²⁹ Nicolson, Lord of the Isles..., p. 46.

³⁰ *Ibid* p. 46.

³¹ *Ibid* p. 46.

³² Michael Brander, The Making of the Highlands (London: The Constable Company, 1980), p. 205.

The catching and curing of herring, a long-moribund industry in Scotland, suddenly became profitable again with the absence of cheaper foreign competitors. Indeed, during the war, for the first time in a century, those who remained on the islands “made good money fishing, and often one successful season would enable a young Hebridean to marry and settle down in a croft of his own.”³³ With the population pressures that had ravaged the island somewhat eased with the call to arms, with a captive market for its produce, and with remittances starting to flow in from those who left the islands to participate in the war effort, it finally started to look as though life on the Hebrides had started to take a positive turn.

World War I and the British Government

At very same time, officials in London discovered that the war revealed gaping inadequacies in the prevailing *laissez-faire* minimalist orthodoxy that had guided the British state throughout the late nineteenth century and into the Edwardian Era. The historian A.J.P. Taylor best characterizes the scope of the transformations World War I wrought, particularly with regard to the relationship between the government and its people.

The mass of the people became, for the first time, active citizens. Their lives were shaped by orders from above; they were required to serve the state instead of pursuing exclusively their own affairs. Five million men entered the armed forces, many of them [though a minority] under conscription. The Englishman’s food was limited, and its quality changed, by government order. His freedom of movement was restricted; his conditions of work prescribed. Some industries were reduced or closed, others artificially fostered. The publication of news was

³³ “Why Starvation Faces the Hebrideans,” in The Daily Province (Vancouver), March 1, 1924, p. 6.

fettered. Streetlights were dimmed: licensed hours were cut down, and the beer watered by order. The very time on the clocks was changed...The state established a hold over its citizens which, though relaxed in peacetime, was never to be removed...The history of the English state and of the English people merged for the first time.³⁴

The activist role the British state found itself forced to play as the war dragged on was certainly a far cry from the attitudes prevalent at the start of the conflict. In those first few months of the war, many would have agreed with Winston Churchill's initial assessment that "fighting Germany was compatible with 'business as usual.'"³⁵

Gradually, however, it became clear that the private sector and a minimalist state were simply unable to meet the needs and the logistics of waging a modern total war on a global scale. National governments emerged during the conflict as the only bodies with the scope and the power to reorient economies and reorganize their citizens. To ensure victory in the war, the British Government extended its authority to a degree unimagined in peacetime in both scale and depth. Central allocation of resources and price-fixing began with munitions and were then extended further and further into the economy as the war deepened. By 1918 two-thirds of the economy and nine-tenths of imports were subject to direction by bodies authorised by government."³⁶ The British war machine required countless weapons, artillery, vehicles, armaments, steel, iron,

³⁴ Taylor, *English History...*, p. 2. I must, for the purposes of this dissertation, point out that Taylor, like many of the English (and others), either used "English" as a synonym for "British," which of course the Scottish subjects of this work might take particular offense with, or he meant to apply these changes in the relationship of the state vis-à-vis its citizenry only to England, which most definitely was not the case. I prefer to attribute this to Taylor's effortless Anglocentrism.

³⁵ P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Crisis and Deconstruction, 1914-1990* (London: Longman, 1993), p. 49.

³⁶ *Ibid* p. 49.

food, clothing, communications equipment, soldiers, laborers. This explosion in demand came right when their traditional suppliers, for reasons listed above, found themselves unable to meet Britain's needs.

Just as the Outer Hebrides benefited economically from the sudden absence of foreign competition, British industry and agriculture as a whole profited from the combination of an explosion in demand for their output generated by the war effort and import substitution. For example, the famous shipbuilding industry in Scotland and Northern Ireland, already in decline in the years immediately preceding World War I, suddenly found itself struggling to meet the seemingly incessant need of the Royal Navy for vessels to protect home waters, convey troops to the Western Front and compensate for German U-boat sinkings. This boom in turn stimulated the British steel industry, so much so that massive new steelworks were built in South Wales and Sheffield for the first time in a generation.³⁷ Likewise, farmers throughout Britain stepped up their production of grains, dairy and meat products to feed the men in the trenches and the laborers toiling in the booming factories at home.

This stimulus to the domestic economy occurred just as British industry and agriculture struggled to find workers not only to replace the absence of the five million-plus men who were fighting in the trenches of the Western Front and elsewhere, but also to meet the new vacancies wartime demand generated. Unemployment in Great Britain virtually disappeared for the duration of the conflict. This stands in stark

³⁷ Taylor, English History...., p. 122.

contrast with the situation present in 1914. The prewar fears of a general strike and potential class warfare almost completely vanished overnight. At first, this could largely be attributed to the general surge in patriotism. As Britain's involvement in the war grew wider and deeper, and perhaps more importantly as the factories roared around the clock and the land was tilled, the class tensions that plagued the Edwardian era dissipated as almost any Briton who was capable of work or military service was ensured a job with decent pay. Talk of Britain's "surplus" population disappeared during World War I, a time when the British state and British capital suddenly found people who were before the war considered to be drains on society now were "useful."

Just as British Columbia suddenly discovered the economic utility of its long-maligned Japanese population during this conflict, and just when the Outer Hebrides and their previously derided "redundant" population were transformed into a valued source of noble fighters, fish and kelp, the British Government now called upon the entire "British" nation – slum-dweller and capitalist, Anglo-Saxon and Celt, "fit" and "unfit" – to help assist it in the overarching goal of defeating the Central Powers. Once this goal was achieved, however, would the prewar status quo reassert itself? Were these gains made by those who hitherto were marginalized be permanent, or prove to be illusory?

World War I and the British Empire

Right when Britain came to rely on its traditionally downtrodden and ignored classes in a way and on a scale it never had before, so too did it in a sense "rediscover"

the utility of the Dominions and the vital role they played in reinforcing and projecting British power on the global stage. From the very first days of the war London drew on the vast resources of the Empire as far as soldiers, auxiliaries, money, supplies and foodstuffs were concerned. The Dominions, for their part, rose up immediately to meet the challenge. To almost a man in Ottawa, in an event that would never be spontaneously replicated, the near-unanimous opinion was “when one part of the British Empire was at war, all were. There was no need for a Cabinet meeting, no need for Parliament to deliberate about whether to jump in or stand aloof.”³⁸ The Australian greeting of the news that the British Empire was at war was just as ebullient. Indeed, “in the words of a hit song written before the first contingent left, ‘Australia will be there.’”³⁹ Andrew Fisher, the leader of the less avidly imperialist Labor Party, vowed that his Dominion would “give our last man and our last shilling” to the Imperial war effort.⁴⁰ Considering such sentiments, it is little wonder that both Dominions embraced so enthusiastically, at least in 1914, the common Imperial need to “rally behind the flag” and fight for the common cause of the Empire.

As the halcyon optimism of the earliest days of the conflict faded, both Canada and Australia hunkered down for a long, protracted conflict. Their relatively youthful

³⁸ Norman Hillmer and J.L. Granatstein, Empire to Umpire: Canada and the World to the 1990s (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman, Ltd., 1994), p. 51.

³⁹ Donald Richmond Horne, In Search of Billy Hughes (Melbourne: The Macmillan Company of Australia, 1979), p. 59.

⁴⁰ Source: Robert Holland’s chapter “The British Empire and the Great War, 1914-1918), in Judith Brown and Wm. Roger Louis, eds., The Oxford History of the British Empire, v. 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 115.

populations, robust economies, and more importantly geographic isolation from any realistic large-scale attack by the Central Powers meant that both Dominions were from the earliest days of the conflict key sources of soldiers, supplies, and loans for the Imperial war effort, particularly in non-European theaters. As Britain started to exhaust its domestic resources in all of these key areas, it increasingly relied on the Dominions as valuable sources of what would later be coined by the postwar Australian prime minister Stanley Bruce, albeit in reverse, “men, money, markets.” Troops from the Dominions served not only in the secondary theaters such as Africa, the Pacific Ocean, and Turkey, but also all along the Western Front. Australia and Canada offered fresh loans to Britain to keep the Imperial war machine alive.

Furthermore, both Dominions reoriented their economies to serve overarching Imperial interests. Canada and Australia, in their outpouring of material and moral support for the British, earned their proverbial stripes in the battlefields, on their farms, and in their factories. Their efforts certainly did not escape the notice of those in Britain.

The hopes of English imperialists revived. Imperial unity was being demonstrated on the battlefield; [Lord Alfred] Milner, its apostle, was in the War Cabinet; the McKenna duties had breached Free Trade. Hard-headed Unionists, who disliked a war for remote ideals, embraced the economic imperialism of which Marxists had long accused them. They wanted to prolong the war into peacetime and to turn the ‘undeveloped estate’ of the Empire into a closed economic system, with Great Britain monopolizing its supplies of raw materials.⁴¹

⁴¹ Taylor, English History...., pp. 81, 82.

The Dominions prior to 1914 were often viewed by a minimalist, not to mention chauvinistic, British political establishment almost as albatrosses that provided little financial, diplomatic or racial return on British overseas investment. Now, through their efforts, many in Britain saw them as vital to the Empire maintaining its power and its prestige in whichever world order emerged from this conflict.

As the war progressed, and as the tangible assets both Canada and Australia proved to the Imperial war effort to Britain proved irrefutable, the British government realized that some recognition of their efforts and their newly-gained respect and status needed to be extended to them. On March 21, 1917, the first Imperial Cabinet was convened in London.⁴² South African General Jan Smuts was awarded equal ranking with British government ministers so far as war planning was concerned, the first (and only) non-Briton to hold such a distinction. Over the course of the following two years the Imperial War Cabinet formulated a variety of recommendations that were intended to entrench wartime imperial unity and to ensure this would not dissipate once hostilities ended.

The Cabinet sought to improve imperial lines of communication, to establish a system of imperial preference that discriminated against “foreign” goods, to implement a more coordinated and holistic approach to imperial defense, and to devise a uniform foreign policy for the entire Empire. Another resolution aimed to reevaluate the

⁴²National Archives (London) (NA), Command Paper 8566, Marc 22, 1917. Source: I.M. Cumpston, ed., The Growth of the British Commonwealth (London: Edward Arnold, 1973), p. 33.

constitutional links between Great Britain and the Dominions. It advocated the following:

The Imperial War Conference are of opinion that the readjustment of the constitutional relations of the component parts of the Empire is too important and intricate a subject to be dealt with during the War... They deem it their duty, however, to place on record their view that any such readjustment, while thoroughly preserving all existing powers of self-government and complete control of domestic affairs, should be based upon a full recognition of the Dominions as autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth, and of India as an important portion of the same, should recognise the right of the Dominions and India to an adequate voice in foreign policy and in foreign relations, and should provide effective arrangements for continuous consultation in all important matters of common Imperial concern, and for such necessary concerted action, founded on consultation, as the several Governments may determine.⁴³

From being considered “liabilities” in the years preceding 1914, World War I showed that with “their economic resources, manpower reserves, and political fidelity,” the Dominions were now often seen as “vital Imperial assets.”⁴⁴

What remained to be seen, however, was whether this change of heart on the part of British officials was a permanent one, or if it was merely a product of wartime exigency. Just like the Japanese in British Columbia, the Hebrideans in Scotland, and the British working classes, the Dominions also experienced a tremendous elevation in their status as a result of wartime scarcity and their sudden necessity and utility to the imperial war effort. As the stature of the Dominions grew, as they started to form their own defense forces, and clamor for an increased say in imperial and in international

⁴³ NA, Command Paper 8566. Source: Cumpston, The Growth of the British Commonwealth..., pp. 34, 35.

⁴⁴ In John Darwin’s chapter “The Dominion Ideal in Imperial Politics,” in The Oxford History of the British Empire, v. 4..., pp. 66, 67.

decision making, many in London worried that Canada, Australia and the other Dominions might discover that their continued connection with the Crown and Westminster had outgrown its usefulness.

World War I and Japan

Just as the Dominions had through their contributions to the British war effort proved pivotal to the ultimate success of the Allies in World War I, so too did Japanese support for the Allies in the Pacific theater play a major role in eliminating the German threat to British interests there. By the end of 1914, the Japanese had conquered all of the German colonial possessions lying north of the Equator in the Pacific Ocean. While these actions transpired, at least initially, with the tacit approval of the Foreign Office, the speed and scope of these conquests by the end of the year threatened to cause a rift with the British Empire for two important reasons.

First, the British Government initially endorsed the quick Allied capture of the German colonies in the Pacific Ocean so that they could be used as a bargaining chip in the peace negotiations they thought would shortly commence. The Foreign Office assumed that these islands could be returned to Germany in exchange for a German withdrawal from Belgium.⁴⁵ This ostensible purpose would be scuttled if Japan assumed control over this territory, especially seeing as the Australians and the Canadians, not to mention the British, viewed Japanese territorial expansion as being a

⁴⁵ Charles Nelson Spinks, "Japan's Entrance into the World War," in *The Pacific Historical Review*, v. 3, no. 4 (December 1936), p. 301.

much more malevolent creature than their own imperial aggrandizement. While British annexations were cloaked in the rhetoric as being a selfless expansion of British progress, civilization and liberty to be bestowed upon less “advanced” peoples, the steady growth of the Japanese Empire was largely attributed to its possessing a master strategy of securing their domination over the Pacific, with an ultimate aim of overthrowing the West. Surely such a power could never be trusted to hold any possessions as “bargaining chips” the way the British legitimated the actions of their Australian and New Zealand proxies, who themselves quickly assumed control of all German possessions in the Pacific lying south of the Equator.⁴⁶

The second major source of tension that emerged as a result of Japan’s conquest of these islands was the acute anxiety such actions generated in Australia, for reasons discussed earlier. As far back as 1910, “many newspapers wrote in the strongest terms about the supposed aggressive designs of Japan.”⁴⁷ Just as Japan conceived of the islands in the Pacific as forming a forward line of defense against potential invaders, Australia too saw these same territories as forming a “protective shield” especially “in the New Guinea—Solomon Islands area against a “foreign power” – a euphemism for Japan.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ *Ibid* pp. 146, 148.

⁴⁷ Ian Nish, “Australia and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1901-1911,” in the Australian Journal of Politics and History, v. 9, no. 2 (1962), p. 207.

⁴⁸ C. Hartley Grattan, in his chapter “The Southwest Pacific Since the First World War,” in William S. Livingston and Wm. Roger Louis, eds., Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands Since the First World War (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1979), p. 212.

Consequently, these small scattered islands in the Pacific came to represent a metaphysical battleground between two similar, yet very oppositional ideologies that proved to be irreconcilable.

The Japanese, and particularly Japanese statesmen, tended to take seriously...the Yellow Peril idea and any form of racial antagonism shown towards Japan. In fact, many contemporary Japanese officials, writers and politicians tried to refute the Yellow Peril idea, but this in turn raised the possibility that an excessive response might mar even the hitherto friendly relations with some Western nations. The cry of the White Peril was one such response. It compared the Yellow Peril with the White Peril, considered the former to be a speculation on the part of the Western nations and the latter a reality for the Eastern nations, thereby denying the possibilities of the Yellow Peril and criticizing aggressive Western policies. The White Peril thesis argues that the expansion and aggression of the white race brought much suffering to the dominated East...Arguments in this vein may well have eroded, to an extent, the pro-Japanese sentiment in Britain.⁴⁹

Britain, recognizing the apparent irreconcilability of these two stances, sought to form a compromise between the Australian and the Japanese positions, but none were to be found. London found itself in a conundrum between “reconciling the interests of her dominions with those of her ally and, if need be, of choosing between them. There were real divergences between the dominions and Japan over the islands which made London’s decisions down to 1919 especially painful.”⁵⁰

If this issue proved to be difficult in 1914, events the following year proved even more challenging for the British. On January 18, 1915, Hioki Eki, the Japanese minister to China, passed to the Chinese government a list of concessions it required

⁴⁹ In Akira Iikura’s chapter “The Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the Question of Race,” in O’Brien ed., The Anglo-Japanese Alliance..., p. 228, 229.

⁵⁰ William Macmahon Ball, ed., Australia and Japan (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1969), pp. 146, 147.

from that nation known today as the “Twenty-One Demands.”⁵¹ Japan initially made these demands in a discreet manner, with the hope it could present a *fait accompli* to the other great powers. Unfortunately for them the terms of the Demands were leaked to the press.⁵² The most onerous of the demands, Group V, would essentially have turned eastern China into a Japanese protectorate. For those such as Victor Wellesley, the head of the Foreign Office’s Far Eastern Department, China’s acquiescence to the Twenty-One Demands “may not only lead to the ejection of the British from Asia and Australia, but ultimately to the destruction of Europe by Asiatic invasion...we should take a longer view that the immediate needs of the political situation, and consider the whole problem of the Far East as one affecting the future of civilization.”⁵³

To the British, it was one thing for Japan to seize German colonies in the northern Pacific, based on the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the “threat” to that pact that they posed. No such justification could possibly exist against China. China was in the midst of a total breakdown of its central government, and thus was in no position to threaten Japan or Britain. Once the Demands became public knowledge, however, worldwide public opinion immediately swung against Japan. To quote an essay that appeared in The New York Times in 1915:

Japan declared that she joined the war to keep up her treaty relations with England, to maintain the peace in the Far East, and to return Kiao-Chao to

⁵¹ Robert Joseph Gowen, “Great Britain and the Twenty-One Demands of 1915: Cooperation Versus Effacement,” in The Journal of Modern History, v. 43, no. 1 (March 1971), pp. 86, 87.

⁵² Nish, Alliance in Decline... p. 153.

⁵³ NA, FO 371/5361, dated September 1, 1920. Source: John Ferris in his chapter “Armaments and Allies,” in O’Brien ed., The Anglo-Japanese Alliance..., p. 251.

China. What a noble cause Japan has undertaken! Japan has always fought wars for others. She fought China because of her immeasurable love toward that neglected land Korea, and she crowned her deed of benevolence by annexing that land. She fought Russia in the name of China and showed her sincerity by her encroachments in Manchuria. Now she has posed as the ally of England, the preserver of the peace in the Far East, and the friend of China. In the light of past history what kind of inferences we may draw from her present case is too evident.⁵⁴

In Britain, The Evening News printed a scathing editorial criticizing Britain's alleged complicity in this "scheme, [which], if carried through, would put all China under Japanese suzerainty... We can understand quite well that the British Foreign Office should be embarrassed, but the policy of suppression has broken down. The sooner it is formally abandoned and the full facts are laid before the country and the opinion of Parliament finds expression the better for us."⁵⁵

This attempt by Japan to incorporate China into the Japanese Empire struck fear to many in British Columbia and Western Australia. Both places viewed themselves as constituting the front lines of "British" civilization. If China now fell to Tokyo, as Taiwan, Korea and Manchuria had over the past two decades, many in these frontier societies concluded they would be Japan's next targets. This fear was magnified by the realization that if Britain could not protect its own sphere of influence in China along the Yangtze River from its formal ally, not to mention its reliance on the Japanese navy to defend British Columbia and Australia, what security possibly existed for them should Japan continue its rather successful expansion? Many in both places viewed

⁵⁴ "Says Japan is Rapacious: Course Toward China Denounced by Chinese Student in Prize Essay," March 21, 1915, p. 8.

⁵⁵ March 19, 1915.

Japan's actions, and Britain's timid response, with trepidation. For the time being, this was largely muted while the war was being prosecuted, they "lay ready to be renewed when labour problems, the immigrant birth rate and the renewal of the [Anglo-Japanese] Alliance became controversial issues" in the years immediately following the war.⁵⁶

In Australia, where a virulent anti-Japanese discourse was always louder, more public, and perhaps more importantly more generally accepted at the national level than in Canada, the public mood upon hearing of the Demands bordered on paranoia. The wartime Australian prime minister William Hughes warned that "all our fears – or conjectures – that Japan was and is most keenly interested in Australia are amply borne out by facts...It is to me quite clear that in the event of even a temporary reverse to the Allies, the Japanese Government might not be able – even if they so desired – to keep Japan behind Britain."⁵⁷ To many Australian political figures, the Twenty-One Demands were another sign that, to quote the then Australian Governor General Munro Ferguson, "Japan obviously intended 'to follow in the footsteps of Germany' in the Pacific and 'evidently means to become the dominant power.'⁵⁸ A secret Department of Defense report made the following assessment of Australia's precarious situation in 1920:

⁵⁶ Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was...*, p. 100.

⁵⁷ Source: A.T. Yarwood, *Asian Migration to Australia: The Background to Exclusion, 1896-1923* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1964), p. 94.

⁵⁸ NLA, Novar Papers, August 3, 1916.

The Empire of Japan remains, therefore, in the immediate future, as the only potential and probable enemy... The great natural resources of Australia, compared with the sparseness of her settlement, render her desirable in the eyes of any nation with a limited territory and a large population. Our extended coast-line and the fact that the greater part of our population and of our secondary industries, as well as much of our primary resources, is at the coast, make Australia particularly vulnerable to attack. When to this is added the fact that, at least, one fundamental tenet of Australian policy the maintenance of a White Australia is easily capable of being made a *casus belli* apart from all other considerations, it becomes clear that Australia cannot hope that good intentions, however pacific, will provide an efficacious guarantee against attack.⁵⁹

For the time being, it seemed as through the concerted action of the British Empire and the United States was enough to rein in some of the worst of Japanese opportunistic territorial expansion. The seed had been sown, however, for the usual suspicions and mistrust between the British and the Japanese to reemerge with vigor once the unique circumstances of the First World War finally passed.

World War I and Its Aftermath

Such worries could temporarily be set aside on November 11, 1918. News of the sudden armistice announced that day quickly traveled around the world. In nation after nation, euphoria and rejoicing erupted. In British Columbia, where the announcement of peace arrived in the wee hours of that morning, the news was greeted with a boisterous and ebullient response eerily reminiscent of the sendoff Canadian

⁵⁹ Australian War Memorial (AWM), File 1/20/7, "Report of a Military Defence of Australia by a Conference of Senior Officers of the Australian Military Forces, 1920 – Volume I" It is worth mentioning here that throughout this period, even at the time this report was commissioned, Australia, as part of the British Empire, was still formally allied with Japan under the terms of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, as created in 1902 and renewed by Australia in 1911. In fact, Australia was one of the most vociferous advocates for the Alliance's renewal in the early 1920s. For more information see Livingston and Louis eds. *Australia, New Zealand...*, p. 50.

troops received in 1914. “As news of the telegraphic flash spread throughout [Vancouver], crowds poured into the streets. Twenty-five thousand people had collected by one a.m. [sic] at the corner of Granville and Hastings Streets...The waterfront came to life as all the boats blew their whistles; the roof-garden lights at the Hotel Vancouver were ablaze.”⁶⁰ Later that day, at a more decent hour, “there was a great civic parade. Vancouver had never seen anything like it; and for years people would carry in their memory the sound, that first Armistice Day, of the skirl of bagpipes and of the patriotic airs played by the band touring the city.”⁶¹

These festive, spontaneous displays of patriotism and pride erupted halfway around the world. In Australia, it seemed that the entire nation had come out to celebrate the achievements of their “diggers.” In Melbourne, the leading newspaper of that city described the almost instantaneous jubilation as a cacophony of “thousands of voices [ringing] out in song. Roll of drum and call of trumpet, bang of cracker and ring of bell, shriek of whistle and hoot of siren. Armistice signed! The pent-up feelings of the last momentous days were raised, and from the hearts of the people came mighty shouts and cheers.”⁶² In Australia’s largest city, Sydney, the scene that very day was by no means less celebratory.

From one end of the city to the other there appeared to be no one who did not openly and sincerely rejoice. It is an astonishing thing to record, when one remembers the disloyalty and war-weariness which were displayed in some

⁶⁰ Margaret Ormsby, *British Columbia...*, p. 401.

⁶¹ *Ibid* p. 401.

⁶² “Rejoicings in Australia: Melbourne Acclaims Victory: Scenes of Wild Enthusiasm: Huge Crowds in Streets,” in *The Age* (Melbourne), November 12, 1918.

quarters on the eve of the second referendum only a year ago. No matter to whom one talked, road navvy or merchant, shop assistant or tramguard, or trade union official, one found a man delighted and satisfied.⁶³

After almost four-and-a-half years of bloodshed and sacrifice, men and women throughout the British Empire could now breathe a collective sigh of relief that the trauma they had experienced had finally come to an end.

Yet, almost as soon as the confetti was swept off of the city streets, the flags furled back up, and the horns put back in their cases, the old worries, prejudices and insecurities that had laid for the most part dormant or muted during the war resurfaced. This time they were joined by a new spate of fears and troubles that were unique to the twentieth century and to the post-Armistice years in particular. In British Columbia, the class and racial struggles that plagued the province in the years preceding the war reemerged

[T]he doctrine of class struggle was being preached in the logging-camps and on the waterfront; the memory of political scandals was still fresh, and the returning soldiers were becoming increasingly disappointed over the seeming ingratitude of the people they had fought for. No one could tell how long Sir Richard McBride's choice of a motto for his province, *Splendor Sine Occasu*, would remain apt and fitting.⁶⁴

Was domestic social disturbance worth the vast price that most "British" of provinces paid for supporting the Mother Country in its hour of need, so to speak?

⁶³ "Cheering the British Flag – A Victory Demonstration at the Destroyer in Moore-Street Yesterday," in the Sydney Morning Herald, November 13, 1918, p. 10. The "disloyalty" displayed in the "second referendum" that this article mentions refers to the defeat of the Australian federal government's attempt to introduce conscription so that it could maintain its level of troops in Europe in the wake of high levels of casualties and slackening numbers of voluntary recruits.

⁶⁴ Ormsby, British Columbia..., p. 403.

The situation in the Outer Hebrides took a dramatic turn for the worse. The artificial demand for Hebridean soldiers, fish and agricultural goods that existed during the war quickly vanished. The Daily Province of Vancouver published an article stating that “The Great War levied a prodigious tax on the manhood of the Highlands, for one never heard of a conscientious objector west of the Caledonian Canal, and it ruined the market for those who survive[d].”⁶⁵ For those who managed to stay alive, they returned home to an economy tottering on the brink of collapse, and a state bereft of any ideas (or money) that might rectify the almost hopeless malaise.

Even before the war, Lewismen’s traditional source of work and income, the herring industry, was beginning to fail them...And after the war, when the industry’s long-established markets in central and eastern Europe were denied to it by revolutionary turmoil and politically motivated trade embargoes, there began, as the latest official report was to acknowledge, a prolonged and disastrous slump.⁶⁶

The Hebrideans contributed disproportionately to the ultimately successful war effort.

Was their reward to be a return to the harrowing antebellum status quo?

The British Government too quickly grew frustrated with the harrowing postwar situation. Industrial unrest, encouraged by the socialist revolutions in Russia and Germany, erupted. Unemployment skyrocketed from practically nil to within less than a year into the millions. For those who managed to maintain their jobs, wages plummeted. As Leo Amery wrote to the then British prime minister Lloyd George, “the task of reconstruction [including demobilization] is going to be so tremendous...that I

⁶⁵ “Join in Aiding the Hebrides,” April 16, 1924, p. 15.

⁶⁶ James Hunter, The Making of the Crofting Community (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1976), p. 268.

am convinced it cannot be carried out by a large Cabinet on the old lines.”⁶⁷ As much as Britain wished “for tranquility, for cultivating [its] garden...these...sounded like a distant echo in a Britain settling down to long and bitter internal conflict over wages, unemployment and conditions of work.”⁶⁸

At the same time, these leaders fretted over how the war undermined the traditional subservience the Dominions had hitherto exhibited to broader British prerogatives. The Dominions won some international recognition through their impressive performance during the war. They represented themselves at the Paris peace conference and thereafter at the League of Nations.⁶⁹ Canada and Australia started to assert their own diplomatic and economic interests.⁷⁰ While Britain depended more and more on the Dominions for trade, manpower and international status, the Dominions started to realize the mother country could no longer solely provide for their defense and their prosperity.

Likewise, Britain and the Dominions collectively worried about the heightened Japanese clout and presence in the Pacific that the war afforded it. During the war, Japan became a great naval power. It suffered no domestic damage to its economy and scant casualties either militarily or economically. In these senses, and additionally both

⁶⁷ December 27, 1918. Source: John Barnes and David Nicholson, eds., The Leo Amery Diaries: Volume I: 1896-1929 (London: Hutchinson, 1980), p. 247.

⁶⁸ F.S. Northedge, “1917-1919: The Implication for Britain,” in the Journal of Contemporary History, v. 3, no. 4 (October 1968), p. 208.

⁶⁹ For a further discussion of the elevation of the international status of the Dominions as a result of the First World War, please see Nicholas Mansergh, The Commonwealth Experience: Volume Two: From British to Multiracial Commonwealth (London: The Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1969), pp. 4-29.

⁷⁰ Taylor, English History...., p. 151.

diplomatically and as far as prestige was concerned, Japan emerged from World War I a much stronger power than it had been even in 1914.⁷¹ Without a doubt, in 1919 “Britain was a highly overstretched power and had lost ground during the war to the peripheral powers like America and Japan.”⁷² If that were true, then what was to be made about the assumptions about the apparently effortless British military and racial superiority that underpinned the pre-war Imperial order, and implicitly bound together Britain with its Dominions? If Britain in 1914, at the height of its power, had to rely on Japan to help clear the Pacific of the German navy and defend British Columbia and Western Australia, how would British interests in that theater be safeguarded in the new postwar era, when Japan seemed to be ascendant and Britain tarnished, to say the least?

All of these problems confronted Great Britain, Canada and Australia as they struggled to come to terms with a world that in many ways was vastly different in 1919 than it was a scant five years earlier. Any one of these was enough to cause considerable worry and consternation; all five combined threatened to shatter the unity of the Empire that had supposedly been so clearly demonstrated by their combined prosecution of the war. Fortunately enough, an overarching solution loomed on the horizon in the immediate postwar years that promised to solve all these problems.

⁷¹ In John Ferris chapter “Armaments and Allies,” in O’Brien ed, The Anglo-Japanese Alliance,. p. 262.

⁷² Nish, Alliance in Decline..., p. 278.

CHAPTER VII: EMPIRE SOLUTIONS: THE EMPIRE SETTLEMENT ACT AND IMPERIAL REJUVENATION, 1917-1922

World War I in many ways destroyed the liberal orthodoxy that guided generations of British and imperial politicians. A state reluctant to interject itself into the lives of its citizenry in 1914 had by 1918 imposed rationing of basic goods and draconian levels of taxation, conscripted millions for its armies, assumed control over several key industries (for example, coal mining, the railroads), to list but a few of the new powers it assumed. Another realm that the British government felt the new need to take a more activist role in was stimulating migration within the empire. As a leading expert on this topic, Keith Williams, argues:

The expansion of state control was a ubiquitous consequence of organising society for 'total war.' It touched all aspects of life and by the end of 1916 had transformed dramatically the political arena in the United Kingdom, opening up new possibilities in the emigration lobby. While emigration itself fell off, the ideological struggle over British emigration intensified in the nationality-conscious climate of the war years, and the possibility of a significant redirection of state policy began to emerge.¹

Just as Westminster proved its effectiveness in marshalling resources for the war effort and directing men to the frontlines, it realized that it could use its scale and scope to transform an Empire that many politicians increasingly saw as the key to Britain's maintenance of its power and its standing.

The Idea of Imperial Resettlement During World War I

¹ In Stephen Constantine, ed., Emigrants and Empire: British Settlement in the Dominions between the Wars (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 30, 31.

The switch in popular attitude towards an actively interventionist policy with regards to migration within the Empire can be summarized by a Mr. A.V. Uvedale Corbett, the secretary of the Empire Land Settlement Committee of the Royal Colonial Institute, which had for years attempted to impress upon Westminster the necessity for state involvement in this field. He wrote in 1917 that “one of the great lessons which this War has taught us is that the Empire has never fully realised the strength that lies in co-operation and Imperial Unity...In the past there has been no Imperial co-operation in regard to migration from our shores, and the total loss to the Empire from this cause during the last fifty years is incalculable.”² This point hit home for many in the political establishment, especially in light of the tangible contribution made to the imperial war effort by those men and women, and their progeny, who had migrated within the Empire prior to 1914. The surge in patriotism and nationalism outlined by Corbett, coupled with popular notions of an Empire uniting as a single entity, bound together through racial and cultural ties, to “fight the good fight,” certainly swayed more than a few skeptics to endorse the necessity of maintaining these ties in peacetime.³

As a result, in 1917 the Dominions Royal Commission, a body established at the last prewar Imperial Conference between Britain and the Dominions, issued its final report. It was critical of the inefficient manner of encouraging intra-Imperial migration

² In “Empire Land Settlement,” in the Journal of the Society of Comparative Legislation, New Ser., v. 17, nos. 1 & 2 (1917), p. 194.

³ For more information on this thread, please see Keith Williams, The British State, Social Imperialism and Emigration from Britain, 1900-1922: The Ideology and Antecedents of the Empire Settlement Act (Ph.D, University of London, 1985), pp. 173, 174.

through private enterprise. While this report did not endorse the British state assuming total control over matters of immigration, it did call for the creation of a “Central Immigration Authority” that would “control passage brokers, emigration societies &c” and “exercise far greater control over the activities of passenger agents.”⁴

At the same time, the Colonial Office established the Empire Settlement Committee, chaired by Lord Tennyson. This committee was created in order to investigate state-directed opportunities for the resettlement of discharged soldiers in the Dominions immediately after the conclusion of World War I.⁵ Its report, also issued in 1917, is replete with the rhetoric of racial cohesion and moral and physical rejuvenation that at first won converts to state-sponsored emigration of ex-servicemen (and young women and orphans, ironically enough).

If opportunities are lacking at home, the Home Government should help, not hinder, [British migrants] on their way to other parts of the Empire. So too, the Dominions should not desire to pursue a policy calculated to denude the Mother Country of the population which she needs. But they will welcome those whom she is able to spare, and give them every chance of success in a new and wider life. Particularly...will they rejoice to receive the men who have fought the Empire’s battles in this war, who are the best of the British race. No settlers could be more desirable both as regards themselves, and their progeny, which may well be of priceless worth in the now unpeopled districts of the Empire overseas.⁶

⁴ T.C. Macnaughten, Empire Opportunities: A Study of the Possibilities of Overseas Settlement (London: Blackie and Son Ltd., 1938), p. 6; Constantine ed., Emigrants and Empire..., p. 33.

⁵ Dane Kennedy, “Empire Migration in Post-War Reconstruction: The Role of the Oversea Settlement Committee, 1919-1922,” in Albion, v. 20, no. 3 (Fall 1988), p. 405.

⁶ National Archives (London) (NA), Cd. 8672, X, Report of the Empire Settlement Committee, 1917-1918, p. 2

Britain and the Dominions were for the first time in agreement regarding the need to implement a large-scale and publicly-funded system of imperial resettlement.

The language this report was also deliberately employed to ensure that the patriotism and fervor for Britain and the British Empire would outlast the unique circumstances of the war, but also to circumvent the powerful interests on the one hand of labor in the Dominions who feared the competition that the resettled Britons would represent to their livelihoods, and on the other of shipping firms and booking agents that vehemently resisted any attempts by the government to in essence nationalize them. Together, combined with lingering suspicions regarding the necessity of state involvement in such an endeavor, these interests conspired to defeat the Emigration Bill of 1918, which represented the first serious attempt to encapsulate the findings of the two previously-mentioned reports and involve the British government in the field of migration on such a large scale.⁷ A few months later, in February 1919, the newly-commissioned Overseas Settlement Committee declared that “while it is desirable to multiply the general facilities for Imperial development and communication, thus incidentally facilitating migration within the Empire on natural lines, it is not, as a general rule, necessary or desirable artificially to stimulate the emigration of individuals as such.”⁸

Empire Settlement Gains Ground, 1918-1921

⁷ Kennedy, “Empire Migration...,” p. 405; Constantine ed., *Emigrants and Empire...*, p. 34.

⁸ As quoted in W.A. Carrothers, *Emigration from the British Isles, With Special Reference to the Development of the Overseas Dominions* (London: Frank Cass and Co., Ltd., 1965), p. 260.

Gradually, however, a combination of factors started to coalesce to prompt the British government to rethink its longstanding aversion to subsidizing emigration. While the economy of Great Britain initially adjusted fairly well to the cessation of hostilities, this brief burst of prosperity rapidly dissipated towards the end of 1919, as a worldwide recession erupted. Unfortunately for Britain, the course of action that most economies pursued to obviate the global crisis was to erect prohibitively high tariff walls. This wreaked havoc on the British economy, which unlike most of its international competitors was dependent on exchanging its industrial manufactures with other nations for the food and raw materials it needed. Even within its own Empire, Great Britain now faced stiff competition from several of its own former colonies. As the noted imperial historian J.D.B. Miller explains:

The influences of World War I caused the Dominions to accentuate the demands which they had made before the war for a privileged position in the British market. Not only had they provided food and fibres which Britain needed in vast quantities to carry on the war; they had also enlarged their capacity to produce these goods, and had made commitments which would keep production at high levels.⁹

This competition could not have come at a worse time for the British economy.

Not only did British industry suffer from the loss of foreign markets and the drastic scaling back of orders placed by the British government now that the war had ended, it also was expected to rehire the millions who over the previous five years, while serving in the armed forces, were in the employ of the state. Indeed, as

⁹ Britain and the Old Dominions (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), p. 115.

conditions worsened in the early 1920s, none other than the famed economist John Maynard Keynes proclaimed that the sheer numbers of those out of work in the United Kingdom was “beyond what the nation could support.”¹⁰ In such a dire situation, there was little chance that the private sector could reabsorb these workers, let alone maintain the situation of full employment that the war provided. The 1922 report produced by the Oversea Settlement Committee harks on the grim situation Britain faced at the time.

Whilst the population has continued to increase, industry has greatly diminished. The War has prejudicially affected the trade of this country with all parts of the world, but especially its trade with the Empire. The demoralisation of the exchanges makes an early revival of this trade improbable, and in present circumstances it is only prudent to assume that there is no likelihood, within a reasonable time, of its recovering to anything approaching the pre-war level. Moreover, even when world trade again becomes normal, British manufactures are likely to meet with more serious competition than heretofore. It follows that the trade of the United Kingdom cannot in the near future provide employment for so many of its inhabitants as in pre-war days.¹¹

That old tried and tested solution to overpopulation and unrest in Britain – emigration – was to be redeployed, though with a statist, twentieth-century twist.

At the time, a fear started to grip more than a few politicians, who concluded that “Britain was threatened with a Bolshevik revolution led by dispirited ex-servicemen. Animated by grievance and bound together by their war experience, the veterans threatened to overturn the existing social order.”¹² The Oversea Settlement

¹⁰ Quoted in Eric Richards, Britannia’s Children: Emigration from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland since 1600 (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2004), p. 240.

¹¹ “Report of the Oversea Settlement Committee for the Year Ended 31st December 1922” (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1923), p. 7.

¹² John Schultz, “Finding Homes Fit for Heroes: The Great War and Empire Settlement,” in the Canadian Journal of History/Annales canadiennes d’histoire, v. 18, no. 1 (April 1983), p. 109.

Committee started to seize on these fears of unrest and potential Socialist revolution along the lines of Russia and Germany in order to foment support for overseas settlement as a panacea. The head of the Committee, Lord Alfred Milner, made sure to stress in his meetings with Treasury officials that each man who was encouraged to settle elsewhere in the British Empire represented a cost savings to Great Britain. Despite the one-off immediate charge of subsidizing an individual's passage, the Treasury would be spared a lifetime's cost in the form of welfare payments.¹³ In the coming years, the Committee emphasized "the efficacy of oversea settlement in relieving unemployment and the payment of benefits."¹⁴ Those who increasingly subscribed to the economic benefits of assisted emigration saw it as a way to "dispose of large numbers of unemployed."¹⁵

These men and women would not only cease being a drain on the public purse in Britain, but they would also help rejuvenate British industry by serving as convenient, ready-made consumers of British goods. It was conceived that they would retain their proclivities and therefore spending patterns that they had acquired in Britain. These immigrants would surely continue to consume their British staples and other commodities once they were transported to the Dominions, which would only stimulate British industry, and help redress the dire situation the authors of the 1922 annual report

¹³ NA, CO 532/158, Office of the Cabinet to the Colonial Office, October 21, 1920.

¹⁴ Williams, *The British State...* p. 220.

¹⁵ Kosmas Tsokhas, "People or Money? Empire Settlement and British Migration to Australia, 1919-34," in *Immigrants and Minorities*, v. 9, no. 1 (1990), p. 2.

by the Oversea Settlement Committee lamented.¹⁶ Indeed, they would increase their consumption, because they would all prosper through the hard work they would produce in their new homelands. As that very report argued:

Such a policy [of state-aided emigration], if successful, is both economic and constructive, because it diverts that part of the population of this country which is surplus to its industrial requirements to those parts of the Dominions where it is needed to hasten development, stimulate production and provide raw materials for the factories of this country and markets for its manufactures – in short, to remedy the destruction and waste of the War by the creation of new wealth for the whole Empire.¹⁷

A population that currently represented a drain on the British coffers would be transformed into productive consumers once transported overseas. In doing so, they would become assets to the British Empire rather than liabilities.

An editorial in the Vancouver Daily Province summarized this crucial line of argument, stating that “if any large number of Britons are transferred from their homes overseas, they will enlarge the overseas markets for British goods and thus, in a double way, by removing them, help solve the unemployment problem.”¹⁸ They would in turn help achieve imperial self-sufficiency. This was a theme that received new approbation and currency in the interwar years due to the collapse of the global economy and the need to repay the foreign, in particular American, creditors for the loans that accrued

¹⁶ For more information on this topic please see Brian Blakeley, “The Society for the Oversea Settlement of British Women and the Problems of Empire Settlement, 1917-1936,” in Albion, v. 20, no. 3 (1988), pp. 421, 432, 433.

¹⁷ “Report...1922,” p. 8.

¹⁸ July 19, 1925, p. 8.

during World War I.¹⁹ This fit well with the developing ideal of “reconstruction,” through which the unemployed Briton, British industry, the British taxpayer, the recipient Dominions, and the British imperial connections would all be rebuilt to their presumably salubrious, “natural” strength and vitality.²⁰

This also aligned with contemporary notions about the effeteness that poverty and living in congested and emasculated environments instilled into the British working classes, especially when compared to the vigor and vitality that supposedly characterized the everyday lives of those who populated the countryside. This dichotomy especially manifested itself in the wake of the prolonged suffering that World War I engendered. The British “victory” was only possible with the aid of the United States, Britain’s one-time colony and contemporary exemplar of the dangers of miscegenation, and the Dominions, Canada in particular, which threatened to follow the Americans along this path. The war only exacerbated this eugenic nightmare.

The combined destruction of the best representatives of the present generation, whose numbers were already diminishing before the war, and the irretrievable loss of their potential offspring constituted a genetic catastrophe exceeding the degenerative visions of even the gloomiest of Edwardian seers. For some it was a ‘vast holocaust’ on the scale of the black death; for others it conjured up recollections of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, which many believed had started France on the path of race degeneration and demographic decline that had marked its history since Waterloo.²¹

¹⁹ For a more detailed discussion of the theme of imperial self-sufficiency, please read R.T. Appleyard, British Emigration to Australia (Canberra: The Australian National University, 1964), Chapter 2.

²⁰ Blakeley, “The Society...,” pp. 432, 433.

²¹ Richard A. Soloway, Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth-Century Britain (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), p. 138.

Many came to believe that the woes Britain and the Empire was experiencing following World War I was due to economic and racial degradation. This process could perhaps best be arrested through the rejuvenation of Britons overseas.²²

Many politicians and eugenicists in the Dominions themselves desired acquiring as many “yeoman” immigrants as they could. They shared in the belief that the rural laborer would help strengthen their nascent societies. However, they were reticent to take in industrial workers from British urban areas. The Dominions did not universally accept the ethos of redemption and rejuvenation that British officials promulgated. They were especially reluctant to accept Britons seeking to flee the slums of Manchester and the East End to replicate their degeneracy in Toronto or Melbourne. Indeed, “as late as 1922 a former Canadian Minister of the Interior...still characterized the ideal immigrant for his country as bring “a stalwart peasant in sheep skin coat...with a stout wife and a half-dozen children.”²³

Many in the Dominions themselves clamored for Empire Settlement, despite the reservations mentioned earlier. T.C. Macnaghten, the vice-chairman of the Oversea Settlement Committee, informed the voluntary emigration societies that were scrambling at the bit to recruit and transport Britons to the Dominions that “the true object of state-aided migration [was] not, in our view the immediate relief of unemployment...[but] to introduce into the Dominions a constant stream of population,

²² Paul Rich, “British Imperial Decline and the Forging of English Patriotic Memory, c.1918-1968,” in *History of European Ideas*, v. 9, no. 6 (1988), p. 660.

²³ Source: Richards, *Britannia's Children...*, p. 245.

British in sympathy and British in spirit, and then to preserve the common ideals of liberty and justice throughout the Empire, to keep it stable, united and well-defended.”²⁴

Proponents of massive assisted-passage schemes had hoped to maintain the ties of imperial solidarity that had manifested themselves so clearly in the throes of World War I by injecting literally millions of Britons into the Dominions, who would naturally and effortlessly maintain the ties of kith and kin that at the time were seen as the essential components of a “British” identity.²⁵ As J.D.B. Miller explains the new logic that emerged from the First World War:

Wartime experience seemed to many in the Dominions to point the way to a closer organization of Imperial resources: if the British countries could ship hundreds of thousands of men around the globe, equip them and feed them, and at the same time control the marketing of such normally intractable products as metals, wool and wheat, why should they not organize themselves for mutual benefit in peace? Why should there not be a redistribution of people which would strengthen the younger countries while removing from Britain much of the population which it could not support? Money and laws seemed all that were needed to make the Empire a reality.²⁶

Lord Milner, now Secretary of State for the Colonies, echoed these sentiments, as he proclaimed to the Conference on State-Aided Empire Settlement that met in 1921:

Overseas settlement should not be regarded as a means of dealing directly with abnormal unemployment in the United Kingdom, at any given moment, but as a means of remedying fluctuations of trade by developing our best markets and of permanently minimizing the risk of unemployment here and throughout the Empire. He emphasized the view of His Majesty’s Government that no stone should be left unturned to secure for the Dominions the population which they

²⁴ NA, CO, 721/69/29901, November 26, 1923. Source: R.L. Schnell, “The Right Class of Boy: Youth Training Schemes and Assisted Emigration to Canada under the Empire Settlement Act, 1922-39,” in History of Education, v. 24, no. 1 (1995), pp. 78, 79.

²⁵ Schultz, “Finding Homes...,” p. 105.

²⁶ In Britain and the Old Dominions p. 115.

require and to ensure that the outflow of population from the United Kingdom should have opportunities for settlement under the flag, in countries British in spirit and British in their institutions.²⁷

This quote explains why many skeptics of government-supported assisted emigration schemes were brought around to endorsing these schemes, in no small part aided by the sanction given to the idea by such a prominent advocate as Lord Milner.

Empire Settlement and Canada, 1918-1922

These claims held true at a general level for all of the Dominions who actively recruited British immigrants to their shores, but there were also varying local prerogatives that motivated their aspirations. In Canada, the 1920s marked the beginning of the whole-scale penetration of that Dominion by American mass-media. In a debate on the issue of assisted passage in the British House of Commons, Sir J. Marriott focused on these fears in trying to win over converts to his cause. He stressed that “it is only an invisible frontier which divides the United States from Canada.”²⁸ Such concerns were surely not limited to those in Britain. An anonymous letter written to the newly-elected Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King by a gentleman proposing a scheme of immigration from Great Britain. In the letter, he argued that “under the scheme which I suggest Canada can be settled in five or ten years, whereas settlement under the prevailing methods cannot be effective in less than 50 or 75 years. Meantime, owing to peaceful penetration and the wholesale absorption of our resources by Americans, we will soon have nothing left but a flag and a

²⁷ National Archives of Canada (NAC), RG 26, G-1, v. 1300, File 1011

²⁸ Parliamentary Debates: Official Report, Fifth Series, v. 174 (1924), p. 532.

sentiment, and Canada will pass under a foreign flag.”²⁹ An editorial in The Daily News of Prince Rupert, British Columbia seized on this fear of increased American influence and this perceived threat to the imperial tie.

The so-called ‘bogey’ of Canada’s annexation by the United States will always be with us as long as American interests continue to be the main factor in the development of our country...Great Britain must spread out if she is to keep her position in the world and one field that is awaiting her entry with open arms is Canada. More British people in Canada imbued with the energy and aggressiveness that one requires to get on in this country...will do much to remove the talk of possibility of annexation with the United States.³⁰

By recruiting British immigrants to settle in Canada, it was hoped that this movement of Britons would “act as a counterweight to American penetration and strengthen imperial ties.”³¹

Many in English-speaking Canada and in Great Britain viewed the fact that Canada was becoming increasingly dependent on the United States with alarm. The editor of the Canadian Export Pioneer, in an article published in 1925 entitled “Wake Up England,” wrote that “nine and one-quarter million people in Canada – mostly of British stock and retaining sentimental regard for the Old Country – desire to trade with Great Britain. Unfortunately, while imports of manufactured goods from the United States rose increased [by \$61,000,000]...those from the United Kingdom appreciated by no more than \$12,000,000”³² Thus, the aim of many Canadians of British descent to

²⁹ NAC, W.L. Mackenzie King Papers, v. 104, letter dated October 10, 1923.

³⁰ “Canada as Part of the British Empire,” August 11, 1925, p. 2.

³¹ J.A. Schultz, “Canadian Attitudes toward Empire Settlement, 1919-1930,” in The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, v. 1, no. 2 (January 1973), p.

³² Public Archives of Ontario (PAO), RG 3-6, July-August 1925 edition.

import British consumers to strengthen the economic ties then seen as vital to the maintenance of the imperial connection dovetailed neatly with those in Britain who advocated a broad state-aided emigration scheme to revive their moribund economy. The latter could point to the potential “loss” of the oldest and largest Dominion to the United States as a crucial reason why such a radical break with longstanding official policy and attitudes was required.

This fear was only exacerbated by the accompanying worry that the emotional bonds that linked both Canada and Australia to Britain were also on the wane. In the years following World War I, a new and often vociferous debate emerged surrounding how to accommodate the rise of more localized and individualized identities in the Dominions as a consequence of their contributions to the Imperial war effort, and what these changes meant to the cohesiveness and unity of the British Empire. No less a man than General Jan Smuts argued in a memorandum circulated at the Imperial Conference between the prime ministers of Britain and the Dominions in 1921:

The national sense, the unconsciousness of nationhood of the Dominions has received a great impetus from their share in the great war [sic] and from the experiences of hundreds of thousands of Dominion troops in the campaigns of the great war. While these experiences have strengthened the common bonds, they have also undoubtedly deepened the Dominion sense of national separateness, of the Dominions as distinct nations in the Commonwealth and the world...And the only way to deal with such movements is not to wait until they have become fully developed, and perhaps irresistible in their impetus, but to forestall them.³³

³³ NA, CO886/10, D. 11047, No. 125, 1921

By this time, it had become clear to all but the most strident imperialists that there was a clear “lurch toward dominion autonomy.”³⁴

In Canada, the rise in support for increased autonomy from London was largely attributed to the large influx of non-British immigrants from continental Europe and the United States in the years preceding World War I. Their mere presence to many English Canadians threatened its carefully crafted “British” identity.³⁵ A front-page article in the Victoria Daily Times quoted Col. J.S. Dennis, the Chief Commissioner of the Canadian Pacific Railway Department of Colonization, as saying that “it is understood that we have closed the door to immigration. By discontinuing its campaign last year, our Government virtually gave notice that we had no plans for any British emigrant in Canada. Nevertheless we must get the largest number of Britishers to help leaven the mass of foreign immigrants.”³⁶ The former Governor General, the Duke of Connaught, at the same time “expressed regret that there should lie so many Slav settlers in Western Canada...It is a matter of concern to this Dominion to build up a homogenous population, yet that will never be done by following the example of the United States and admitting any and every kind of immigrant.”³⁷ Not to be outdone, the Bishop A.U. dePencier, in addressing the Kiwanis Club of Vancouver, lamented the fact

³⁴ Paul Rich, “British Imperial Decline and the Forging of English Patriotic Memory, c.1918-1968,” in History of European Ideas, v. 9, no. 6 (1988), p. 661.

³⁵ For a further discussion about this transformation in popular conceptualization in Britain of emigration from one of punishment, most clearly seen in the foundation of Australia as a penal colony, to one of “rehabilitation,” please see Marjory Harper, “Personal Contact is Worth a Ton of Text-Books: Educational Tours of the Empire, 1926-39,” in The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, v. 32, no. 3 (September 2004).

³⁶ “Declares Canada Needs Immigrants,” March 31, 1922, p. 1.

³⁷ “Immigration Policy,” in The Daily Colonist (Victoria, BC), May 24, 1924, p. 4

that “in one of our western provinces 60 per cent of the population is not British, and if this continues we will soon have a province without British ideals or traditions. It is not essential that we fill our unoccupied lands in five or ten years, but it is essential that when Canada is developed she should be populated by a people, the majority of whom will maintain our ideals,” those ideals being a British identity in terms of culture and race.³⁸

Empire Settlement in Australia, 1918-1922

While Australia, with a vast ocean separating it from the United States and constituting a much more hegemonic and homogenous “British” population than Canada, remained for the time being isolated from the pressures of “Americanization,” it too felt a need to populate its vast “empty” spaces with Britons. Much of the motivation behind this drive was defensive in nature, to protect against any perceived threat to its quintessential “British” identity and its security. For Australia, however, this perceived threat came not in a largely benign cultural form from its most proximate neighbor, but rather – as it was perceived at the time – in a direct military challenge to its sovereignty from a close-by empire it saw as utterly alien and atavistic. It was felt at the time that the best defense against any prospective aggression from Japan would be to establish “communities of British settlers, particularly ex-servicemen, whose loyalty to the motherland and experience at arms could be relied upon in a crisis.”³⁹ In the

³⁸ “Must Keep Race Ideals,” in The Daily Province (Vancouver), May 22, 1924, p. 25.

³⁹ Kennedy, “Empire Migration...” p. 415.

words of the noted press baron and tireless advocate of imperial resettlement Lord

Northcliffe:

The key to your White Australia ideal is population. You must keep your slender garrison by the multiplication of your people. Only numbers will save you. The world will not tolerate an empty Australia. This continent must carry its full quota of population. You have no option. Tens of millions will come to you whether you wish it or not. You cannot hold up the human flood by a restriction Clause in an Act of Parliament.”⁴⁰

In light of Japan’s recent territorial expansion, Japan was now perceived to be perilously close to the outer frontiers of Australia. Japan, it was assumed, would use these acquisitions as “stepping stones” to be used to fulfill its destiny and launch an attack on Australia.

Australia naturally looked, as it had ever since the First Fleet arrived in Sydney Harbor in 1788, to Britain as its source of immigrants. The mantra of “populate or perish” held perhaps no greater sway anywhere else. The prime minister of Australia, “Billy” Hughes, wanted the Dominion to increase its intake of British settlers to approximately 100,000 per year, so that Australia could triple its population within ten years.⁴¹ “Hughes, the Social Darwinist, still believed that the enemy [probably Japan] would someday strike at Australia, and that only a densely populated nation could resist: migration was integral to his *realpolitik*.”⁴² In the words of John A. Marriott, a tireless advocate of an activist immigration policy:

⁴⁰ As quoted in Parliamentary Debates: Official Report, Fifth Series, v. 174 (1924), p. 533.

⁴¹ Michael Roe, Australia, Britain and Migration, 1915-1940: A Study of Desperate Hopes (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 35.

⁴² Michael Roe, in Constantine ed., Emigrants and Empire...., p. 98.

With the advent of Japan as a Great Power and the rapid progress of China towards self-conscious nationalism, the ‘Pacific Problem,’ as we may briefly term it, has assumed an aspect of which no one dreamed even a quarter of a century ago. For the moment it must suffice summarily to point out that on the littoral of eastern Asia there are 1,000,000,000 coloured people inhabiting some of the most densely populated portions of the earth’s surface. Facing eastern Asia is the western coast of America, with [relatively] only a sprinkling of people. In the south lie Australia and New Zealand, the former empty as a drum.⁴³

Slowly but steadily, the sheer numbers of benefits that a large program of state-aided emigration were seen as able to provide for Great Britain and her overseas Dominions won over many converts who up until then were imbued with a minimalist and parsimonious attitude towards government purview and expenditure.

This was especially true for Australia in the early 1920s, a nation that prided itself on “speaking English, eating English food, wearing English clothes and playing English games, whereas ‘abroad’ is inhabited by immoral strangers.”⁴⁴ Because Australia was for the most part not only more consciously uniformly “British” in terms of population and identity, and due to its location so far away from Great Britain, yet so close to Japan, a power that was starting to show “aggressive inclinations, made it doubly conscious of the necessity of keeping as close to Great Britain as distance would permit.”⁴⁵ An activist policy of imperial resettlement – especially one paid for by the British taxpayer – was seen as the best defense for a “British” Australia in both a military and a bio-cultural sense.

⁴³ In *Empire Settlement* (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 14.

⁴⁴ W.H Auden, “Going into Europe,” in *Encounter*, v. 20, no. 1 (January 1963), p. 54

⁴⁵ Gwendolen Carter, *The British Commonwealth and International Security: The Role of the Dominions, 1919-1939* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1947), p. 89.

The Empire Settlement Act Takes Shape, 1920-1922

Only one year after concluding that the state should refrain from providing assisted passages to all but a select few segments of the population who were considered valuable to maintaining the strength and vitality of the British Empire – ex-soldiers, young single women and orphans – the Overseas Settlement Committee’s report of 1920 started to notice the effects of the economic slump in changing people’s attitudes towards state-aided emigration schemes. It consequently broadened its definitions of who should be judged “worthy” of receiving government assistance:

The present situation resembles in certain respects that which existed one hundred years ago, when, at the close of the Napoleonic wars, the cessation of war expenditure, the fall in wages, and other economic conditions led His Majesty’s Government to embark upon a policy of State supervision and State aid of emigration.⁴⁶

Over the next couple of years, as high rates of unemployment continued unabated in Great Britain, as the Dominions started to assert some of their newfound autonomy, with the concomitant realization that the ties that had bound the Empire together for over a century were in danger of being eclipsed either militarily, culturally, or through natural decline, as Social Darwinist ideals about racial “purity” were increasingly backed by the burgeoning science of eugenics, and as the new ideals of a more actively interventionist state all took root, the notion of the British government funding and directing imperial resettlement increasingly began to gain currency in London.

⁴⁶ “Report of the Overseas Settlement Committee for the year ended 31st December, 1919” (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1920), p. 14.

This notion of a break from the past is perhaps best embodied in the carefully-chosen words of support offered by Leo Amery of the Oversea Settlement Committee in the parliamentary debates on the Empire Settlement Bill in the British Parliament:

We must think of our problems in terms of conquest and creation – the creation of new wealth to replace the wastage of the old, the fruitful conquest of Nature to make good the terrible cost of conquering our fellow men. For the one conquest, we sent out and sacrificed the best of our manhood. For the other, the nobler conquest...we must now send forth again of our manhood and of our womanhood, not to be blown to pieces or maimed, but to win in wider fields, in the trenches of peace, for themselves and their children, what matters more than any wage, health of body and mind – the bodily health that comes of abundant space and sunshine, the confidence and content that follow freedom and opportunity. And winning these things for themselves they will win them no less for those who remain here, sending the life blood of new trade, of new hope, of a new vision of Empire pulsing through the veins of this old Mother-Country.⁴⁷

Empire Settlement won many converts by its promise to remedy a veritable host of social ills and imperial decline, at little cost to the British Treasury.

This idea had attracted sufficient notice for it to be one of the main issues taken up at the 1921 Imperial Conference. From the very beginning of the conference, Lord Milner sought to convince the governments of the various Dominions of the merits of empire resettlement.⁴⁸ He “laid it down at the outset” of that pivotal meeting “that the problem was how to distribute its white population in the way best calculated to develop and strengthen the whole Empire. Such distribution could not, he emphatically said, directly relieve abnormal unemployment, but might minimize future risk of

⁴⁷ Parliamentary Debates, Official Report, Fifth Series (1922), v. 153, p. 591.

⁴⁸ In Constantine ed., Emigrants and Empire..., p. 38.

unemployment by increasing production overseas and industry here at home.”⁴⁹ While these words were carefully chosen to appeal to the sensitivities of the Dominions, who basically solely sought agricultural laborers to fill up their empty spaces and shore up the vitality of their “British” identities, and stood in stark contrast to the language surrounding assisted emigration that was used for purely British domestic consumption – Amery for one has been quoted as saying that empire settlement would be “the best cure for the industrial situation and the serious overcrowding in this country”⁵⁰ – they had their intended effect, and “the remaining Dominion reservations had been largely overcome.”⁵¹ The Conference recommended that the British government pass enabling legislation allowing for a broad system of state-aided emigration to proceed.

The Empire Settlement Bill of 1922 was thus drafted. It was introduced into the British House of Commons on April 7. With astonishing speed it raced through that body with little debate. This is rather remarkable, especially considering the dramatic break with longstanding notions of *laissez-faire* the act represented. The bill received the requisite royal assent on May 31.⁵² It seemed as though the British Parliament, and broad swaths of the electorate, now bought part and parcel into the new notions regarding an activist state as far as state-aided passages were concerned. Stephen Constantine notes that “the encroaching statism characteristic of wartime politics between 1914 and 1918 and the postwar unemployment crisis of the early 1920s created

⁴⁹ Macnaughten ed., *Empire Opportunities...*, p. 7.

⁵⁰ In Constantine ed., *Emigrants and Empire...*, p. 40.

⁵¹ Schultz, “Finding Homes...” p. 110.

⁵² Constantine ed., *Emigrants and Empire...*, pp. 40, 41.

the conditions for a dramatic reevaluation of emigration within state departments' in Britain and overseas.⁵³ An author for the Manchester Guardian observed at the time, "before the war the very word 'emigration' came to have a sinister significance. Since then...all the governments [involved] have learned to handle the matter more wisely."⁵⁴ Many became convinced that "a growing desire for a more even spread of the white population in the Empire, economic depression and unemployment -...galvanized the [British] government into action."⁵⁵

Under the act's provisions, £1,500,000 would be set aside for the remainder of 1922, and £3,000,000 annually thereafter, to assist the passage and resettlement of those Britons deemed needy to the overseas Dominions. The costs for any emigration schemes would be split evenly between the British government and the government of the recipient Dominion or sub-entity, like British Columbia and Western Australia, each of which proposed their own schemes independently of their respective national governments.

The Empire Settlement Act and Its Intended Benefits

Ostensibly, the Empire Settlement Act as passed in 1922 seemed be a cure-all that would in one fell swoop cure the British Empire of its proximate woes in the

⁵³ *Ibid* p. 42.

⁵⁴ As quoted in the article "Emigration is Vital Matter," in the Vancouver Daily Province, April 27, 1922, p. 1.

⁵⁵ John Darwin, "The Dominion Idea in International Politics," in William Roger Louis and Judith Brown, eds., The Oxford History of the British Empire (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), v. 5, p. 72.

immediate aftermath of World War I and its more structural difficulties it had suffered from for some time.

After 1900 social imperialist ideas challenged orthodox liberal political economy with increasing authority. The debate about emigration was bound up with fears of pauperism, physical and moral deterioration, the political threat from the ‘dangerous classes’ and the challenges of foreign competition. Emigrationists and imperialist ideologues presented Empire settlement as a palliative for class conflict in the United Kingdom and as an instrument of imperial organic unity.⁵⁶

Great Britain would be able to deflect a looming crisis by literally shipping off the potential agitation that ex-servicemen and women, the poor, and the Celt might have stirred up at home to the far corners of the British Empire. There, it was hoped, these settlers would remain loyal to the British Crown, British institutions, the British “race,” and to British industry.

Many in Canada and Australia also envisioned imperial resettlement as a way to recruit soldier-settlers, especially the Highland Scots, who were closely associated in the public imagination as being the architects of the Empire.

Soldiers of Highland regiments were settled in British America after the conquest of Quebec and became successful colonists. Later some 30,000 United Empire Loyalists were allowed land and supplied with lumber and other necessities with free rations for the first year and partial rations for two years following. Many of them were soldiers but they became successful farmers and were the pioneers of thrifty settlements.⁵⁷

On the other side of the Pacific, the Premier of Western Australia, Sir James Mitchell, sought to attract said immigrants to his state, largely due to “the small population...and

⁵⁶ Constantine ed., *Emigrants and Empire...*, pp. 41, 42.

⁵⁷ “Soldier Immigration,” in the *Victoria Daily Colonist*, June 20, 1922, p. 6.

the consequent shortage of labour...the second influence was the much vaunted ‘populate or perish’ catchcry, related of course to the White Australia policy and the fear of Asian infiltration from the north.”⁵⁸ Britain would be rid of a population that threatened that nation’s sense of natural ethnic and cultural gentility and effortless superiority. The Dominions simultaneously would receive a population that would boost the ‘British’ component of their population and in doing so their quintessential “Britishness,” and defend against threats both real and perceived to this status quo.

The migrants themselves would be “redeemed” at both an individual and a nationalistic level. In the words of the eugenicist J.A. Froude, empire settlement would “empty our towns of half the squalid creatures that draggle about the gutters, and pour them out [to the Dominions] to grow fat and rosy again”⁵⁹ Lastly, British industry, through this process of rejuvenation, would as a by-product be able to escape the malaise and overall decline that structurally predated World War I, but was grossly exacerbated by that conflict. What remained to be seen, however, is whether the Empire Settlement Act, which was simultaneously forward-looking and anachronistic, would be the economic, racial, and political panacea its supporters touted it as being.

⁵⁸ Victor Richard Draper, Rockingham – The Visions Unfold: A History of the Rockingham District (Rockingham, WA: City of Rockingham, 1997), p. 126.

⁵⁹ As quoted in Richards, Britannia’s Children..., p. 201.

Victoria Daily Colonist March 21 1922 p. 15



"A Family Council"—from Punch, London

The British Lion's Restless Brood

Restless to realise all the blessings of their united greatness and their individual equality—a restlessness of growth and readjustment, transforming a vast Empire into a world-wide Commonwealth of Free Nations. When did this great change begin? How was America responsible for its beginning? In what way did Canada hasten it? And Ireland? By what steps and through what difficulties is the process continuing? What important steps remain to be taken? Shall America hinder or help?

Canada, the Land of Potentialities

How does Canada compare with the ancient Roman Empire? With the British Isles? With the United States? How may Canada determine the future destiny of the world commonwealth of Greater Britain? Under what circumstances did the close friendship between the United States and Canada begin, and what is its special significance? How have the physical characteristics of Canada affected the development of her national life? What are the fabulous natural resources of the Dominion?

"Old Ireland" the New

When and how did the "rebirth of the Gael" begin, and how did it result in the Irish Free State? What was at the root of Ireland's trouble with England? What is the "peculiar cultural and spiritual ancestry" of the Irish people? What is the Irish attitude toward death? What was the Irish Republican Army really like, and what are the facts from both points of view regarding the Sinn Féin? Of what importance is the Irish Free State as an economic factor in the world? What is the effect of the new Agreement on Ulster?

India, Seething With Unrest

Will India break away from the British Commonwealth and become an independent Moslem state; will the Mohammedans restore the Sultan of Turkey to his former power; or will India remain as a dazzling jewel in the British crown? What is the wonderful story of this land of extremes, the home of one of the oldest civilizations in history—the "motherland of religion"? What are the most marked causes of the great unrest and discontent?

America's Attitude Toward Great Britain

Why have some papers been declaring that war between America and Great Britain "is inevitable," while others insist that we are "entering what is the prevailing American opinion, and upon what is it based? Should the United States share with Great Britain the burdens of the world as a whole"? How will the rivalry between the British Commonwealth and the American Commonwealth for world trade be carried on, and with what result?

THE BIG STORY OF A GIANT EMPIRE CHANGING TO A DEMOCRATIC COMMONWEALTH

Told in the Special British Commonwealth Number of the Literary Digest

OUT TO-DAY

Australia, the Real Land of the Golden Fleece

The oldest continent on earth; larger than the United States; no bigger than all Europe; a land of wonders and mysteries; surpasses all other peoples in the world in per capita wealth and productive power; seven per cent of her people of pure British descent; a laboratory of political experiments—what is the relation of Australia to the Crown, how is the country governed, what are her political principles, and what is her place in the economic programme of the world?

New Zealand First

Did you know that New Zealand was the first country in the world to make compulsory the conviction and extradition of industrial spies? That it was the first country to establish universal pension, age, state fire insurance, state maternity homes, non-partisan S.B.P. pensions, and many other social and economic reforms? Do you want to know all about this remarkable country of which it is declared that "nowhere is the level of comfort higher, there is no millionaire, very few rich persons, and no class of people in anywhom there is the margin of subsistence."

Changing Tides in South Africa

What marvelous transformation in South Africa has brought about the most dramatic chapters in the modern history of the Empire? What caused the Boers who fought against the British in 1900, to fight for the British in 1917? How did the Union of South Africa become possible, and what claim to distinction as "the only real democracy of the world" does it hold? Why is the color problem "the most serious question before the people of South Africa"? What is the thrilling and picturesque story of the taking and making of Rhodesia?

British Power in the West Indies

What special American significance has been found in the fact that a chain of islands flanks the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean? What are the social, industrial, political, and commercial character and possibilities of these groups of several thousand islands? Is there a probability of an Imperial Federation of the Caribbean Colonies under the leadership of Jamaica?

Bases of British Strength

With all its wealth, natural resources, financial strength, and means of defense on land and sea how is England kept from starving? How are the products of the British Empire related to the life of the rest of the world? How is British naval supremacy affected by the Washington agreement? Where have the sons of Britain been going for the past 200 years, and with what effect upon the motherland?

British Character, Culture and Life

From what "hated enemy" is the dominant strain of English blood traced? What are the natural characteristics of the people and their attitude toward war? What is their notion of private rights, and how does it affect their government? What contradictory things are found in their character and temper, and what general genetic accounts for them? How is the growth of democracy changing the British people?

Egypt Under the British Regime

What modern wonders in Egypt compare, for greatness, with the ancient pyramids and the ruins of Luxor? What has Britain been doing for the last forty years in Lower Egypt and along the Upper Nile? How has Egypt developed, what is the present condition of her people, and when did the new Egyptian "nationalist movement" become militant?

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MARCH 11TH ISSUE

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Illustration 10.

Source: Victoria Daily Colonist, March 11, 1922, p. 15.

Table 5.
Empire Settlement Act, 1922

12 and 13 Geo. 5, Chapter 13

An Act to make better provision for furthering British settlement in His Majesty's

Oversea Dominions

[31 May 1922]

Be it enacted by the King's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows : -

(1)—It shall be lawful for the Secretary of State, in association with the government of any part of His Majesty's Dominions, or with public authorities or public or private organisations wither in the United Kingdom or in any part of such Dominions, to formulate and co-operate in carrying out agreed schemes for affording joint assistance to suitable persons in the United Kingdom who intend to settle in any part of His Majesty's Oversea Dominions.

(2) An agreed scheme under this Act may be either:---

(a) a development or a land settlement scheme ; or

(b) a scheme for facilitating development in or migration to any part of His Majesty's Oversea Dominions by assistance with passages, initial allowances, training or otherwise;

and shall make provision with respect to the contributions to be made, either by way of grant or by way of loan or otherwise, by the parties to the agreed scheme towards the expenses of the scheme.

(3) The Secretary of State shall have all such powers as may be necessary for carrying out his obligations under any scheme made in pursuance of this Act :

Provided that –

- (a) the Secretary of State shall not agree to any scheme without the consent of the Treasury, who shall be satisfied that the contributions of the government, authority, or organisation with whom the scheme is agreed towards the expenses of the scheme bear a proper relation to the contribution of the Secretary of State ; and
- (b) the contribution of the Secretary of State shall not in any case exceed half the expenses of the scheme ; and
- (c) the liability of the Secretary of State to make contributions under the scheme shall not exceed beyond a period of fifteen years after the passing of this Act.

(4) Any expenses of the Secretary of State under this Act shall be paid out of moneys provided by Parliament :

Provided that the aggregate amount expended by the Secretary of State under any scheme or schemes under this Act shall not exceed one million five hundred thousand pounds in the financial year current at the date of the passing of this Act, or three million pounds in any subsequent financial year, exclusive of the amount of any sums received by way of interest on or repayment of advances previously made.

2. His Majesty may by Order in Council direct that this Act shall apply to any territory which is under His Majesty's protection, or in respect of which a mandate is being exercised by the government of any part of His Majesty's Dominions as if that territory were a part of His Majesty's Dominions, and, on the making of any such order, this Act shall, subject to the provisions of the Order, have effect accordingly.

3. This Act may be cited as the Empire Settlement Act, 1922.

Table 6.

Emigration from Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 1922-1929

Year	Net Emigration		Assisted Migrants	Percentage of Total Migration	Natural Increase
	Empire	Foreign			
1922	68,723	37,347	6479	n.d.	345,260
1923	112,624	86,054	36,185	23	373,272
1924	84,861	6401	41,044	30	301,438
1925	62,886	21,373	39,530	37.5	284,273
1926	93,227	22,311	65,544	48.8	288,763
1927	80,549	17,141	60,916	49.7	208,865
1928	62,812	14,917	47,855	44	239,388
1929	62,951	24,518	72,213	67.5	138,766

Source: Great Britain. "Economic Advisory Council Committee on Empire Migration Report, Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty, May 1932" (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1932), p. 80.

Table 7.

Number of Immigrant Arrivals in Canada from the United Kingdom, United States and Other Countries,
 Showing Separately Immigrants from Central and Southern European Countries

Year	Total	U.K.	U.S.A.	Other Countries	Central and Southern Europe
1921	148,477	74,262	48,059	26,156	12,072
1922	89,999	30,020	29,345	21,634	12,676
1923	72,887	34,508	22,007	16,372	8083
1924	148,560	72,919	20,521	55,120	21,376
1925	111,362	53,178	15,818	42,366	16,076
1926	96,064	37,030	18,778	40,256	22,144
1927	143,991	49,784	21,025	73,182	51,374
1928	151,597	50,872	25,007	75,718	48,182
1929	167,722	59,497	30,560	77,665	54,456
1930	163,288	64,082	30,727	68,479	n.d.

Source: *Ibid* p. 83.

Table 8.

Gross, Net and Assisted Immigration to Australia, 1919-1930

	Gross		Net		Immig.	Immig
	Immig.	Gross	British	Net	Assisted by	Aided
	From UK	Immig	Immig	Immig	Australia	by UK (ESA)
1919	N.d.	N.d.	N.d.	N.d.	245	N.a.
1920	N.d.	N.d.	N.d.	27,606	9059	N.a.
1921	N.d.	N.d.	17,630	17,525	14,682	N.a.
1922	N.d.	N.d.	34,729	40,157	24,258	5611
1923	N.d.	N.d.	35,154	39,714	26,645	24,221
1924	19,572	30,974	35,734	46,069	25,036	23,645
1925	47,596	66,477	32,164	39,801	24,827	22,527
1926	42,219	59,664	38,482	44,783	31,260	32,689
1927	41,945	67,078	39,872	51,580	30,123	29,136
1928	31,149	48,233	24,746	30,054	22,394	20,603
1929	19,700	31,698	10,268	11,820	12,943	11,528
1930	8369	17,537	(-7538)	(-8530)	2683	1978

Source: Michael Roe, Australia, Britain and Migration, 1915-1940: A Study of Desperate Hopes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 3, as compiled from the Demography Bulletin and Labour Report.

Notes:

1. N.d. means no data available. N.a. is short for not applicable.
2. The columns that indicate gross immigration to Australia only count those who intended to permanently settle in the Commonwealth. Likewise, those columns that count the net numbers of new settlers subtract from the former figures all those who left Australia regardless of reason.
3. The first column (Gross Immigration from Britain) counts residents of both the United Kingdom and, after 1922, the Irish Free State. The third column (Net British Immigrants) refers to those from throughout the British Empire/Commonwealth.

CHAPTER VIII: FROM BONNIE SHORES TO BARCALAY SOUND: THE RECRUITMENT OF HEBRIDEANS TO BRITISH COLUMBIA, 1924

In February 1924, the Minister of Lands for the province of British Columbia, Thomas Dufferin “Duff” Pattullo, decided to take advantage of the Empire Settlement Act to revive Begg’s plan to transport Hebridean crofters and resettle them on the province’s Pacific Coast. Pattullo described this scheme as follows:

The settler leaves the Hebrides with his passage paid by...the Imperial or Dominion Governments to British Columbia. On his arrival in British Columbia he has a credit of \$600 to be advanced as required. He will be placed on a suitable piece of agricultural land, either on the Coast islands or the Coast mainland, of an area from five to twenty acres...He will be charged the current prices for the land...not to exceed \$25.00 an acre, with a rebate of \$10.00 an acre for every acre put under cultivation within a period of five years.¹

The initial public response in British Columbia to the announcement of Pattullo’s proposal to the Scottish Office was quite positive. An article in the Vancouver Daily Province stated that “if British Columbia wants settlers, she could scarcely do no better than encourage the coming of these thrifty folk from the Scottish Isles.”² Across the Strait of Georgia, The Daily Colonist of Victoria reported that “a considerable settlement of Hebrideans on Vancouver Island could shortly be expected...[Pattullo]

¹ National Archives of Scotland (NAS), File AF 62/1964/1, letter from Pattullo to Agent-General for British Columbia in London F.C. Wade, dated March 13, 1924

² “The Hebrideans,” February 27, 1924, p. 6.

pointed out that...immigration would be of inestimable value to the country and every province and district in it.”³

In Scotland, the scheme seemed to be held with equal regard. According to a contemporary article in the Stornoway Gazette, the main newspaper of the Hebrides:

It is a well-known fact that the Scotchman, and in particular the Hebridean, makes a first-rate colonist, his native talents and sane outlook on life enabling him to make the very most of the new conditions. The following extract of a letter written by a lady in [Canada] will prove of interest to our readers: ‘These Hebridean emigrants [sic] have made good on the whole and have given the very best satisfaction. Of course in a big crowd like that there are always a few ‘bums’ but that is to be expected.’⁴

The sentiments expressed in the final sentence of this quote explains in some part the ultimate downfall of this scheme, which will be addressed in further detail in the following chapter. For the time being, however, the news that the provincial government was to subsidize the transportation of destitute Scottish Hebridean farmers to British Columbia was greeted initially with great public approbation, at least as far as the contemporary media was concerned.

As evidenced by Pattullo’s own words, the province’s involvement in encouraging emigration from the Hebrides to British Columbia was certainly not limited to their transportation alone. To ensure that the “right” type of settler was chosen for state support, the province would select a representative, whose job it would be to interview and vet prospective emigrants. Those deemed worthy would have their passage paid for, with the costs being split evenly between the governments of Great

³ “Hebrideans to Live on Island,” April 11, 1924, p. 5.

⁴ “News and Views,” January 3, 1924, p. 2.

Britain and British Columbia. Once they had arrived on the west coast of Canada, the Hebridean settler would receive £120 per family to help with the purchasing of boats, nets, and other necessary accoutrements required to establish themselves in the province's fishing industry. Anything the immigrants could not produce for themselves would be purchased at a company store.

Why the Hebrideans I: Their "Inherent" Skills and Advantages

The Hebrideans were chosen in particular for resettlement in British Columbia because of their experience with deep-sea fishing back at home. Advocates of this scheme also pointed to the perceived climactic and topographical similarities between the Hebrides and the islands along the shores of British Columbia. One in particular wrote that "hardworking and industrious people, skilled fishermen and fish-curers, will be given an opportunity to leave Scotland, where adverse trade conditions and a succession of bad seasons have brought them to poverty, and come to Canada, where working under conditions very similar to those which they have become accustomed they will be able to live a prosperous and fruitful life."⁵ It was assumed that the Hebrideans could effortlessly transfer their skills to build up a vital component of the provincial economy and the provincial psyche (fishing being one of the oldest and most lucrative industries in British Columbia), without the province having to expend a great deal of time and money on their training.

⁵ "Fifty Families of East Coast of Scotland Chosen as Nucleus of Barkeley Sound Fishing Town," in the Victoria Daily Times, July 29, 1924, p. 1.

The Hebrideans were also chosen in particular for resettlement because of their bivalent status in contemporary racial/ethnic thought. They enjoyed a privileged cachet compared to other immigrants to Canada on the part of their being “British.” This status made them possibly worthy of “redemption.” There was an assumption, depending on how immutable one interpreted Social Darwinism as being, that once the Hebrideans were removed from their stark, barren, isolated home, and transplanted onto the undeveloped, rural, lush landscape of a still-young, vibrant British Columbia, that the “British” element of the Hebridean character could finally break free from the “Celtic” shell that imprisoned it. An article in the Stornoway Gazette, while reflecting the sensitivities of its Hebridean audience by omitting the more derogatory categorizations of the Highland Celt, addressed this theme rather directly. It argued that “the Gaelic race, if placed under favourable condition for development and expansion in one of our colonies, might be destined to become a great, possibly the greatest race or nation in the world. Such is impossible in Lewis, or indeed in the Highlands.”⁶

From a more practical vantage point, British Columbia would also gain a population known for its martial prowess that, it was hoped, would help defend its west coast against any possible foreign threats. The Hebrideans were seen as being imbued with these “innate qualities of the Highlander – stoicism, loyalty and martial prowess” which lent them a reputation of being “natural” fighters and warriors that Britain could

⁶ “The Lewis Crofts,” January 3, 1924, p. 2.

call on at any time to defend its imperial interests, particularly on the more tenuous frontiers of the British Empire where their services would be most needed.⁷

This was particularly true following World War I, when “Scots filled the Highland...regiments with their many proud battle-honours: the Royal Scots alone had thirty battalions during the war.”⁸ Yet despite their valorous service during the war, far from being rewarded for their bravery and loyalty, they returned to the Hebrides to experience unprecedented despair and destitution. The 1920s marked the nadir of the Hebrides’ admittedly bleak economic history. The British Government, in the wake of the recent agitation in the Highland’s and the utter failure of Lord Leverhulme’s modernization program for Lewis, apparently concluded that no amount of aid, no matter how paternalistic it may have been from the islanders’ perspective, could ever redeem such a people. Once again it turned to the panacea it so often used in the past whenever social unrest reared its head – emigration.

Once removed from their homeland, where they lived “on the verge of starvation,” it was hoped that their languid, yet potentially violent, nature would be effectively neutered, or better yet channeled and then directed against the non-British threats that the Empire encountered. In 1923, the Deputy Attorney General of British

⁷ Edward M. Spiers, *The Scottish Soldier and Empire, 1854-1902* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 3; Heather Streets, in her chapter “Identity in the Highland Regiments in the Nineteenth Century: Soldier, Region, Nation,” in Steve Murdoch and A. MacKillop, eds., *Fighting for Identity: Scottish Military Experience c. 1550-1900* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2002), p. 219.

⁸ Michael Brander, *The Emigrant Scots* (London: Constable, 1982), p. 77.

Columbia, William D. Carter, pointed out the laudatory contributions the Hebrideans might make to his province:

I can only add that the settlement of the Island of Vancouver and adjoining shores of the mainland, by these hardy and loyal men cannot fail to become a source of great strength to the British Empire, from a strategic point of view. They are descendents of the men who have been foremost in the defence of Great Britain, and they will form a reliable and ready coast guard of the Western shores, should danger loom up in that direction at any future time.⁹

If the whole coastline “was to be reserved for them,” then surely these more martial motives operated equally as strongly as providing the Hebrideans opportunities to fish.

Why the Hebrideans II: Defenders Against Japan and the Japanese

Of course, the only credible military threat to British Columbia these Hebridean farmer-fishermen and hopefully militia would counter came from Japan. Members of the Legislative Assembly of the province became especially attuned to the potential danger that Japan now posed to the province. Its territorial acquisitions, combined with advances in military technology, meant that Japan was now within actual striking distance of British Columbia should the general peace suddenly disintegrate. A.W. Neill, Member of the Provincial Legislature from Comox-Alberni, the riding on Vancouver Island where the Hebrideans were to be resettled, introduced a resolution in the provincial legislature that would “consider the question of defense of our sea coast...a policy of defense might be evolved under the name of the ‘Canadian policy’...the drydock at Esquimalt, which will be finished shortly, will be of vital

⁹ British Columbia Archives (BCA), MS-0003, memorandum dated July 11, 1923.

importance to any British naval operations in the Pacific. Today it is practically open to the world with only a few obsolete guns to protect it.”¹⁰

The fact that British Columbia depended on an inherently “inferior” power racially for its defense and security during World War I, while the supposedly “superior” Royal Navy was nowhere to be seen, was unsettling for many to say the very least. An official editorial in the Victoria Daily Colonist warned that “conditions have arisen, growing out of the Great War and the Naval Limitations Treaty, which define an increase in naval and military responsibilities... We are lagging behind and our senses are dulled to a situation fraught with grave responsibility.”¹¹ It was lamented that “Britain... is spending the same amount on naval defence now as in 1903” with even less personnel.¹²

¹⁰ “Neill of Alberni Urges Coast Defense Policy and Protect Shipping,” in The Daily News (Prince Rupert, BC), March 15, 1925, p. 1

¹¹ “Naval Expenditures,” July 6, 1924, p. 4. The Naval Limitations Treaty refers to the pact reached at the Washington Conference of 1922, which established the 5-5-3 standard for the tonnage of naval vessels. This meant that for every five tons the United States and the British Empire had in service, the Japanese were allowed three. Another provision of the agreements was that no new military bases could be constructed in the Pacific; the status quo as it existed in 1921 was to be maintained. While this on the surface might seem as an amicable and equitable arrangement, it marked two important developments that further exacerbated regional insecurity: first, it was a dramatic recognition of the downgrading of British naval influence worldwide, by recognizing parity with the United States (prior to World War I, the British had maintained a policy known as the Two-Power Standard, whereby the Royal Navy was to have twice the capability of any other single naval power). Second, up until the Conference, Great Britain and Japan were in a formal alliance (see the chapter on World War I for more information). Japan enjoyed a great deal of prestige by entering into that compact, and she also used the agreement as leverage to ensure that her status, not to mention the respect afforded her emigrants in Australia and Canada (and elsewhere in the British Empire), were respected in London. The abrogation of this alliance was widely perceived as a betrayal by the British in Japan, whose leaders actively courted the compact’s renewal. For further information, please see Ian Nish, Alliance in Decline: A Study in Anglo-Japanese Relations (London: The Athlone Press, 1972), Chapters 21-23.

¹² In “Japanese Naval Defence,” in the Victoria Daily Colonist, May 20, 1924, p. 6.

The threat Japan posed to British Columbia, or so it seemed to many, was by no means limited to the one the Japanese navy and army posed should it strike from its new possessions in the North Pacific. Indeed, just as troublesome for many British Columbians was the ever-expanding numbers of Japanese immigrants and their progeny in this outpost of “Britishness” in the North Pacific. Their visibility increased exponentially during World War I, as Japanese men and women filled vacancies left by those white British Columbians who fought overseas. After the war, many veterans “discovered that civilian jobs they had vacated during the war had been filled with people they considered to be aliens. Hardened by their war experience and conditioned with a ‘friend or foe’ attitude, veterans usually identified the alien immigrant with the enemy they had recently fought against in Europe.”¹³

This sentiment was by no means exclusive to those returning from the trenches in Europe and elsewhere. R.S. Hanna, a prominent resident of Vancouver, wrote a letter to the Prime Minister, King, that entreated him to take action to counter the expanding Japanese presence. Hanna argued that the Japanese “are not wanted, and are a great detriment and where they are they are so numerous and rapidly multiplying... There was a time when Britain requested Canada to go slowly, but [the Anglo-Japanese Alliance] treaty does not now exist, and so there is no reason why Canada should not prevent them entering by legislation at the next session.”¹⁴ His

¹³ Kent Fedorowich, Unfit for Heroes: Reconstruction and Soldier Settlement in the Empire between the Wars (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 73.

¹⁴ National Archives of Canada (NAC), RG-76, Vol. 85, File 9309, Part 12, letter dated October 30, 1924.

opinion was seconded by fellow city resident F.H. Barber, who wrote to the Honorable James Stewart of the Department of Immigration that “if we do not stop Japanese and Chinese immigration into Canada, we can soon say good-bye to the white race.”¹⁵

David Grant, the provincial magistrate, echoed these sentiments. In a letter addressed, like Hanna’s, to the Prime Minister, he wrote:

Permit me to say that the Oriental is a menace to this Coast and must be dealt with promptly and effectively if this greatest Province in our Dominion is to be saved for the Anglo-Saxon race and the Empire. At this stage I say no more...I may say to you, in confidence, that if there is any way that can be found to avoid the obligation you seek to impose the Jap will find it.¹⁶

Such opinions only increased both numerically and in intensity in the early 1920s.

Unfortunately for men and women like Grant and Hanna, British Columbia was fairly constricted in its own ability to eliminate this “threat” to the Province. Ottawa forbade Victoria from infringing too harshly on the civil rights of Japanese already resident in the province, and the Canadian government also refused to pass a law that specifically barred the immigration of Japanese nationals to Canada, largely at the insistence of the Colonial Office in London that none of its Dominions approve such patently exclusionary legislation for fear of the repercussions both within its multinational empire and in the international community in general.¹⁷ Many in the

¹⁵ BCA, GR-1547, Reel 0796, letter written January 6, 1923.

¹⁶ BCA GR-1547, letter dated April 24, 1923.

¹⁷ Such laws “disallowed” by the Canadian Government included a requirement that Japanese immigrants pass a literacy test in a European language of the examiner’s choosing, popularly known as a “Natal Act” and the basis of the “White Australia” policy (1908), a prohibition on the importation of Asian laborers to British Columbia (November 1922), the outright banning of Asians from numerous industrial and commercial activities (December 1924), and allowing the use of corporal punishment against drug

province thus turned their attention to the importation of Hebridean crofters, a more palatable means of stimulating the same goal.

On the surface, this scheme appeared to be a magnanimous gesture on the part of the government of British Columbia. It would benefit a distressed population, who would come to enjoy levels of prosperity undreamed of in Britain. It certainly gained the favor of London, who was only too happy to seize on the opportunity to rid itself of a potentially dangerous populace. Ottawa craved British immigrants, so it too would aid this scheme, in spirit if not in funds. Tokyo could say little about a matter that seemingly did not affect them. This scheme, however, would achieve the same exact goals as any act of exclusion or bigotry passed by Victoria.

The attempts by British Columbia to recruit Hebrideans to its shores was in no small part inspired by the widespread trepidation that an advance guard of Japanese spies was accumulating, working to prepare British Columbia so that their compatriots could launch their inevitable invasion. There was at the time a “fear that the Japanese government was fostering emigration to the Pacific coast in order to ultimately conquer [British Columbia] was part of the anxiety-ridden ethos [prevalent there], so picturesquely vivified by the propagandists.”¹⁸ Articles began to circulate widely in the press that included fantastic “charges that immigrant fishermen were really Japanese

dealers, who at the time were almost exclusively considered “Asian” (1925). Source: Journals of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia (Victoria, BC), 1908, 1922, 1924, 1925 editions.

¹⁸ Ken Adachi, The Enemy that Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), p. 133.

naval reservists, industriously charting the coastline for future use.”¹⁹ In December 1924, the provincial Minister of Mines, the Honorable William Sloan, attempted to stir his fellow legislators into taking action to prevent this outcome. He implored, “Was British Columbia, with its 500,000 square miles of territory, rich in natural resource and its 500,000 odd population, to permit this peaceful penetration to continue? If the State of California, with its 3,500,000 population, could not assimilate its Japanese and Chinese immigrants was it safe for British Columbia with its handful of white people to attempt to do so?”²⁰

The mere presence of the Japanese in the province was seen to be at the very least destabilizing. According to a brief on the subject of Japanese immigration to North America composed for the U.S. Department of State in 1921:

The general system of peaceful penetration followed by the Japanese is to first supplant white labor by working for less money or longer hours than would the whites; then, having driven out white competitors, to raise the rate of wage until it is as high or higher than that asked by white labor; then to refuse to work for the whites under wage, and to work only for Japanese for wages or under the ‘cooperative’ plan, or to lease land from whites, and finally, where possible, to secure ownership of the land and control of related businesses.²¹

When this is combined with the notion, as appeared in the Vancouver Sun that same year, that the Japanese “long for glory, for more land, for the world’s recognition as equals...Where are they to get that land?...British Columbia, land of fruit, flowers,

¹⁹ *Ibid* p. 133.

²⁰ “Member for Nanaimo Makes Strong Speech in Legislature Against Oriental Immigration,” in the Nanaimo Free Press, December 18, 1924, p. 1.

²¹ V.S. McClatchy, “Japanese Immigration and Colonization: Brief Prepared for Consideration of the State Department,” p. 53, in Valentine Stuart McClatchy, Four Anti-Japanese Pamphlets (New York: Arno Press, 1978)

sunshine, fertility, where the Japanese by self-denial in a different mode of living defeat all native competitors,”²² it is not too difficult to see the sense of fright many whites in British Columbia felt regarding the presence of the Japanese in their midst.

Perhaps in no other industry in British Columbia did the Japanese attract more negative attention regarding their growing dominance than in the province’s fisheries. It seemed to many British Columbians that “ever since they immigrated to Canada, the Japanese had been associated with fishing.”²³ During World War I, this association strengthened immensely, as white fishermen answered the call to arms and the Japanese replaced them trolling the bountiful coastal waters. After the war, however, the numbers of Japanese employed in the fishing industry of British Columbia started once again to increase dramatically, even though white labor was again available to the fishing outfits. In 1919, fishermen of Japanese extraction received 3267 licenses that permitted them to fish in provincial waters; this was almost half of the total amount issued by the provincial government that year.²⁴ So important was this issue that during the provincial election campaign of December 1921, a Liberal Party candidate for the federal Parliament, H.H. Stevens, declared that he “regretted to see the B.C. fisheries so largely in the hands of the Asiatics.”²⁵

²² As quoted in Patricia Roy, The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man’s Province, 1914-41 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003), p. 168.

²³ Adachi, The Enemy that Never Was..., p. 7.

²⁴ Charles Young and Helen Reid, The Japanese Canadians (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1938), p. 43.

²⁵ “Liberal Candidates Are Pledged to a White British Columbia,” in the Vancouver Daily Province, December 3, 1921, p. 27.

In light of this perceived threat to British Columbia that Japan and the Japanese posed to the province's fervid "British" identity and its supposed security in both the physical and metaphysical senses, it is little surprise that so many politicians and others turned towards the state-sponsored immigration of Hebrideans as an effective and cheap countermeasure to remedy this "penetration." As mentioned earlier, one of the most attractive aspects to this scheme for many British Columbians was that, by introducing a population of Highland Scots, the province would also gain a valuable boost to its essential "British" character that many politicians and others thought was being assailed by newer, stronger threats from within and from overseas. In the words of the immigration advocate J.B. Thornhill:

The settlement of the seaboard of British Columbia is one of the most important problems of the Empire, and, at the same time, one of the most difficult, for it will no more pay to clear dense forest now than before the war it paid to build Dreadnoughts ... What we want is a series of settlements by young married Englishmen...drawn from the agricultural and seafaring villages of the British Isles.²⁶

What better place to look for such men and women than the Outer Hebrides, where such a population already existed and which conveniently also had an inbuilt tradition of emigration?

Pattullo himself, holding true to his own Scottish roots, was even more specific than Thornhill. In an address he gave to the Canadian Club in 1923, Pattullo stressed that "we need sturdy settlers for this country. I am not going to talk to you today about

²⁶ BCA, MS 0003, Reel A1797, vol. 14, no. 2, "The Settlement of the Coastal Belt of British Columbia," published in 1922.

the sons of our men from the North of the Tweed. Scotchman after scotchman [sic] has come to talk about his success. Englishmen, however, can succeed equally too.”²⁷ An article in The Scotsman emphasized the “Scottish” aspect of the Hebridean, by applauding the notion that the “Scots had achieved one great fact in history, and it was worth taking note of at this time. They had shown more than any country in the world they could preserve the strongest possible feeling for their national origin and nevertheless play a proud part in the development of wider communities.”²⁸ It was widely assumed that they would bring this fervor for Empire and their expertise in imperial development to British Columbia. These Hebrideans, themselves from one of the furthestmost frontiers of Great Britain, would once again be deployed to shore up yet another distant frontier in a time of need.

All of these men in their arguments highlighted the urgency of such a scheme that reflected the heightened insecurity British Columbia experienced in the interwar period. The 1921 Canadian census revealed that slightly less than half of the population of the province had been born in Canada, and only 27 percent were natives of British Columbia. Accordingly, “to keep their province ‘British’ or ‘Anglo-Saxon,’ white British Columbians called for encouraging immigrants of the ‘right kind.’”²⁹ A letter from the Agent General of British Columbia resident in London, F.C. Wade, to the

²⁷ BCA, MS 0003, Reel A1798, v. 16, no. 1, speech dated 4/20/1923.

²⁸ “St. Andrew’s Night in London,” December 1, 1921, p. 8.

²⁹ Roy, The Oriental Question..., p. 55.

provincial Premier John Oliver, stressed the need to maintain the imperial tie through an active and robust policy of stimulating immigration (and capital) from Great Britain:

Meantime, the people of the United Kingdom are tired of living on a volcano, old estates and family treasures are being sold as rapidly as possible and there is a general desire to go to Canada, or some other part of the Empire. The other Dominions realize that now is the time to get British settlers and British capital and are doing everything possible to take advantage of present conditions. There will never again be another chance to fill Canada with British stock and British money.³⁰

It was hoped that the province would procure as much of these settlers as possible from the Outer Hebrides of Scotland, for reasons listed above.

One of the main reasons why the Hebrideans were targeted in particular for such a colonization scheme was specifically so that they would drive the Japanese out of the provincial fisheries and ultimately out of the province altogether. A member of the provincial legislature, Col. Cyrus Beck, asserted that “he was against the promotion of immigration generally, but in this particular instance he commended [Pattullo] for his efforts. ‘These are the best people in the world,’ he declared. ‘They will succeed. Furthermore, we are trying to get the Orientals out of the fishing industry and this is our opportunity.’”³¹ Father Andrew Macdonnell, a leading advocate of the state-sponsored mass importation of Hebridean laborers to British Columbia, attempted to stir up legislative support for this project by arguing that “provided the British Columbia Government really means business and intends to replace her Japanese fishermen with European, [he] can bring out several hundred families of Hebrideans exactly suited to

³⁰ BCA, GR-441, letter dated September 1, 1920.

³¹ “B.C. eager for Hebridean settlers,” in the Vancouver Daily Province, December 4, 1924, p. ?

[the fishing] industry.”³² Arguably the main attraction of this scheme was not the attempt to provide a destitute people with a new chance for prosperity, the reason often provided for public consumption, nor was it to shore up the province’s “British” character, but it was the chance to eliminate once and for all the presence of the Japanese in the vital fishing industry of the province.

The Hebridean Scots and Social Darwinist Hierarchies in the 1920s

This was in large part attributable to the unique position the Hebridean occupied in the Social Darwinist ethnic/racialist hierarchies that enthralled significant sections of the population of British Columbia. Their “Celtic” status apparently doomed them to penury and degeneration. Even those who publicly applauded the Hebrideans and their value as colonists betrayed this praise in private. To quote the British Colonial Secretary at the time, J.H. Thomas:

In any case, the standard of living of the Oriental races...cannot be so very much lower than that of the crofter fisherman of the Highlands and Islands (of Scotland)...I think we may safely express the opinion that it is desirable to encourage the migration of crofter fishermen in congested districts in the Outer Hebrides to British Columbia, but I doubt if we can express an opinion on the question whether they would compete with the Japs...but they would have wider opportunities generally in British Columbia than in their present environment.³³

The Hebrideans were expected to earn and live on wages far lower than those paid to their unassailably “Anglo-Saxon” counterparts. In fact, part of the reason these immigrants were only allocated £120 per family was because such a paltry sum would

³² NAS, AF 51/72, “Hebridean Fishermen for Canada: Inadequate Offer,” newspaper article dated November 21, 1924.

³³ NAS AF 62/1961/1, letter from J.M. Vince, Dominions Development Ltd., to Colonial Secretary J.H. Thomas, June 30, 1924.

make them beholden to the fishing companies just as the Japanese had been. In fact, it was predicted they would have to sell the fish they caught to them at the same exact price paid to the Japanese.³⁴ Seeing as the Hebrideans eked out a hardscrabble existence on the low standard of living they enjoyed at home, it was widely assumed and even understood that they would and should live on frighteningly low wages and inhabit patently substandard housing. These expectations were a wholesale betrayal of the “rehabilitation” rhetoric put forth for public consumption and used to convince the British Treasury and the Scottish Office to allow this scheme to proceed.

The official editorial of The Daily News of Prince Rupert manages to in a rather succinct fashion both extol and disparage the simultaneously “British,” “Scottish” and “Celtic” Hebrideans.

Immigrants from the Hebrides, if they decide to come here, will be made extremely welcome. They are a hardy people and would make good settlers anywhere on the seaboard where they might engage in fishing. A recent article telling about them and the famine conditions in their country says of them: ‘At the best these people barely make a livelihood. Their life is a continual struggle against a relentless soil. The last year has been more than usually hard, and misfortune has come so steadily that now, without food and fuel, the people face misery unless outsiders force them to accept charity or move to the mainland.’³⁵

The editorial continues, focusing on the deprivations the Hebrideans were supposedly inured to:

To help these people is a problem. They live in poor huts, talk only their own language, and have a hearty dislike for anything English or modern. But the real tragedy is that they resist any suggestion that they should migrate to more

³⁴ Marjory Harper, Emigration from Scotland between the Wars: Opportunity or Exile? (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 90.

³⁵ In “B.C. Will Welcome Scotch Immigrants,” February 23, 1924, p. 2.

productive land. They have steadfastly refused to do this for the last hundred years, but continue to bear the hardships of the islands while they might become a happy, thriving folk in a different land. The islanders regard with suspicion the efforts of any outsider to help them with money, food and clothing. They are content to sit in their cottages, awaiting aid from their own government that is not forthcoming because of the lack of funds.³⁶

Far from rehabilitating the Hebrideans, many of the scheme's proponents touted, particularly to the fishing concerns of the province, that the Hebrideans would be essentially white "British" substitutes for the Japanese. British Columbia would gain the "right sort" it so assiduously wanted, while the fishing outfits would gain a workforce as skilled, yet as docile and poorly-paid, as the Asians they currently employed.³⁷

Pattullo's Scheme Takes Shape, July – December 1924

This scheme seemed to offer something to recommend it to everybody. As a result, many in British Columbia, Scotland and London gave it their tacit approval, and started to work together to ensure its realization. Negotiations between the government of British Columbia and the relevant committees and agencies in Great Britain continued over the next several months. In July, the Fishery Board of Scotland endorsed Pattullo's plan. Its report on the practicality and feasibility of this particular scheme noted that "the prospects of the fishing industry in British Columbia appear to

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ NAS, AF 62/1964/4, memorandum titled "Re: Opportunities for British Fishermen in British Columbia," dated November 1936, p. 2. While this document references a later attempt by the government of British Columbia to yet again revive this scheme that had been on the books now for decades, the sentiments expressed by its author are by no means unique to the 1930s; Harper, Emigration from Scotland..., p. 90.

be much more favourable than in this country where the industry has reached a highly developed state and where openings for expansion are limited. In any case the economic and other conditions of the crofter-fishermen of the Scottish Highlands and Islands are at present such as to preclude any possibilities of development on any considerable scale there.”³⁸ This approval for the scheme to proceed, however, was contingent on a representative from this Fishery Board for Scotland travelling to the west coast of British Columbia so that he could observe the locations intended for Hebridean colonization personally and make his own recommendations, rather than merely relying on the almost wholly optimistic reports issued by the provincial government.³⁹ For now, however, faith in the scheme by all parties concerned was enough to paper over these differences.

Draft agreements between the government of British Columbia and the British Undersecretary of State for the Colonies were created and continually circulated across the Atlantic Ocean starting in July 1924, continuing for the remainder of that year.⁴⁰ Finally, in December 1924, it appeared as though the scheme had secured the approval of a majority in the British Columbia legislature, the lone body that had reserved its assent for so long. On December 3, the particulars of the scheme were debated in the Legislative Assembly. Proponents such as Peck stumped for the crofters by arguing

³⁸ NA, CO 721/93, letter from Assistant Secretary for Scotland George Hogarth to the Secretary of State for Scotland, dated July 11, 1924.

³⁹ NAS, AF 51/172, letter from Charles Weatherhill of the Board of Agriculture for Scotland to W. Banks Amery of the Oversea Settlement Office, dated September 17, 1924.

⁴⁰ NA, CO 721/93, letter to the Secretary of the Fishery Board for Scotland, dated June 4, 1924.

that “we are trying to take back from the Orientals our west Coast [sic] fisheries...and these Hebrideans are the stamp of [people] who can and will do it. They will make good. I know the breed.”⁴¹ His colleague Ian Mackenzie echoed Peck’s sentiments. He “vigorously attacked those who advocated dropping the Hebrideans settlement scheme, holding that the crofters from the Hebrides would solve the Oriental problem in the fisheries of British Columbia if given the chance.”⁴²

Evidently these pleas were accepted by a majority of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. On December 15, after a vigorous debate, that body authorized the release of \$20,000 to assist with the resettlement and establishment of the first wave of approximately 25 Hebridean colonists in a small settlement “in the neighborhood of Port Alberni.”⁴³ Of that amount, Pattullo specified that \$6000 would be earmarked for an entirely unrelated scheme directed by the Salvation Army that would bring approximately 250 “young immigrants” to the province; the rest, it should be assumed, was intended to transport and help establish the Hebrideans.⁴⁴

The scheme, as approved, meshes well with many of the goals the Minister of Lands had for the province he served. As a biographer of Pattullo, Robin Fisher, explains:

He was a constant and vocal advocate of attracting new population. According to Pattullo, every new immigrant was a potential market and a potential source

⁴¹ “Hebridean May Replace Asiatic,” in the Victoria Daily Colonist, December 4, 1924.

⁴² “Hebridean Problem is Discussed,” in the Vancouver Star, December 16, 1924.

⁴³ “House Votes \$20,000 to Aid Hebridean Settlers,” in the Vancouver Daily Province, December 16, 1924.

⁴⁴ “Hebridean May Replace Asiatic,” Victoria Daily Colonist...

of development...He constantly urged British Columbians to accept the need for immigrants and, in other parts of Canada, as well as in the United States and Great Britain, he extolled the opportunities offered by his province. His advocacy of increased immigration harkened back to the days of Laurier and the expansion of the west in which Pattullo had taken part.⁴⁵

That said, the gates to British Columbia were only wide open to a select few. Pattullo deemed the Hebridean as worthy of unrestricted access. Others, however, were not so privileged.

While Pattullo was prepared to lead public opinion on the need to encourage immigration, he did nothing to stem the racist tide that flowed strongly in west coast society. He proposed to carry out 'an aggressive immigration policy with a view to securing the right kind of settlers.' Clearly, however, 'the right kind of settlers' did not include Asians, since British Columbia was to be a white man's country..[for] such immigrants would be detrimental to the progress of the Anglo-Saxon on the Pacific Coast. Although he never pushed it as far as others did, Pattullo toyed with the notion of eugenics and suggested that, 'for its own protection,' society might someday require laws 'that will prevent the propagation of unfit human species.'⁴⁶

While as 1924 drew to a close, it appeared as though the scheme would proceed as planned, and many of the myriad of problems that plagued the Hebrides, British Columbia, Great Britain and indeed the British Empire might be relieved by this single program, events the following year proved that the hope and expectations present in 1924 would certainly not be replicated in 1925. In fact, by the end of October of that year, the scheme was officially abandoned by the government of British Columbia, the same government that initiated and so actively pursued this plan only a year earlier. Its failure, largely due to the inherent mishmash of contradictions and assumptions and

⁴⁵ Duff Pattullo of British Columbia, p. 138.

⁴⁶ *Ibid* pp. 138, 139.

anachronisms surrounding the Hebrideans, Japan and the Japanese, Empire Settlement, and even the British Empire itself, is the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER IX: HIERARCHIES OVERTURNED: THE FAILURE OF PATTULLO'S SCHEME, 1925

In December 1924, advocates of the state-sponsored relocation of Hebridean crofters to the western shores of British Columbia had every reason to celebrate the successes they achieved in the previous twelve months. Starting from relative scratch, they managed to inundate the press in British Columbia, Great Britain and elsewhere with tales of the woe and misery that the Hebrideans suffered from at home in the wake of the postwar collapse of their economy. The sympathy these articles attracted on the part of the electorate was not lost on the province's politicians. They to a fault seized upon the popular outcry for some sort of redress, not to mention the funds made available by the British Treasury, as a chance to procure British settlers who would shore up the supposedly quintessential "British" character of British Columbia at a time when that aspect of its identity was felt to be under serious threat from numerous fronts. The British Government and the Fishery Office for Scotland shared these concerns. They cumulatively saw this scheme as a welcome opportunity to relieve Great Britain and Scotland of what it considered to be a "surplus and disadvantaged free population."¹ Employers in British Columbia, so it was believed, would be provided with a "docile labor force" that would be paid the same wages as the Japanese who were entrenched in

¹ In Michael LeMay, ed., The Gatekeepers: Comparative Immigration Policy (New York: Praeger, 1989), p. 29.

that province's vital fishing industry, but were assumed to be automatically preferable based on their status as "white" "British" laborers.²

Yet, on October 31, 1925, the Under-Secretary for Scotland received a letter marked "Very Pressing" from the Overseas Settlement Department of the newly-established Dominions Office informing them of an official communication they received from the Agent-General of British Columbia, F. Pauline (the previous Agent-General, F.C. Wade, died in 1924) that expressed the total abandonment of the government he represented of any further attempts to transport and establish Hebridean fishermen in his province.³

This outcome is puzzling, especially in light of the fact that the provincial government was the party that proposed this scheme to the British Government. In addition, while the Fishery Board for Scotland and the Overseas Settlement Committee had severe reservations regarding the treatment its charges would receive in British Columbia, they, as late as November 1925, even after hearing of Pattullo's decision to terminate the negotiations, still sought to reach some sort of agreement that would revive the scheme.⁴ How did the jubilation with which the government of British Columbia, and as measured in the popular press of the day, the public at large, greeted the decision to subsidize the importation of Hebridean fishermen in December 1924 dissipate so quickly?

² *Ibid* p. 29.

³ National Archive of Scotland (NAS), AF 51-173.

⁴ NAS, AF 51-173, Minutes of the 127th Meeting of the Oversea Settlement Committee, dated November 3, 1925.

Obstacle I: Problems with Location

The first explanation is practical in nature. Despite the tentative agreement reached between Pattullo and the Fishery Board for Scotland to establish the Hebrideans on the west coast of Vancouver Island, near Port Alberni, the Minister of Lands remained loathe to place the crofters there. He strove to place the Hebrideans on the remote Queen Charlotte Islands near the border with Alaska. Part of the reason for this rests in Pattullo being from the city of Prince Rupert. Prince Rupert, the closest mainland town to the Queen Charlotte Islands, was fast becoming the major metropolis in northern British Columbia. As such, the city would be the beneficiary of any development the Hebrideans might stimulate in the local economy. A concomitant benefit to settling these Scottish fishermen there, besides the hope they might defend the relatively unpopulated archipelago from any prospective intruders, was that Pattullo was eager to check the population boom that was occurring in and around British Columbia's two largest cities, Vancouver and Victoria.

Pattullo, who knew the hinterland intimately, and who considered that the real British Columbia existed outside Vancouver, deplored the increasing political influence of the metropolitan area. He had been in the Klondike, and the spell of the north was upon him, as it had been upon Sir Richard McBride; his admiration for the courage and the energy of the people who had established themselves on the rock-bound coast and in the mountain valleys had grown during the years when he was first alderman and then mayor of Prince Rupert. Only the Liberal party with its broad social philosophy, he felt, could properly serve the interests of the people of the whole province.⁵

⁵ Margaret Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History* (Vancouver: The Macmillan Company of Canada, 1958), p. 441.

It should be mentioned that these urban areas, with their more cosmopolitan populations, were those most opposed to the Liberal government in power at the time.

Not only were these “metropolitan areas” so close to the pernicious and potentially disloyal (as far as the British connection was concerned) influence of the United States, their populations were becoming increasingly cosmopolitan and working class in nature.⁶ Pattullo saw the threat that these trends posed to both the “British” character of the province and his Liberal Party’s hold over the provincial government, as these voters, whose share of the electorate grew disproportionately compared to the rest of the province, flocked to the newer socialist and progressive parties that more closely reflected their concerns.⁷ This rural, “British” constituency, located far from the corrupting influences of the southern part of the province and indebted to Pattullo for his selflessness in aiding their rehabilitation, would serve as an effective counterweight that would entrench his power base and that of the Liberal Party which he served.

The Fishery Board for Scotland, however, did not agree with Mr. Pattullo’s choice of locale for the Hebrideans. In an ongoing dialogue regarding the scheme in the

⁶ Robin Fisher, Duff Pattullo of British Columbia (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), p. 176.

⁷ In Donald Blake’s chapter “The Politics of Polarization,” in R.K. Carty, ed., Politics, Policy and Government in British Columbia (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1996), pp. 68, 69. Blake here discussed the growth of the Co-Operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), a new socialist party that emerged in the wake of the steady decline of the Progressive Party, a party that reflected agrarian concerns that swept western Canada in the early years of the 1920s, but quickly fell into decline and eventually merged with the Conservative Party, a union that would last until 2005. The CCF attracted many of the Progressive Party’s earlier supporters, as well as poorer urban voters who felt they would benefit from the CCF’s support of both industrial/urban and agrarian/rural reform. In 1928, the CCF would win 35 of the 48 available seats in the provincial legislature of British Columbia, and in 1933 they outpolled the Conservative Party to become one of the two major parties in the province, a position they continue to hold today (along with the Liberals) under the banner of the New Democratic Party.

Office for the Secretary for Scotland, an unidentified commentator opined to a Mr. Rose that “Alberni and...[the] Queen Charlotte Islands are suitable places for an experiment on a small scale of settling carefully selected Hebridean families who have children of working age. I must say that Alberni sounds most attractive.”⁸ Contemporary assessments of the Queen Charlottes, the archipelago Pattullo so fervently promoted as the ideal place to repose the Hebrideans, stressed the “absence of work and markets; while so far out of touch with civilisation that they receive a mail only twice a month,” and that the islands at their present state of development “are not at present suitable to settlers from this country.”⁹

Eventually, in the face of such obstinate opposition, Pattullo begrudgingly, and only verbally, acceded to the demands of the Secretary of State for Scotland to establish the Hebrideans on Vancouver Island.¹⁰ A confidential report commissioned by the Oversea Settlement Office shortly before the scheme completely unraveled places much of the blame for its ultimate failure on the reluctance of Pattullo to firmly commit to establishing the Hebrideans permanently at Port Alberni. The acrimony between the two sides over this issue is clearly evidenced by its conclusions that he “did not want to be restricted to Alberni...and could not guarantee to provide cleared land at \$50 an acre.

⁸ NAS, AF 51-145, dated August 27, 1925.

⁹ NAS, AF 51-172, memorandum entitled “Queen Charlotte Islands: Warning to Intending Settlers,” undated; NAS AF 51-172, letter from T.C. Macnaughten to Col. Wedgewood of the Parliamentary Secretary of the Admiralty, dated October 5, 1922.

¹⁰ National Archives (London) (NA), CO 721/93, letter from F.H. Cunningham to W.A. McAdam of British Columbia House in London, dated August 2, 1924; NAS, AF 51-173, report by David Jones to the Fishery Board of Scotland, dated February 23, 1925; NAS AF 51-173, memorandum titled “Scheme for Settlement of Scottish Crofter Fishermen in British Columbia,” dated September 8, 1925.

Neither were [the government of British Columbia] prepared to set up a special Welfare Committee, to look after the settlers...Mr. Pattullo was informed by telegram that the localities mentioned by Commander Jones in his report must be adhered to as regards the 25 families under the Agreement.”¹¹ The scheme was abandoned almost immediately after this telegram was dispatched.

Obstacle II: Problems with Housing

This same report also cites another serious, and ultimately insurmountable, point of contention between the contracting parties. The Overseas Settlement Committee mandated “that adequate accommodation must be arranged for the families in existing buildings pending the provision of houses.”¹² It becomes clear through the official exchange of correspondence between Victoria, London and Edinburgh that the government of British Columbia had no intention of providing permanent housing for the Hebrideans. Pattullo, in a meeting he had with William Bankes Amery, informed the latter that if the scheme should fail, “he would be too afraid of his opponents criticising him for failure. This is also his reason for refusing to build houses until settlers have definitely said they like the spot. After all, in [Western Australia], the settlers live in something approximating to a tent when they first arrive.”¹³ An earlier

¹¹ NAS, AF 51-173, “Settlement of Scottish Crofter Fishermen in British Columbia,” dated October 27, 1925.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ NAS, AF 51-173, letter from Amery to G. Steel of the Scottish Office, dated July 29, 1925. A more detailed comparison between this particular scheme and the conditions expected of the Hebrideans (and others) who were selected for participation in Western Australia’s more grandiose Group Settlement Scheme will be provided in the chapters dealing with that state later in the dissertation.

internal memorandum in the Fishery Office for Scotland stressed the need to ascertain from representatives of the government of British Columbia if it was Pattullo's intention to house the Hebrideans in tents indefinitely. It requested those agents to respond to the question, "what accommodation will be ready for [the Hebrideans] on arrival? If only tents, this must be made clear, and would they be satisfied with such accommodation, even for a comparatively short period?"¹⁴ Pattullo's answer was rather swift and abrupt. "Will provide tents as previously indicated."¹⁵

His rationale behind providing such plainly substandard housing is revealed in a subsequent telegram that also indicates his continued insistence on the Queen Charlotte Islands as the most desirable place to settle these immigrants. He informed Wade of the following:

No reason whatever for condemning Queen Charlottes. For some time Government followed movements of people who came out under this project and at last investigation all were getting along well in various avocations with one exception due to inherent disqualifications. Venture to say ninety percent better off than they were in Old Country. In present instance an operating fishing company ready to employ and properly house five families. If Oversea Settlement Board not prepared to accept such positive statement please discontinue all negotiations.¹⁶

Pattullo was of the opinion that conditions in the Hebrides were so dismal that these immigrants should be grateful for the aid they did receive, including the tents they would be housed in. In rather forceful instructions he provided Wade, Pattullo stressed

¹⁴ NAS, AF 51-172, "Memorandum for the Guidance of the Representative of the Scottish Fishery Board."

¹⁵ NA, CO 721/93, cablegram received from Pattullo, dated July 24, 1924.

¹⁶ NAS, AF 51-172, cablegram dated September 4, 1924.

that “the foregoing seems to me as simple as a-b-c. If these settlers cannot get along upon this basis it would seem that the only thing they can do is stay where they are and either live off doles or eke out an existence from interstices in the rocks.”¹⁷

Pattullo operated under the firm conviction that “the tents would be adequate for the first needs of the settlers on arrival at Port Alberni, the place of settlement located. Besides, it was better for the prospective Hebridean fishermen to accept the proffered shelter rather than burden themselves with debt for frame houses, which they could put up as they acquired knowledge of living conditions of the country.”¹⁸ The Minister of Lands took the following words of Lord Leverhulme to heart:

At the present time you see young men leaving [Lewis] to escape poverty; you see children watching the cattle all the live-long day on the wind-swept grazings; you see women carrying creels of peat on their backs, a weight of 80 lbs., while in the Congo no negro woman is allowed by law to carry more than 44 lbs.; and you see the men coming back from the sea with fish that must be consumed in the village or salted and packed in barrels – the least remunerative way of selling that hard-won harvest. These people are not adding to their happiness. They are merely existing.¹⁹

Following such logic, it should not be too surprising that Pattullo saw no problem with insisting that the Hebrideans would not only reside in, but gladly welcome, the chance to occupy tents that it was assumed were superior to the one-room thatched lodgings they shared with their domestic animals they occupied at home.

¹⁷ NAS, AF 62/1964/1, letter dated March 13, 1924.

¹⁸ “Foster-Father of Hebrideans Raps Pattullo,” in the *Vancouver Evening Sun*, November 18, 1924.

¹⁹ As quoted in Nigel Nicolson, *Lord of the Isles: Lord Leverhulme in the Hebrides* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1960), p. 75.

This, however, was not an opinion that was shared with officials in London and Edinburgh. Indeed, such notions were lambasted even within the British Columbia political context. An independent member of the provincial legislature, R.J. Burde, argued that “it was impossible to live on the West Coast during the winter months in a tent.”²⁰ This insurmountable discrepancy between officials in Great Britain who seized on the chance to extend the Hebrideans an opportunity to rehabilitate themselves they would never dream of doing so in Britain and those in British Columbia like Pattullo who primarily desired “an alternative cheap source of labour for the canneries” that would accept conditions that for all intents and purposes replicated the deprivation they experienced in the Hebrides was yet another reason why this scheme ultimately never came to fruition.²¹

Obstacle III: Problems with the Amount of Money Offered to the Hebrideans

The reluctance on the part of British Columbia to provide suitable permanent housing to sponsored immigrants was part of the overall parsimoniousness of the offer extended to the Hebrideans by the provincial government. One of the leading advocates of the relocation of poor Scottish fishermen to Canada, Andrew Macdonnell, expressed his strong criticism of the paltry amount offered by the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia to transport and establish Hebridean immigrants in that province. He deemed

²⁰ “House Votes \$20,000 to Aid Hebridean Settlers,” in the *Vancouver Daily Province*, December 16, 1924, p. 1.

²¹ Marjory Harper, *Emigration from Scotland between the Wars: Opportunity or Exile?* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 88.

it woefully insufficient if the province intended to truly achieve the unstated aims of the scheme:

Provided the British Columbia Government really means business and intends to replace her Japanese fishermen with European, [I] can bring out gradually several hundred families of Hebrideans exactly suited to [the fisheries], but the provincial authorities must give more generous terms than the present offer of 300 dollars per family. This offer, [I declare], is quite inadequate, but [I hope] it may be doubled.²²

Macdonnell recommended that “a sum of 1200 dollars...would enable each family to have its own house and a few acres of land.”²³ If the government of British Columbia truly did intend to use the Hebrideans as instruments through which the fishing industry of the province could be “redeemed” from the Japanese who were perceived as so adamant on dominating that resource, then why would it extend such a paltry sum, especially in light of the fact that “it would cost \$600 to buy the cheapest type of fishing boat” these fishermen would need to adequately compete with their Asian counterparts?²⁴

The province, however, refused to increase the amount of money offered to the Hebrideans, even in light of an internal memorandum addressed to Pauline from Pattullo himself that revealed exactly how much money should be made available to each prospective immigrant family if the scheme was to achieve its goals.

²² NAS AF 51-172, newspaper article titled “Hebridean Fishermen for Canada: Inadequate Offer,” dated November 21, 1924. The \$300 refers to the share the government of British Columbia intended to advance to each family of immigrants. This figure, it was assumed, would be matched by the British Government under the terms of the Empire Settlement Act, which would bring the total amount offered to each family to \$600, or £120.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ “House Votes \$20,000 to Aid Hebridean Settlers”

I sent Mr. Naden to Alberni to look over the situation and the Corporation of the City of Alberni are still willing to sell the whole or a portion of District Lot 13 for \$50.00 an acre. Mr. Nadon [sic] points out, however, that while the timber has been taken off, the ground cannot be considered cleared land and would probably cost from \$50.00 to \$100.00 an acre to put in shape for the growing of farm produce. Major Burde [sic], Member in the Provincial House for the District, was also interviewed and it was his opinion that the fishermen should be located nearer to the fishing grounds, at such places as Uchuckleait and Toquart Harbours. Land in this vicinity, however, is very heavy clearing and would probably cost from \$350.00 to \$500.00 an acre.²⁵

If these figures are to be believed, then the \$600 that British Columbia budgeted per family to transport the Hebrideans from Scotland to the province's shores, provide them with property, housing, some animals, farming implements, jobs, and of course the necessary equipments required to compete in the mechanized fishing industry, would be largely spent on the costs of purchasing and clearing the land alone.

Pattullo continues, listing some of the other expenses the province would in all likelihood have to incur:

Major Burdo did not favor the bringing of settlers to work in the canneries but he did favor a policy of the fishermen owning their own boats and being able to sell their catch to the local cannery or to other available market [sic]. It was his opinion that this might be the means of getting the Japanese fishermen on the West Coast of Vancouver Island replaced by white men. To establish these men in the fishing business, owning their paraphenalia, would cost very much more than the advance that has been suggested. In addition to which fact, the Provincial Government did not desire to embark upon a policy of buying fishing outfits, as there will be a demand all up and down the Coast for the Government to supply every fisherman who wishes to own his own boat.²⁶

In fact, these seem to be the main impetuses behind Pattullo's decision shortly thereafter to terminate further negotiations with London and Edinburgh, effectively ending the

²⁵ NAS, AF 51-173, letter dated October 2, 1925.

²⁶ *Ibid*

scheme. Pattullo saw an opportunity to procure “Brits on the cheap” to fulfill his goal of ensuring that his province remained as “British” as possible in the face of new challenges to that ideal. This was to take precedence over any substantial attempts to properly rehabilitate these crofters.

When the Hebrideans were no longer seen as “cheap,” the Social Darwinist priorities that supposedly propelled this scheme were sacrificed so that the province did not become mired in further debt. Much like the fishing operators in the 1880s and 1890s, who when faced with the decision between their racist impulses and beliefs and the bottom line of their enterprises frequently acted in accordance with the latter, Pattullo, an avid promoter of immigration to and development of British Columbia, evidently abandoned these principles once the financial outlays the province would have to incur were revealed. Pattullo was a champion of a “White British Columbia,” and a British one at that, but apparently he only was if it could be procured at a cost to the province of \$300 per family.

Obstacle IV: The Hebrideans Themselves

Was the ultimate abandonment of this scheme to import Hebrideans to British Columbia based solely on economics or logistics, or did the Social Darwinist hierarchies that so clearly inspired this scheme work both for and against these Scottish crofters, and the Japanese they were to replace? The answer, much like the one that doomed its predecessor, lies in the disagreements over which place the Hebrideans occupied in the Social Darwinist hierarchy of races of the day. One of the most widely

sold and influential books of the 1920s was The Passing of the Great Race, by Madison Grant, first published in 1916. While the overall argument that Grant made is that the European “race,” and in particular the “Nordic” substrata within that broader classification (to which the British, Grant opined, largely belonged), was in fear of being swamped by “inferior” peoples via miscegenation, he made specific mentions of the west coast of North America and Scotland that surely influenced those who were skeptical about importing Hebrideans to British Columbia. Grant writes at one point that “personally [I believe] that the finest and purest type of a Nordic community outside of Europe will develop in northwest Canada and on the Pacific coast of the United States. Most of the other countries in which the Nordic race is now settling lie outside the special environment in which alone it can flourish.”²⁷

While Scotland, which lies rather far north in Europe, is considered by that author to be populated for the most part by “Anglians” and “Norse,” Grant does specify that “the Mediterranean strain is marked in the Highlands.”²⁸ Keep in mind that he felt that the Mediterranean had little to contribute to modern civilization and was inherently “swarthy.”²⁹ Was this the proper population that should be imported to British Columbia, at the time the most stridently “British” province in Canada and simultaneously the western window of British civilization at one of its furthest

²⁷ (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1918), p. 81.

²⁸ *Ibid* p. 203.

²⁹ *Ibid* p. 78.

peripheries? Or would the Hebrideans only serve to undermine this supposedly empty canvas?

To many in British Columbia who subscribed to the popular Anglo-Saxon rhetoric of the day, and even to those who initially proposed the scheme in the first place, the answer was a resolute “no.” While advocates of the scheme constantly stressed and placed emphasis on the fact that the Hebrideans were British, the scheme’s detractors decided to highlight their concomitant “Celtic” status. There were few other population groups in the British Isles who could be characterized on the one hand as “a virile race nurtured in the Scottish Highlands” who have for the past century gone “on colonising enterprises to the great Dominion of the West,” but who on the other were also simultaneously warned that “the [provincial] government has no intention either of guaranteeing employment or providing them with doles, but they will be required to take care of themselves in the manner that other people who are here now do.”³⁰

Proponents of the scheme hoped that the former quality would be able to resurface in British Columbia.

The scheme’s denigrators, however, often envisioned the Hebridean as being “firstly... a Gael with a distinctive language and culture, often unfamiliar and unsympathetic to the ways of [England and Lowland Scotland]... Secondly he was a peasant with what one contemporary called a ‘blind attachment to the rock and

³⁰ NAC, RG-76, vol. 632, file 68592, pt. 1, newspaper article entitled “Off to Canada” in the Glasgow Herald, April 16, 1923; “B.C. Offers \$300 Loans to Settlers from Hebrides,” in the Vancouver Daily Province, February 28, 1924, p. 1.

glens.’’³¹ Those who subscribed to such beliefs attributed the poverty and deprivation in the Outer Hebrides to being both a byproduct and a signifier of their racial inferiority, something that could never be rejuvenated, even in such a lush and fertile landscape as British Columbia. They never could serve as sufficient or suitable replacements for the Japanese in the fishing industry of that province. No amount of training and supervision would change the fact that the Hebrideans were inherently lazy. To them, these crofters would not “whiten” British Columbia. On the contrary, their mere presence, like that of the Japanese, would lower the entire province into the “blackness” of poverty and degradation seen as inherent to the Hebridean character.

In fact, a modification to the publication of the draft agreement between the government of British Columbia and the Oversea Settlement Board reveals a great deal about the anxiety that even the scheme’s more ardent boosters felt towards its long-term success. The editor noted that “in view of the prospect of publication in Canada the last sentence should perhaps not cast doubt on all Hebridean crofter fishermen but might be modified in this sense: - ‘In applying any scheme to Hebridean crofter fishermen it would be necessary to select men who possess the grit and staying power.’”³² The last qualification evidently became a mantra of sorts. D.T. Jones, the chairman of the Fishery Board for Scotland and a man who out of anyone should have championed this scheme based on his position alone, voiced the following concern:

³¹ Michael Flinn, ed., Scottish Population History from the Seventeenth Century to the 1930s (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 35.

³² NAS, AF 51-173, dated March 9, 1925.

There is an undoubted need of British settlers of the right type in British Columbia, and the Province can hardly hope to develop its wonderful resources without them. Men of the right stamp can be absorbed with advantage, especially if they possess dual qualifications such as the crofter fisherman possesses, but it is essential that they be of the right stamp. In so far as my knowledge of the Hebridean crofter fisherman goes, my greatest fear is that he lacks the grit and staying power necessary to overcome the initial difficulties which have to be faced in a new country and under strange conditions.³³

The Hebridean crofters already present in British Columbia who he observed were mostly unemployed. In his report on the scheme, Jones concluded that “Hebrideans should not receive a preference, as I do not consider they are readily adaptable or that they are sufficiently good workers to make a satisfactory return under such a scheme.”³⁴

To ensure the Hebrideans would learn thrift and industry, and consequently not default on their debts, some advocates of this scheme sought to intersperse hardy Anglo-Saxons from Lowland Scotland and England who would serve as models and exemplars for these poor crofters to follow. A letter addressed to the Fishery Board for Scotland written by Anne MacDonald, a representative of the Canadian Department of Immigration and Colonization local office in Inverness, practically implored that body to widen the scope of this particular scheme beyond the narrow confines of the Outer Hebrides.³⁵

³³ NAS, AF 62-1964-2, dated February 23, 1925.

³⁴ NAS, AF 62-1964-2, dated March 12, 1925.

³⁵ It is rather instructive that the Canadian Department of Immigration and Colonization even felt the need to establish a recruitment office in Inverness, so far removed from the overpopulated cities of England and even Lowland Scotland, and a testament to the determination of British Columbia and Canada to attract settlers from the Highlands to immigrate to its shores, when other recruitment centers established elsewhere had far more populated catchments over much less territory.

If it is a question of the British Columbia Government desiring Fisher Families [sic] from Scotland, I would impress upon them that there are families on the Mainland coast with experience of crafting and fishing who are by far more desirable than the Hebrideans, and if such settlers are wanted I can secure any number of them from the North of Scotland.³⁶

What the author implies was that the “Mainland coast,” or the area around Aberdeen, was generally not considered part of the Highlands. They consequently were not tainted with Gaelic blood, and as such would strengthen British Columbia in a way the Hebrideans never could. Yet the Secretary for Scotland steadfastly refused to open the scheme to immigrants from elsewhere. The main priority of the Scottish Office was to rid Britain of a poor and troublesome “Celtic” population. Likewise, the provincial government, eager to attract “Britons on the cheap,” was wary of including more prosperous and educated Scots who could not be treated in such a heavy-handed fashion as the Hebrideans. This contradiction played no small role in blocking this scheme’s realization.

Obstacle V: The Japanese Themselves

In order to make it financially attractive to the various canning and fishing concerns operating in British Columbia to employ the Hebrideans, the province let it be known that these Scots would be paid the same wages and be treated in the same manner as the Japanese had been. Once news of this was publicized, many white fishermen and cannery workers were aghast at what they saw as an attempt to undermine their wage levels and their elevated status as “Anglo-Saxon” workers. For

³⁶ NAS, AF 62/1964/1, letter dated November 21, 1924.

example, a John Kendall, a white fisherman, testified in front of a royal commission on perceived Japanese dominance over the fisheries of British Columbia. He complained to the commissioners that “I am a Newfoundlander by birth; am married and have five children, four boys and one girl, oldest 12. I am over \$200 behind what I was last year this time. If the Japanese...still continue to come I have got to leave or starve. I am British to the backbone. I wish to stay under the British flag.”³⁷

A Labor member of the provincial legislature, a Mr. Thomas Uphill, made his displeasure of the scheme known to his colleagues. He “said it looked idiotic to bring more settlers [to British Columbia] at this time until those out of work were cared for.”³⁸ British Columbia, like Great Britain, was in the midst of a crippling postwar depression that even five years after the cessation of hostilities showed little signs of dissipating. Under these circumstances, it seemed folly to import more “charity cases,” as the Hebrideans were undoubtedly considered by the majority of the laboring classes of the province.

From the perspective of many of the fishing concerns, there was an almost total inversion of the racial hierarchies that the legislators who approved of the scheme and Pattullo (at least in public) employed and promulgated. Indeed, many of the owners of these companies actually preferred the “highly skilled Japanese” fishermen to the

³⁷ As quoted in Alicja Muszynski, Cheap Wage Labour: Race and Gender in the Fisheries of British Columbia (Montreal and Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), p. 171.

³⁸ “House Votes \$20,000 to Aid Hebridean Settlers”

Hebridean.³⁹ Such sentiments were echoed by none other than D.T. James. In his report on Pattullo's colonization plan, issued in February 1925, he remarked that:

Protests were made by the canners that it would be impossible for them to replace the experienced Orientals with whites owing to the difficulties and hardships associated with fishing...but the Commission pointed out that the system under which fishermen were employed in the industry was responsible very largely for the preponderance of Orientals.⁴⁰

The Japanese fishermen (and their wives) tended to be valued by the fishing concerns for their supposedly inherent values of thrift and diligence. They often employed the same exact Social Darwinist stereotypes and hierarchies as advocates of Hebridean immigration used, but with a twist. Instead of Japanese cunning and skill being a danger to the province, either through their presence viscerally undermining its “Britishness” or working avariciously to wrest control of British Columbia from its white pioneers, these attributes were often cited by employers as being veritable assets, especially compared to their lazier, indolent, expensive white competitors. Even the Victoria Daily Colonist, one of the leading mouthpieces of the “British” establishment in the province, observed that many of the largest fishing companies in the province felt

³⁹ Duncan Stacey, Salmonopolis: The Steveston Story (Madera Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, Ltd., 1994), p. 113.

⁴⁰ BCA, MS-0003, in a report entitled “Proposed Settlement of Scottish Crofter Fishermen in British Columbia,” dated February 3, 1925, p. 20. The “Commission” referred to in this quotation was the aforementioned Royal Commission convened two years later to address the issue of licenses being granted by the provincial government to fish in its waters going disproportionately to Japanese immigrants, a situation that skyrocketed in the years immediately following World War I and helped propel this immigration scheme in particular. The Commission decided in 1922 to reduce the number of licenses granted to those of Asian extraction by anywhere from 10% to 60%, depending on location, with an overall reduction in trolling licenses of 33 1/3% in 1922 and an additional 25% the following year. Source: BCA, DF-45, “British Columbia Fisheries Commission, 1922: Report and Recommendations” (Canada: Commission to Investigate Fisheries Conditions in British Columbia, 1922), p. 11.

that the Japanese were “the best fishermen, being more steady and industrious than the whites.”⁴¹

These opinions directly contradict one of the central arguments behind importing Hebrideans to British Columbia. It bears worth repeating here that Pattullo and others were of the opinion that the Japanese were employed by the fishing concerns and the canneries solely as a matter of expediency. If only an alternative cheap, pliable “British” labor source was available, that could be handled in the same paternalistic fashion as the Japanese were, then the latent racist attitudes of the operators could manifest themselves, and British Columbia would be relieved of what was one of its greatest threats to its security and identity. The fishing operators and canners, however, steadfastly refused to modify their own economic and often racialist rationales behind retaining Japanese labor.

When the scheme for taking immigrants from these islands to Canada was first mooted it was the intention of the promoters to take fishermen settlers to Vancouver and district in order to try and wrest the fisheries of that coast from the yellow races. That scheme, however, appears to be unworkable at present... The Japanese and Chinese have been too long established in the trade there to be easily ousted, and so far as cheap labour is concerned [they] have no rivals.⁴²

These attitudes were entrenched in the industry, as the Japanese consolidated their position in the fisheries and the canneries, becoming even more central to their successful and profitable operation.

⁴¹ Source: Patricia Roy, A White Man’s Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989), p. 147.

⁴² NAS, AF 62-1961-1, letter from Alexander Stephen, Secretary of the Fishery Board for Scotland, to the Fishery Office in Castlebay, dated April 7, 1923.

A Royal Commission which was convened in 1922 to investigate the prevalence of the Japanese in the fisheries of British Columbia conceded that, considering “the need for much knowledge and experience in handling boats and gear...it is impossible to find white men fit to take the place of the Japanese as fish producers.”⁴³ Quite simply, to many operators, the Japanese simply outperformed their white competitors.

Driven by contractors and economic necessity, the Japanese-Canadian gill-netters consistently outproduced their white and native counterparts and were cheaper to employ. Three northern canneries reported that in 1922 the average Japanese-Canadian fisherman landed 5541 fish on the Skeena [River]. Native fishermen landed 3220 and whites 3192.⁴⁴

One of these Japanese-Canadian fishermen, Yoshio Oda, is recorded as saying that the “white men ‘loaf in town’ until the fishing season started but that Japanese fishermen arrived early to secure the best gear, study tides and be where the fish were.”⁴⁵ Cannery and fishing operators undoubtedly were of the same opinion of each racial group as Oda. They consistently fought any attempts by the provincial government to restrict their access to their preferred source of labor, even if such calls flouted or subverted the Social Darwinist convictions of the government.

Cannery owners said that difficulties in finding white fishermen meant a choice of ‘the Jap or the trap,’ a reference to a fishing method long outlawed as a conservation measure. Although fisheries officials denied any protests over a policy that was ‘reclaiming the great Pacific fishing industry for Canadian citizens,’ Henry Bell-Irving of Anglo-British Columbia Packers, one of the larger firms, correctly

⁴³ BCA, DF-45, “B.C. Fisheries Commission...,” p. 12.

⁴⁴ Geoff Meggs, *Salmon: The Decline of the British Columbia Fishery* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1991), pp. 126, 127.

⁴⁵ Source: Patricia Roy, *The Oriental Question...*, p. 106.

noted that those Japanese labourers forced from fishing were moving into agriculture and trade.⁴⁶

In fact, it was at the insistence of these canners that no guarantee of employment was ever extended to the Hebrideans, a key explanation as to why this scheme failed.

This would prove to be a constant point of contention between the government of British Columbia and the Oversea Settlement Board and the Fishery Office of Scotland, one that played no small part in causing the scheme to be ultimately abandoned.⁴⁷ These men, in an awkward alliance with white and Indian fishermen already resident in the province, often brought heavy pressure that proved in the long run successful in undermining support for the ideals that buttressed this particular colonization scheme. The large fishing concerns in their stalwart support of the Japanese revealed that “racist xenophobia was not always in the best interest of employers.”⁴⁸ Meanwhile, white fishermen in the province were loathe to welcome the introduction of a population who “appeared to be quite an unsuitable type of emigrants and seemed quite content to live on charity” that would undercut their hard-won prosperity and newfound bourgeois status.⁴⁹ Such an awkward alliance seemed unlikely, but it proved effective insofar as how the intended and ostensible beneficiaries of this scheme would not in fact gain at all from the introduction of Hebrideans into the fisheries of British Columbia.

⁴⁶ Source: *Ibid* p. 108; NAC, RG-76, v. 95, File 11365, Part 2.

⁴⁷ NAS, AF 62-1963, report by Anne MacDonald, Special Canadian Emigration Agent in Inverness, dated June 1, 1925.

⁴⁸ Muzyinski, *Cheap Wage Labour...* p. 224.

⁴⁹ NAS, AF 51-173, report by D.T. Jones, p. 14.

Obstacle VI: Problems with Ottawa

The provincial government also neglected to take into account the attitudes of the federal government in Ottawa towards this rather transparent attempt to “whiten” the province at the expense of the Japanese. This failure to ascertain the opinions of the Canadian government also proved fatal to the scheme. The first explanation behind Ottawa’s surprisingly curious silence on this scheme was the fact that any official federal government sanction of Empire Settlement was a rather controversial stance to take, due to some curious exigencies particular to the early 1920s. In 1921, the Conservative government led by Arthur Meighen was unseated by the Liberal Party, led by King. Unfortunately for King, however, the Liberal Party failed to secure a majority in the House of Commons. This was due in large part to the swell in support for an upstart political party, known as the Progressives. The Progressive Party practically monopolized federal politics in Western Canada, so much so that the federal government scrambled to find a single cabinet minister from the region. Consequently the West was largely alienated at the time from most federal government decisions, the stimulation of immigration included.

To complicate matters further, the bulk of the members of Parliament from the Liberal Party represented constituencies, or ridings in Canadian parlance, based in the overwhelmingly Francophone and decidedly un-British province of Quebec. Out of 235 seats available in the House of Commons, the Liberals only won 116 of those. Out of

those 116, 65, or well over half, came from Quebecois ridings.⁵⁰ This stood in stark contrast to the two Liberal Members of Parliament elected from Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan combined. This dependence of the Liberals on the support of the French-Canadian electorate had two important effects on shaping the outcome of this scheme. The first involves the marked reluctance of the federal government during this first King administration to support Empire Settlement. Many in Quebec, already well aware of their status as a minority within their own country, were fearful of any further dilution of their power and threat to their cultural survival that a further influx of British settlers would pose to them. They made sure that King “could never afford to forget that phalanx of sixty-five Liberals that Quebec had sent to support him in 1921.”⁵¹ He was keenly aware that “even to encourage British immigration schemes, no matter how selective, was to risk those... whose support the Liberal government were heavily dependent [on].”⁵² Using this powerful weapon they had at their disposal, they were able to stave off most federal support for assisted-passage schemes, at least through the first half of the 1920s.

This reticence in turn engendered a robust skepticism in Britain regarding ability or the veracity with which it should pursue a policy of assisted immigration with British Columbia when it was well known that the federal government in Ottawa was

⁵⁰ Source: Robert A. Wardhaugh, Mackenzie King and the Prairie West (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), p. 60.

⁵¹ C.P. Stacey, Mackenzie King and the Atlantic Triangle (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1976), p. 24.

⁵² Philip G. Wigley, Canada and the Transition to Commonwealth: British-Canadian Relations, 1917-1926 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 202.

extremely skeptical of such endeavors, and only participated in imperial migration schemes “reluctantly and only after lengthy negotiations.”⁵³ In addition, King himself did not originate from the same “Ready, Ay, Ready” British imperialist mold that his predecessors were cast in. The Prime Minister was a passionate advocate of the autonomy of each component of the British Empire.⁵⁴ King had a dramatically different assessment of what properly constituted the British Empire. This meant that he “was resentful of anything which suggested a subservient or colonial status for Canada.”⁵⁵ In King’s own words, as he addressed the Imperial Conference of October 1923:

The British Empire...is not a single community, homogenous, concentrated, with uniform neighbours, problems, needs. It is a league of peoples plus an Empire; it covers all the Seven Seas; it includes communities of every conceivable stage of civilisation, every variety of resources, every range of neighbours, every concentration of problems and interests.⁵⁶

⁵³ A letter written to King on November 2, 1922, from a Peter Larkin of the Office of the High Commissioner indicates the extreme displeasure that the Canadian High Commission, the Dominion’s official representative in London, had at British Columbia’s attempts to circumvent Ottawa and deal with the Colonial Office directly in matters the province felt Ottawa was neglecting, such as Empire Settlement. Larkin informs King that “the Agent-General for British Columbia [F.C. Wade] cannot be as busy a man as I or he would not bother as much as he does about his ‘status.’” Larkin also wrote to Wade that very day, telling him in no uncertain terms that “if the Provinces have representations to make the Imperial or any outside Government, these are made through the Secretary of State at Ottawa, and if these representations carry their judgment, they communicate with the Government or Department interested.” Source: Canada, Department of External Affairs, Documents on Canadian External Relations (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1967), v. 3, pp. 33, 36.

⁵⁴ In H. Blair Neatby’s “Mackenzie King and National Unity,” in Harvey L. Dyck and H. Peter Krosby, eds., Empire and Nations: Essays in Honour of Frederic Soward (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), p. 59.

⁵⁵ H. Blair Neatby, “Mackenzie King and French Canada,” in the Journal of Canadian Studies, v. 11, no. 3 (1976), p. 10.

⁵⁶ In Canada, Documents on Canadian External Relations, v. 3, p. 241.

This quote reveals that the Prime Minister did not conceive of the British Empire being linked solely through the oft-quoted ties of “kith and kin,” bound through British blood and an automatic deference to British interests and needs.

While King undoubtedly avidly supported the fundamental contribution Great Britain and by extension British culture and institutions made to the Canadian national psyche, he also understood that Canada was not a transplantation of nor a reproduction of Britain overseas. This outlook diverged from those of lawmakers in British Columbia, Australia, and elsewhere, who vociferously and stridently stressed their quintessential British core, nourished by their overwhelmingly British “racial” ancestry. King may have been sympathetic to British Columbia’s desire to acquire British settlers to shore up its supposedly besieged “British” population, but he was by no means driven to procure such immigrants if they would work against his goal of achieving complete autonomy for Canada within “a Commonwealth of equal states” under a hazy imperial aegis or offend the constituencies whose support was vital for the realization of his policies.⁵⁷

In light of this benign disapproval on the part of the federal government, combined with the disregard for the opinion of significant segments of British Columbia society that were adamantly opposed to the state-sponsored importation of Hebridean fishermen to the shores of that westernmost province of Canada, it is but little wonder that this revival of Alexander Begg’s scheme met the same fate as its predecessor.

⁵⁷ Bruce Hutchison, The Incredible Canadian: A Candid Portrait of Mackenzie King: His Works, His Times, and His Nation (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1953), p. 95.

Proponents of the scheme's revival trotted forth the usual racial, political and economic justifications for recruiting and subsidizing this particular population of Celtic laborers. Their presence in British Columbia, it was offered, would allay the numerous threats to British Columbia, the British Empire and that intangible, yet so-often cited, "Britishness" that were so effortlessly handled throughout "the long nineteenth century" that lasted until 1914. In the new postwar world order, however, the racialist, economic, and institutional buttresses that defined the world order of the Victorian and Edwardian periods had been eroded by the emergence of new global powers, a challenge to Social Darwinism, new technologies that transformed almost everything from warfare to leisure to mobility to social control, and the rise of Dominion and colonial nationalisms as a result of the recent cataclysm all played their roles in explaining the scheme's proposal and its downfall.

Advocates of Hebridean resettlement in British Columbia dusted off a scheme that proposed to solve all of these problems with one stroke, without realizing that the economic, geopolitical, cultural, and indeed racialist impetuses that propelled this scheme in the 1880s had all transformed dramatically by the early 1920s. A solution that may have worked in its previous guise in an attempt to secure British Columbia now increasingly seemed moth-ridden and anachronistic. Could a rural, quasi-feudal population defend against Japanese aerial attacks? Would their presence rejuvenate the moribund economy of the province? Could or should the Hebrideans be rehabilitated at all? Would they automatically strengthen the British connection at a time when so

much of the population was already “foreign” in origin or descent? Was the fishing industry so central to British Columbia as its population grew increasingly urban in nature and proletarianized in its employment? Lastly, were the Hebrideans even preferable to the Japanese, let alone other ethnic groups? These are all questions and considerations that were never properly answered by any of the parties involved in the scheme. This lack of foresight, of uniting to determine what exactly was to be achieved and how those goals could be executed in this new age, more than anything else was what ultimately prevented its realization.

Table 9.

Arrivals and Departures of Asians to and from Australia, 1907-1923

Year	Chinese		Japanese		Total Non-European	
	Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.
1907	1424	2308	521	353	3263	7339
1908	1771	2402	555	427	3304	4040
1909	1729	2341	509	429	3448	4078
1910	1817	2310	610	462	3994	4082
1911	2009	2226	459	447	3662	4044
1912	2250	2885	698	586	4078	4343
1913	2698	2286	822	534	4232	4250
1914	1968	2723	394	850	3475	5031
1915	2287	3108	423	859	3482	4848
1916	2289	2407	1089	357	4307	3429
1917	2016	1987	888	486	3511	3258
1918	1723	1722	431	774	2625	3021
1919	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
1920	1753	2115	345	554	3117	3511
1921	1833	2912	282	626	2710	4600
1922	1964	2189	390	359	3555	3213
1923	1974	2310	222	436	3176	3656

Source: A.T. Yarwood, Asian Migration to Australia: The Background to Exclusion, 1896-1923 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1964), p. 185. N.d. = no data available. Numbers include diplomats, scholars, businessmen and visitors in addition to Australian residents, all of whom were exempt from the diction test.

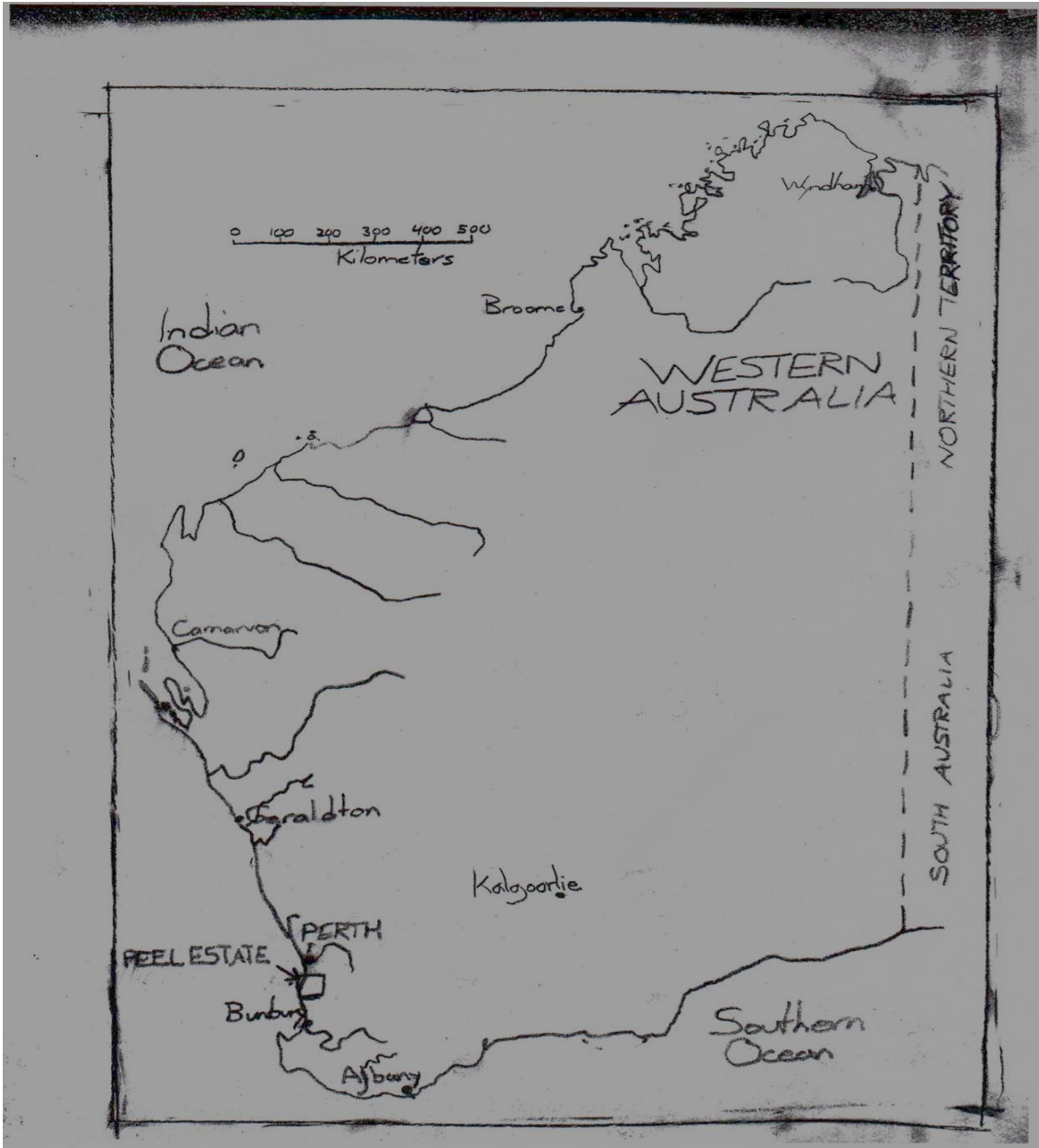


Illustration 11.

Map of Western Australia. Illustration done by author.

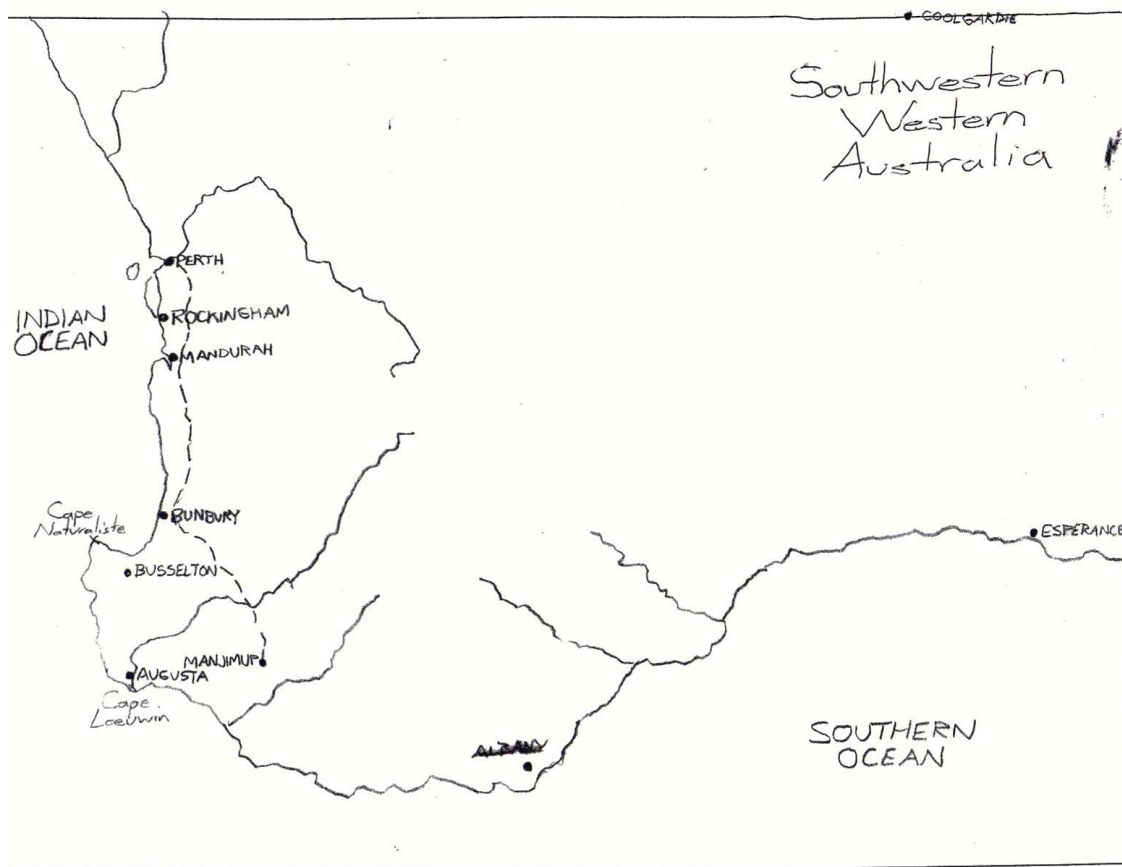


Illustration 12.

Map of Southwestern Western Australia. Illustration done by author.

CHAPTER X: “THE MOST ISOLATED PLACE ON EARTH”: THE BIRTH AND RISE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA, 1829-1914

In the late 1840s, the British Government, casting a wary eye at the prospect of losing their claims to the western coastline of North America, quickly created what would eventually be known as British Columbia. The British hurriedly authorized the erection of forts and the launching of a systematic scheme of colonization to ensure their nascent outpost on the northern Pacific Ocean would remain in British hands.¹ Surely they in doing so had in mind the very similar circumstances that caused them to proclaim their possession of the western shoreline of Australia and sanction the establishment of forts and settlements there some twenty years earlier. Just as the initial *raison d’etre* of British Columbia was to forestall the United States from colonizing the area, the British rushed to create the colony of Western Australia to prevent other European powers (and, interestingly enough, the United States) from claiming dominion over an unoccupied portion of Australia. These defensive imperatives and fears of foreign domination that motivated the establishment of both frontier colonies remained ingrained in their psyche for decades to come.

¹ For a more detailed discussion on the earliest days of Vancouver Island/British Columbia, please look back at the first pages of Chapter II, “The ‘West Beyond the West:’ British Columbia from Its Inception to the 1880s.”

Imperial Rivalries, the Founding of the Swan River Colony, and Its Early Years, 1820-1850

The Dutch and the Americans were already active in the eastern Indian Ocean in the early 1800s, trawling the waters for whales that could be processed into oil for use in lighting, candle-making, etc. The British were well aware of these exploratory and small-scale trading ventures, but paid little heed to them so long as neither nation lodged any claim to sovereignty in the region.² The British did, however, grow alarmed once the French arrived in the area in the 1820s. France was Britain's chief and most powerful rival at the time. While the Dutch and the Americans could be written off more or less as mere interlopers, more concerned with following the whales rather than establishing colonies there, British leaders knew the French could actually make good on their threats to create a rival empire in the South Pacific. In January 1826, the French *charge d'affaires* in London announced that his government recently dispatched a corvette named *L'Astrolabe* to chart the western Australian coastline. Only a few days later, British officials discovered that another ship, the *Coquille*, had just returned to France. Her captain, Jules Blosseville, issued a report that recommended the

² For more information on early American expeditions to the western coast of Australia, please see K.A. MacKirdy, "The Fear of American Expansion as a Factor in British Expansion: Western Australia and Natal," in the *Pacific Historical Review*, v. 35, no. 2 (May 1966). For a fuller discussion on British trepidation should the Dutch, the initial "discoverers" of western Australia, press their claim on that basis, please see Pamela Statham-Drew, *James Stirling: Admiral and Founding Governor of Western Australia* (Nedlands, WA, Australia: University of Western Australia Press, 2003), pp. 51, 52.

establishment of a French penal colony along the unclaimed southwestern coastline of Australia.³

Almost immediately upon hearing this news, General Ralph Darling, the Governor of New South Wales, wrote a letter to the Permanent Undersecretary for the Colonies, Robert Hay, imploring the British Government to take immediate action to ensure that the entire continent remained in British hands.

It will not be easy to satisfy the French, if they are desirous of establishing themselves here, that there is any objection to their doing so on the west coast, and I therefore beg to suggest that the difficulty would be removed by a commission describing the whole territory as within the Government.⁴

The prospect of Britain's ancient and most formidable enemy establishing a foothold on the Australian continent, one perilously close to the vital sea lanes that linked the growing eastern colonies to Britain, spurred the previously indifferent British Government into asserting sovereignty over the entire continent.⁵

A scant two months after learning about French designs on western Australia, Darling was given instructions to authorize the further surveying of the unclaimed portion of Australia lying west of the 135° meridian so that a British colony could be established there. By the end of 1826, the British had established their first permanent settlement in what would become Western Australia, on King George Sound near present-day Albany. There, the British surveyors hoisted their flag and proclaimed

³ Statham-Drew, James Stirling..., p. 52.

⁴ Letter dated October 9, 1826. Source: J.S. Battye, Western Australia: A History from its Discovery to the Inauguration of the Commonwealth (Oxford, UK: The Clarendon Press, 1924), p. 59.

⁵ *Ibid* p. 58.

British sovereignty over the whole of the Australian continent.⁶ This location, however, due to its location on the Southern Ocean, was deemed inadequate as a base for discouraging the French from their intended enterprise and ensuring the security of Australia's links with the rest of the British Empire.⁷

On January 17, 1827, Darling dispatched another ship, named ironically enough the *Success*, under the command of the Admiral James Stirling, to chart the western coastline of Australia to locate a site more suitable for British colonization. Stirling, upon his return to Sydney in June of that year, presented a report to the Governor that glowingly recommended the Swan River estuary as the most favorable location to establish a successful British colony. To quote the report Stirling delivered upon his return to New South Wales:

In delivering my opinion on the whole of the lands seen on the banks of the Swan, I hesitate not in pronouncing it superior to any I have seen in New South Wales eastward of the Blue Mountains, not only in its local situation, but in many existing advantages which it holds out to settlers, viz.: 1st. The evident superiority of the soil, 2nd. The facility with which settlers can bring their farms into a state of culture from the open state of the country..., 3rd. The great advantage in fresh-water springs of the best quality, and consequent permanent humidity of the soil...4th The advantage of water carriage to their own doors.⁸

Based on Stirling's recommendations, the British government issued a circular in December 1828 that spelled out the terms for the establishment of the Swan River

⁶ *Ibid* p. 61. While the British ship *Amity* landed and its passengers disembarked on Christmas Day 1826, the Union Jack was not actually raised over the nascent settlement until January 21, 1827. This, according to historian F. K. Crowley, "began the permanent occupation of Western Australia by the British. Source: F.K. Crowley, Australia's Western Third: A History of Western Australia from the First Settlements to Modern Times (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1960), p. 3.

⁷ Statham-Drew, James Stirling..., p. 57.

⁸ From "Observations of the Soil, &c., of Swan River" (Enclosed with Stirling's Report of April 17, 1827). Source: Battye, Western Australia..., p. 66.

Colony.⁹ On the 30th of that month, Stirling “received his instructions as the lieutenant-governor of the new colony of Western Australia.”¹⁰

Two ships were immediately dispatched to make good these paper claims. The vessels were laden with military officials, a small number of free pioneer settlers, and provisions required to establish a new isolated colony. The ships arrived at the southwestern coast of Australia on June 1, 1829. Almost immediately, Stirling set his eyes on a supposedly well-watered location approximately twelve miles upstream from the mouth of the Swan River. It was there that the new Lieutenant-Governor planned on situating the capital and main town of Western Australia. On August 12, the town of Perth was officially founded at that very site.¹¹

Despite, or perhaps because of, this initial sense of urgency that led to the hasty formation of Western Australia, the colony quickly languished. A mere year following the establishment of Perth, it was apparent that the land set aside for the colonists was nowhere near as fertile as they had been led to believe, nor were any plentiful supplies of fresh water that Stirling wrote about in his report located.¹² By the end of 1830 only 200 acres were under cultivation, out of the 1,178,297 originally set aside for that purpose.¹³

⁹ Crowley, Australia's Western Third..., pp. 2, 3; Sir Hal Colebatch, A Story of a Hundred Years: Western Australia 1829-1929 (Perth: Fred Wm. Simpson, Government Printer, 1929) pp. 12, 13.

¹⁰ MacKirdy, “Fear of American Expansion...,” p. 131.

¹¹ *Ibid* p. 7.

¹² Crowley, Australia's Western Third..., pp. 12, 13.

¹³ Source: Pamela Stratham, in her chapter “Swan River Colony 1829-1850,” in C.T. Stannage, ed., A New History of Western Australia (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1981), p. 187.

The unsuitability of the land was only exacerbated by the decision made by the founders of the colony to discourage paupers and indigents from migrating there. This automatically excluded a labor source vital to early colonial development.¹⁴ The extreme isolation of the fledgling colony vis-à-vis other British settlements also deterred many would-be immigrants from resettling in Western Australia. Troubled relations with the indigenous population certainly did not help matters. They grew so bad that in June 1832 the settlers in the town of Guildford requested that the entire colony be abandoned if the violence between whites and Aborigines continued unabated.¹⁵ Starting from a European population of practically nil in 1829, eight years later the white population of Western Australia as a whole numbered only 2032 people, a figure that includes the military men stationed in the colony.¹⁶ The Swan River colony required immigrants in order to develop its moribund economy, but Western Australia as a whole offered little inducement for prospective settlers.

Such a desperate situation would plague the colony for most of the nineteenth century. In fact, the labor shortage in Western Australia became so acute that as early as 1836, a year in which immigration to the colony practically came to a halt, the new Lieutenant-Governor, F.C. Irwin, requested that the British Government supply him with convicts from India so that roads, public buildings and other requisite

¹⁴H.C. Gilliland, "Arthur Kennedy's Administration of the Colony of Western Australia Examined as a Background to the Initiation of the Vancouver Island Exploration Expedition of 1864," in the British Columbia Historical Quarterly, v. XVIII, Nos. 1 and 2 (January-April 1954), p. 105.

¹⁵Battye, Western Australia..., p. 117.

¹⁶Stannage, ed., A New History..., p. 189.

infrastructure could be constructed.¹⁷ Two years later, it was reported that the ship *Gaillardon* had brought an unspecified number of Indian laborers to Western Australia.¹⁸ They apparently were not the only contract laborers present in the colony. Already seven Indians were in the employ of a Scotsman by the last name of Miller, working at the small outpost of Leschenault.¹⁹ No exists in the historical record regarding how these laborers were treated or viewed by the European population of the colony.

The Transportation Era, 1850-1868

Even with the arrival of contract workers, Western Australia continued to languish throughout the 1830s and 1840s due to the lack of free settlers willing to immigrate there. Barring the mass importation of coerced labor from the non-white colonies of the British Empire, a solution few seemed to advocate, the only other way Western Australia would be able to procure migrants was to resort to accepting British convicts. Not only would the convicts represent a badly-needed infusion of cheap labor, but the costs of their care and upkeep, not to mention that of the soldiers who would oversee them, would be borne by the British Treasury and not the handful of already-struggling Western Australian ratepayers.²⁰

¹⁷ Battye, *Western Australia...*, p. 127. In 1836, Western Australia actually managed to lose 25 more immigrants than those who arrived at its shores. Source: Stannage ed., *A New History...*, p. 189.

¹⁸ Statham-Drew, *James Stirling...*, p. 348.

¹⁹ *Ibid* p. 349.

²⁰ Gilliland, "Governor Kennedy..." p. 105; Martin Gibbs, "The Archaeology of the Convict System in Western Australia," in *Australasian Historical Archaeology*, v. 19 (2001), p. 60.

Interestingly enough, the government of Western Australia stipulated two specific conditions regarding the convicts they would and would not accept in their colony. The first stricture was that the colony would only accept male convicts; the second was that the British Government refrain from sending any Irish prisoners.²¹ The latter can be attributed to the fact that the government of Western Australia embraced the prevalent contemporary racist hierarchies that labeled the Irish, and by extension the Celt, as “unstable, childish, violent, lazy, feckless, feminine, and primitive...likened to Hottentots, Maoris, Chinese, pigs, apes and chimpanzees.”²² An editorial in the Australian from 1846 ranked the suitability of British immigrants to Australia. The author wrote: “We rate these three races as follows: ---- Three first-rate lowland Scotch or English labourers or shepherds...to seven west and mountain Irish or highlanders [sic], and to ten coolies.”²³ Even with such a dire labor shortage, many Western Australians were loathe to admit Celts who would, it was presumed, form a “low caste” that would lead to the degeneration of the colony as a whole.²⁴

In June 1850, the first shipload of felons landed at Fremantle, the principal port of the colony.²⁵ As advocates of transportation had hoped, the convicts and their guards helped boost the population of the struggling colony considerably. In that year,

²¹ James Jupp, The English in Australia (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 28.

²² L.P Curtis, Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England (Bridgeport, CT: Conference on British Studies, 1968), p. 119.

²³ Dated April 13, 1846. Source: in Jon Stratton’s chapter “Borderline Anxieties: What Whitening the Irish has to do with Keeping Out Asylum Seekers,” in Aileen Moreton-Robinson, ed., Whitening Race: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2004), p. 232.

²⁴ Laksiri Jayasuriya, David Walker and Jan Gothard, eds., Legacies of White Australia: Race, Culture and Nation. (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 2003), p. 11.

²⁵ Crowley, Australia’s Western Third..., p. 18.

Western Australia only counted 5886 white inhabitants. Ten years later, the population had nearly trebled, to 15,346.²⁶ By the time transportation of convicts ceased in 1868, there were 24,653 white inhabitants in Western Australia.²⁷ Not only was the overall population of the colony boosted, but the convicts helped build the roads and facilities and provided the casual labor that allowed Western Australia to develop a viable export-based economy centered on wool production. This in turn started to attract free settlers from the British Isles and the eastern Australian colonies.²⁸ These free settlers established “genteel” civic institutions, such as clubs, libraries, etc., which further increased the colony’s attractiveness as a more refined locale that “respectable” Britons could inhabit.

The End of Transportation and a Tentative Outreach to Asian Laborers, 1868-1890

Due to popular uproar in Britain over both the high drain on the Treasury that transportation represented, the growing notion that the exile of felons was morally wrong, and fears in the eastern Australian colonies that recidivist criminals would flock there and undermine their own new “respectability,” the British Government ended the sending of criminals to Western Australia in 1868.²⁹ Almost immediately, the colony once again stagnated. Without this forced immigration to Western Australia, the

²⁶ I.H. vanden Driesen, Essays on Immigration Policy and Population in Western Australia, 1850-1901 (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1986), p. 22.

²⁷ Martin Gibbs, “The Archaeology of the Convict System in Western Australia,” in Australian Historical Archaeology, v. 19 (2001), p. 69

²⁸ *Ibid* p. 69; Crowley, Australia’s Western Third..., p. 45.

²⁹ vanden Driesen, Essays on Immigration..., pp. 38, 39.

traditional obstacles to its development – its isolation and lack of resources – reasserted themselves.

To compensate, the colony turned to the one remaining source of cheap malleable labor – contract immigrants from Asia. In 1874, the Legislative Council of Western Australia voted £1000 to encourage the importation of Chinese and Indonesian laborers to any district in the colony that requested them.³⁰ When no district took advantage of this offer, the Council four years later authorized a further £4500 to subsidize the importation of Asian workers.³¹ In 1879, an additional £2000 was set aside for this purpose. These actions flowed from the “belief of some classes that, as Western Australia attracted very few immigrants and had no fixed labouring class from which to draw unskilled workers, this foreign labour would be invaluable. The advocates of their importation – shipowners, pastoralists and pearlers, but not all merchants – contended that the Chinese labourers...would be cheap.”³² Advocates of the importation of Asian laborers surely were imbued with the heightened racism of the late Victorian period, but at the time the necessity of economic development managed to trump these impulses. Despite the funds authorized by the Legislative Council, by

³⁰ *Ibid* p. 318; Charles Price, The Great White Walls are Built: Restrictive Immigration to North America and Western Australia, 1836-1888 (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974), p. 154.

³¹ *Ibid* p. 318; *Ibid* p. 154.

³² Patricia M. Brown., The Merchant Princes of Fremantle: The Rise and Decline of a Colonial Elite, 1870-1900 (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1996), pp. 91, 92.

1881 only 181 Chinese (and 110 Indo-Malayans) were counted in the whole of Western Australia, out of a total estimated population of approximately 30,000.³³

Those small numbers aside, the fact that the colonial government actively sought out Asian laborers is indicative of the belief that so long as the numbers of Asians remained small, and as long as Western Australia suffered from a vital manpower shortage, the presence of Chinese and other Asian workers was for the time being tolerated, if not actively sought out, by that colony's unelected elites. In fact, a British traveler to that colony, H.G. Parsons, reported favorably on the Asians in Perth in the early 1890s.

Living in Perth is cheap, and, on the whole, moderately good. The hotels are rough, but clean, and you may live in the best of them for thirty shillings a week... The waiters in the club, and many of the cooks and servants, both in hotels and private houses, are Chinese, so the cooking is always at least fair. The variety of Orientals [by the way] who settle in the colony is extraordinary... In Perth itself there are, besides the Chinese market-gardeners and laundry-men, several stores kept by Indian firms, and, in particular, quite a number of small Cingalese [sic] traders in moonstones, stuffs, and cheap jewelry. Such is one result of the *Pax Britannica*, under which the whole border line of the Indian Ocean, from Zanzibar even unto Perth, is becoming a field for the enterprise of Her Majesty's Indian subjects.³⁴

Parsons was evidently unaware that the relatively "idyllic" multicultural and multiracial ambience he observed in the early 1890s was about to become the catalyst for the

³³ Price, *The Great White Walls...*, p. 154.

³⁴ *A Handbook to Western Australia and Its Goldfields* (London: George Robertson, 1894), pp. 13-17. Source: Russel Ward and John Robertson, eds., *Such Was Life: Select Documents in Australian Social History*, v. 2, 1851-1913 (Chippendale, NSW: Alternative Publishing Cooperative Ltd., 1980), p. 60. It should be noted here that while China was not a part of the formal British Empire as such, many of the Chinese who resided in Perth and elsewhere until the gold rushes of the 1890s who Parsons observes were actually British subjects who emigrated from either Singapore or Hong Kong, both of which were formal British Crown Colonies.

systematic implementation of a wholly “British” Western Australia, to be defended at all costs.

The Gold Rush of the 1890s and Its Impact on Immigration to Western Australia

All of this would suddenly change in the early 1890s. In 1892, a large goldfield was discovered approximately 350 miles east of Perth. Overnight the town of Coolgardie sprang up at the site of the strike. By 1898 Coolgardie was the third largest city in the colony, boasting some 15,000 inhabitants. In 1893, an even larger gold strike was made 25 miles east of Coolgardie, when two prospectors by the names of Patrick Hannan and Tom Flannagan returned from a few days of fossicking there with approximately one hundred ounces of gold.³⁵ Once their find was publicized, prospectors flooded into Western Australia. The city of Kalgoorlie was established right next to the second strike; it rapidly surpassed its new western neighbor to become the second largest city in the colony, with a population of 30,000 residents by 1903. The influx of miners and others hoping to “strike it rich” helped Western Australia quickly catch up to its eastern colonial counterparts in terms of population. The 1890 census counted only 48,502 residents in the entire colony. By 1900, the population had almost quadrupled, to 179,967.³⁶

In the prosaic words of the noted historian of Western Australia J.S. Battye, the discovery of gold in the 1890s gave the colony an almost “Cinderella-like” aura:

³⁵ Stannage, ed., *A New History...*, p. 219.

³⁶ Source: vanden Driesen, *Essays on Immigration Policy...*, p. 1.

The gold almost seems to have waited for the advent of responsible government to declare itself, or perhaps it was that a freer, more independent, and more enterprising spirit came upon the people through the change. Whatever may have been the impelling cause, the story of the rise of Western Australia from the position of an almost neglected territory to the status of one of the largest gold producing countries of the world possesses all the elements of a romance... Even the most simple and unvarnished narrative almost suggests that the lamp of Aladdin had found a resting-place under the protecting wing of the Black Swan.³⁷

The benefits of the gold rush were by no means limited to the unprecedented influx of immigrants and settlers. Gold was Western Australia's entrée into the vast credit markets of London. The state was borrowed extensively in Britain to finance the construction of railroads, aqueducts, a new deep-water harbor at Fremantle, roads and bridges, and ornate public buildings.³⁸ This much-needed infrastructure in turn facilitated further immigration, for it afforded quicker and easier access to the goldfields and also allowed auxiliary industries to emerge, such as retail, banking, hospitality, agriculture, all of which stimulated fresh demands for laborers. It seemed at the time that the economic boom would never end, and that all who arrived in "The Coming Colony" who worked hard would be able to claim their share of the newfound riches circulating throughout Western Australia.³⁹

The Hardening of Racial Barriers, 1890-1901

³⁷ *Western Australia...* p. 404. Western Australia was only granted responsible government in 1890, largely because up until that date the British Government felt that the colony's white population was insufficient to meet the expenses of paying for its own administration.

³⁸ Stannage ed., *A New History...*, pp. 221-226.

³⁹ *Ibid* p. 111.

That is, to say, so long as you were not Asian. As stated earlier, as long as the numbers of Asians resident in Western Australia remained small, they provided little economic competition to the majority white population, and they confined themselves to certain niche occupations such as domestic service and gardening (fields that not coincidentally directly benefited mostly the propertied classes), their presence was often begrudgingly tolerated or deemed necessary for the development of the colony.⁴⁰ The gold rush effectively changed this scenario, for it eliminated one of the main justifications for importing Asian labor touted by the colonial business community. With the discovery of gold, the colony's political elites feared that immigrants from "undesirable" nations would flood into Western Australia, as they had in British Columbia and other previous rushes elsewhere. These immigrants, unlike even the most hardened of "British" criminals who arrived up to a scant 25 years earlier, were often deemed unassimilable. Their visceral physical and linguistic differences would serve as a constant reminder of the fragility of the British presence in Western Australia. If such settlers were allowed to "pour" in, then the "British" might be overwhelmed, just as they had in turn overwhelmed the Noongar aboriginals earlier in the century. In this light, the presence of the Asians, far from being an economic asset

⁴⁰ As Patricia Brown points out, throughout the nineteenth century, Chinese immigrants in Perth and Fremantle, the colony's two largest urban centers, were often employed as "cooks and 'houseboys' on pastoral leases, as servants at clubs such as the Weld Club in Perth and the Fremantle Club" – in other words, in occupations that most of their white male contemporaries would deem too effete and demeaning for them, in times of economic prosperity, to perform. Source: The Merchant Princes..., p. 91.

to the colony, was increasingly likened to being a pathogen that would destroy Western Australia from within

They were also well aware that tens of thousands of “desirable” immigrants from Britain and elsewhere in Australia would now voluntarily choose to immigrate to Western Australia because that colony finally offered an economic incentive for them to come. The arrival *en masse* of Britons would “redeem” the colony, and allow the “natural” Social Darwinist hierarchy to reassert itself now that its disruption due to economic necessity present since the colony’s founding had finally been surmounted. Conversely, the argument regarding the number and the utility of the Asians in Western Australia now worked against their continued presence in the colony. Many of the white laboring classes, not to mention several of their employers, hoped that with this dramatic influx of “Anglo-Saxons,” the mining companies, the farmers of the colony, retailers, etc. that hitherto had employed Asian laborers would replace them with British workers, now that they were available in sufficient quantities.

Those Western Australians who increasingly clamored for tougher immigration restrictions particularly feared a repetition of the influx of Asian and other non-British immigrants that arrived in New South Wales and Victoria in the 1840s and the 1850s. Their experiences with this immigration, and the racially motivated clashes that ensued, served as examples to be avoided at all costs. In addition, politicians from the eastern colonies also pointed out to their western counterparts that should such a movement of Asians be allowed to arrive in Western Australia, then that colony would become the

new “Achilles Heel” through which their own recently “redeemed” societies would again be threatened by Asians in their midst. In 1892, the very year news circulated regarding the gold finds at Coolgardie, the Victorian politician Charles Henry Pearson wrote a missive that attacked the premise that Asian laborers could be used as a relatively cheap means to help develop the Australian continent, especially its remote and lesser-populated locales.

The fear of Chinese immigration which the Australian democracy cherishes, and which Englishmen at home find it hard to understand, is, in fact, the instinct of self-preservation, quickened by experience. We know that coloured and white labour cannot exist side by side; we are well aware that China can swamp us with a single year’s surplus of population; and we know that if national existence is sacrificed to the working of a few mines and sugar plantations, it is not the Englishman in Australia alone, but the whole civilised world, that will be the losers... We are guarding the last part of the world, in which the higher races can live and increase freely, for the higher civilisation.⁴¹

The increasingly virulent Social Darwinism of the late Victorian period, combined with a crippling economic depression in the 1890s in the eastern colonies that heightened competition for scarce jobs, created a racialized economic situation where Asian and other “foreign” labor not only took vacancies away from “whites,” its very presence undermined the tenuous “British” character of the continent. In such an atmosphere of almost paranoia regarding the threat the Asians had become, many Australians became convinced that ‘however small the numbers of Chinese and however humble their

⁴¹ From National Life and Character (London: Macmillan and Company, 1894), p. 16. This quote is also significant for the fact that the first prime minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, Sir Edmund Barton, actually quoted it practically verbatim in the parliamentary debates surrounding the Immigration Restriction Bill of 1901, the first major piece of policy the federal government considered. Barton referenced Pearson on August 7, 1901. Source: Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, III-3501.

circumstances, they apparently provided clear evidence of a gathering flood that would sweep all before it.”⁴²

That said, Western Australia, especially before the granting of responsible government to the colony in 1890, certainly took its time to be convinced of the pressing need for imposing immigration restrictions on Asians. Until the mid-1890s, there were few outright barriers placed on the migration of any new settlers to Western Australia. Its Legislative Council had passed two pieces of legislation – the Goldfields Act of 1886 and the Goldfields Act Amendment Act of 1892 – that at least on paper prevented the employment of non-Europeans in its gold mines. Both laws contained an exemption to those provisions if the “aliens” were British subjects.⁴³ This meant that Indians, Ceylonese, men and women from Hong Kong and the South Pacific – all being British subjects – were recruited by agencies to work in the mines, farms, and kitchens of the colonial elite. Many employers actually argued that it was preferable to import “British” subjects from within the Empire than to encourage the influx of non-Anglo-Saxon Europeans. These proponents pointed out that their loyalty to the Crown and other British institutions would actually reinforce the hard-won “British” character of Western Australia, whereas poor whites from the United States and continental Europe would dilute those very ties and open the door for the “pollution” of that colony through miscegenation.

⁴² Jayasura et al. eds., Legacies of White Australia..., p. 36.

⁴³ *Ibid* p. 195.

Also, despite the official restrictions limiting the employment of Asians in the goldfields of Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie and elsewhere, many Asians quickly procured jobs in the auxiliary industries that catered to the miners. With so many whites flocking to the goldfields, many employers in Western Australia, particularly in Perth and Fremantle, welcomed Asian immigration at first as a vital substitute in an economy habitually plagued with labor shortages.⁴⁴ The use of Asian workers in such trades became so pronounced that the Perth branch of the Trade and Labour Council tried to point out to the colonial Legislative Assembly (the body that replaced the largely unelected Council in 1890) in the mid-1890s that “non-Europeans monopolised market gardening and were moving into the retail grocery business and cabinetmaking, while Afghans had largely taken over the carrying trade. In addition, Chinese were being employed on farms, and Japanese workers were replacing Europeans in the northern ports.”⁴⁵ Yet the colonial legislature still failed to take any action on the matter. For the time being, however, Western Australia for much of the 1890s could afford to take a more benevolent stance on the issue because its labor market was still expanding and accordingly was more accommodating to immigration from wherever laborers could be procured. Thus, one of the three conditions for inciting a racist backlash against Asian labor was, at least through most of the early 1890s, absent from the Western Australian context.

⁴⁴ Charles Price, “‘White’ Restrictions on ‘Coloured’ Immigration,” in Race: The Journal of the Institute of Race Relations, v. VII, no. 3 (January 1966), p. 218.

⁴⁵ *Ibid* p. 197.

The second prerequisite, of sheer numbers of a visible minority generating antagonism from the majority population, was also largely absent in Western Australia in the early 1890s. While Asians did relocate to Australia, few did so, especially when compared to the numbers who migrated to Hawaii and North America. This is especially true of Western Australia. Asians and Europeans like found little reason or incentive to immigrate to such a remote and struggling colony. For example, in 1891 there were 1223 Chinese residents in all of Western Australia. Six years later, that number had risen, to 1940.⁴⁶ This represented a mere one percent of the overall population of the colony at the time, an actual drop from the 2.5% of the population they constituted in 1890.

The Rise in Calls for Asian Exclusion, 1889-1900

Eventually, however, the demand of the eastern colonies to implement a continent-wide system for Asian exclusion overpowered Western Australia's reticence to act on this issue. This occurred for a number of reasons. First, as argued in the previous paragraph, Asians no longer "confined their employment to an accepted range of occupations."⁴⁷ As the economy of Western Australia grew, and its population expanded, a wider array of economic opportunities emerged for Asian immigrants, particularly in mining and in retail, that hitherto were off-limits to them. To cite a particular example, Frederick Vosper, the editor of the Coolgardie Miner, wrote a series

⁴⁶ vanden Driesen, Essays on Immigration Policy..., pp. 123, 131.

⁴⁷ Andrew Markus, Australian Race Relations 1788-1993 (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin Australia, 1994), pp. 73, 74.

of articles decrying the fact that not only were Asians employed in the vital camel driving industry, a vocation they traditionally dominated, but they also owned land, worked for that city's council and police force, and even started to open up their own stores.

To Vosper, this was unacceptable. It was evidence of “the sneaking, crawling, insidious Mohammedian invasion now going on” that was a perilous threat to “the sweet, clean and wholesome,” or in other words white and British, Australia he and his supporters cherished.⁴⁸ In Perth, many workers started to clamor against the growing non-European control over such previously non-competitive or non-existent economic sectors such as market gardening, furniture making, and carpentry, operating groceries, and carrying.⁴⁹ The growing popularity of this message became much more difficult for the colonial government to ignore.

The rise in both the numbers and the visibility of Asians in Western Australia started to attract the attention of the burgeoning labor movement. The increasingly powerful labor unions often pointed out the western seaboard of North America, with its large Asian population and constant strife between the “Anglo Saxon” and “John Chinaman,” as a dangerous model of social disharmony and labor strife that should be avoided at all costs.

The history of California shows that the danger is a real one. In all the departments of industry Chinese cheap labor is making itself felt. Such industries as market gardening, domestic service and laundrying have a special

⁴⁸ Markus, *Fear and Hatred...*, pp. 195, 196.

⁴⁹ vanden Driesen, *Essays on Immigration...*, p. 130; Price, *The Great White Walls...*, p. 216.

attraction for the quiet and not over muscular Mongolian...there [are] 2500 Chinamen engaged in the work of growing and vending vegetables, and an additional 2000 in the work of canning fruits. That the same thing will happen here, where the conditions are even more favorable to its happening, is absolutely certain. Already a very considerable commencement has been made, and nothing will check the progress of the mischief short of special legislation.⁵⁰

North America also served as a negative example of how the importation of Asians by unscrupulous employers undercut wages, introduced security woes and further weakened the moral and racial fiber of society. With that in mind, the unions in Western Australia worked hard to ensure that such conditions would not replicate themselves in their colony.

Ironically enough, the surge in the numbers of immigrants raised important questions over the impact they may have on the quintessential “British,” or to be more specific “Anglo-Saxon” character of Western Australia they potentially posed. The premier of the colony in the 1890s, John Forrest, operated under the firm conviction that “bringing the laws of Britain and the Christian religion to Australia was a great and worthy task.”⁵¹ While he at first appeared to be adverse to imposing blanket restrictions on immigration to Western Australia, citing the need of the colony for cheap labor in certain sectors of the economy mentioned above, he too shared the belief that the presence of a visibly non-European populace would inherently undermine the fragile Anglo-Saxon character of his colony. Once the economic incentive to allowing Asian

⁵⁰ The Age (Melbourne), August 22, 1887, p. 4. Source: Gibb, The Making of White Australia..., pp. 51, 52.

⁵¹ Geoffrey Partington, The Australian Nation: Its British and Irish Roots (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1994), p. 149.

immigration to continue was removed, his racist imperatives, or at least the ones now suddenly politically palatable, could assert themselves.

Situated on a frontier so far from any other Europeans, Western Australia to many of its inhabitants needed to have a stronger sense of its “Britishness,” because it was continually under attack from alien threats. It was widely acknowledged that the colony lie in a part of the world where whites, let alone Britons, constituted a minority and where the legitimacy of the European presence was not justified by history, military victory or demographics. In such a context, Australia had to remain homogenously “British” or steadfastly “Anglo-Saxon,” for the Asians to the north were looking for any sort of crack in the veneer of racial superiority to challenge the British hold over the continent. As “Billy” Hughes boasts:

You can go from Perth to Sydney, and from Hobart to Cape York, and find men speaking the same tongue, with the same accent... We are all of the same race, and speak the same tongue in the same way. That cannot be said of any other Dominion in the Empire, except New Zealand, where, after all, it can only be said with reservation, because that country has a large population of Maoris. We are more British than the people of Great Britain, we hold firmly to the great principle of White Australia, because we know what we know.⁵²

In other words, the governments of Australia needed to take immediate action in the 1890s to ensure that their continent remained, in the words of the “Father of Federation” Sir Henry Parkes, “all one family, all one blood, all one faith.”⁵³ Parkes also implored

⁵² Source: Neville Meaney, “Britishness and Australia: Some Reflections,” in The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, v. 31, no. 2 (2003), p. 121. The Commonwealth of Australia, which achieved Dominion Status, was formed on January 1, 1901. New Zealand achieved its similar status in 1907.

⁵³ Official Report of the Federation Conference Held in the Court-House, Corowa, 31st July and 1st August 1893 (Corowa, NSW, 1893), p. ii. Source: Douglas Cole, “The Problem of ‘Nationalism’ and

that “it is our duty to preserve the type of British nation and we ought not, for any consideration whatever, to admit any element that would detract from or in any appreciable degree lower that admirable type of nationality.”⁵⁴ To permit an Asian community to establish itself and grow anywhere on the Australian continent would destroy that essential identity.

The Emergence of a “White Western Australia,” 1890-1901

Accordingly, the Legislative Assembly of Western Australia was spurred into action on the issue of non-European immigration. In 1889, a weak Chinese Immigration Restriction Act was passed. Under its provisions, the number of Chinese laborers brought to Western Australia by shipping concerns and immigration agents was limited to one per 500 tons of cargo landed per ship. Employers of Asian labor, however, procured an exemption in that act. Any British subject who was legally able to immigrate under the provisions of the 1884 Imported Labour Registry Act (which merely required them to register with the colonial government) could continue to do so without restriction. This exemption significantly diluted the purpose of the Chinese Immigration Restriction Act, as employers continued to recruit laborers in Hong Kong and other British possessions in Asia. Its routine flouting, however, led to rising agitation by the working classes that such an egregious loophole be closed. The colonial legislature, now more keenly aware of the growing political power labor

‘Imperialism’ in British Settlement Colonies,” in *The Journal of British Studies*, v. 10, no. 2 (May 1971), p. 168.

⁵⁴ *New South Wales Parliamentary Debates*, 5/88, p. 4782. Source: Price, *The Great White Walls...*, p. 256.

enjoyed over them, removed the exemption afforded to British subjects in 1893.⁵⁵ Over the course of the decade, the colonial legislature also passed several laws that further restricted and infringed upon the rights of Asians in Western Australia. Under their terms, Asians were declared ineligible for naturalization, were barred from serving in the colonial civil service, and could not obtain fishing, liquor, or mining licenses.⁵⁶

Despite such action, the Asian presence in Western Australia continued to expand. In response, the largely white working class electorate, many of whom themselves arrived in the colony as paupers with the hope of increasing their economic and social status, demanded that their government act more stridently as far as Asian exclusion was concerned. Forrest, realizing that this issue was a powerful vote-getter, increasingly obliged.⁵⁷ He swung away from his previous reticence to pass discriminatory legislation and started to appropriate the Trade and Labour Council's rabidly exclusionist stance on the topic to woo the increasingly vital working class vote. In 1897, after a particularly rancorous electoral campaign in which the Council, the Australian Natives' Association, the mayor and municipal council of the city of Fremantle joined forces to vociferously decry the continued "Nigger Invasion" of Western Australia, the cowed colonial government passed a blanket Immigration Restriction Act late that year.⁵⁸ Under its provisions, any immigrant to Western

⁵⁵ Andrew Markus, Fear and Hatred: Purifying Australia and California, 1850-1901 (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1979), p. 195.

⁵⁶ Crowley, Australia's Western Third..., p. 119, *Ibid* p. 195.

⁵⁷ vanden Driesen, Essays on Immigration..., p. 124.

⁵⁸ Markus, Fear and Hatred..., pp. 197, 198.

Australia faced being subjected to a diction test. If the prospective immigrant failed “to write out...in the characters of any language of Europe, a passage of fifty words in length, taken...from a British author,” that person would be barred from entering the colony.⁵⁹ The selective use of this test meant that all immigrants from Asia would be subjected to the diction test, whereas Britons would have that requirement waived regardless of their levels of literacy.

This so-called “Natal Act” received the approval of the eastern Australian colonies and the Colonial Office in London. Asians could be excluded without Britain receiving any sort of international opprobrium. This placated the Colonial Office, a body wary of any controversy that any explicitly racist exclusionist policies might generate within the polyethnic and officially race-blind British Empire. The diction test in theory applied to anyone. Consequently it would be difficult for any foreign power to challenge it. It in fact in its supposed “egalitarianism” insidiously comported to the British sense of “fair play.” It was rather ironic that Western Australia, the last colony in Australia to develop and arguably the one most resistant to impose restrictions on immigration throughout the nineteenth century, was the first colony to pass the legislation that would become the cornerstone of the “White Australia” policy towards immigration that would last for over seventy years.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Western Australia Acts of Parliament, 61 Victoria (1897), p. 425. Source: vanden Driesen, Essays on Immigration..., p. 132.

⁶⁰ *Ibid* p. 137. This so-called “Natal Act” was passed by the governments of New South Wales and Tasmania in 1898, and by New Zealand the following year. Source: Brian Galligan and Winsome Roberts, Australian Citizenship (Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Press, 2004), p. 52.

Race and the Road to Federation, 1897-1901

By 1897, a general consensus emerged throughout Australia on both the “British” nature of that continent’s society at a social and a racial level, and the inherent threat that all Asians now posed to that self-conceptualization. In fact, this consensus was actually one of the main motivations behind the very formation of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901. The growing numbers of Asians arriving in the various Australian colonies in the 1890s stirred up public approbation, which in turn led the varying colonial officials to call for a uniform standard regarding the prevention of “undesirables” from migrating to the continent. One way to ensure that Australia should be, to quote the future federal parliamentarian G. Edwards, “maintained as an Anglo-Saxon civilization,” was for some sort of overarching unitary body to emerge that would ensure that all of the colonies comported to this ideal, and that no colony would renege on this pledge based on its own selfish short-term economic interests.⁶¹ Prompt action at the continental level needed to be taken so that this last bastion of “Britishness” could, as A.T. Yarwood characterizes, “prevent the creation of a *uitlander* situation in Australia similar to that which was soon to plunge the Transvaal into a war of intervention.”⁶² This federation would not only prevent an “advance guard” forming within this continent, it would also, just as the confederation of the British North

⁶¹ Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, August 25, 1901, p. 5141. Source: J.D.B. Miller, ed., Australians and British: Social and Political Connections (North Ryde, NSW: Methuen Australia, 1987), p. 19.

⁶² In his book Asian Migration to Australia: The Background to Exclusion (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1964), p. 5.

American colonies in 1867 prevented Canada from being absorbed by the United States and kept it within the British Empire, preserve Australia from being engulfed by its large proximate neighbors.

With some prodding from the Colonial Office, on January 1, 1901 the Commonwealth of Australia was officially called into being. The Duke of Cornwall, the future King George V, presided over the ceremonies, a sign of the magnitude and importance of the occasion. Shortly thereafter, the first federal Parliament convened. The issue that dominated the inaugural debate was the matter of exclusion.⁶³ The use of the word debate here is a bit ironic, seeing as the different positions taken on the topic of immigration restriction were really those of form rather than function; there was by this time almost universal agreement in Australia on this topic.⁶⁴ For example, the Labor Party feared that employers would dilute a language test, the mechanism preferred by London, so that they could maintain their access to cheap labor. As such, they desired even more explicitly exclusionary measures to be adopted.⁶⁵ To quote the Labor Senator from Queensland J.C. Stewart:

I should be a traitor to my country, to my race, and to those of our ancestors who have conferred benefits upon us, if I were a party to anything which would allow those Asiatics to come here and destroy at one fell swoop all the efforts of centuries. For these reasons, I think, we are all agreed that the coloured man must be kept out, whether he is a Japanese, a Chinaman, an African, or a subject of His Majesty the King from Asia. We make no exception. We crowd them all

⁶³ Gibb, The Making of "White Australia", p. 99.

⁶⁴ *Ibid* p. 22.

⁶⁵ Markus, Australian Race Relations..., p. 115.

into the one bunch, and say that for the reasons given we cannot permit them to come here. This is really a matter of life and death to the people of Australia.⁶⁶

The Liberal Party, true to its name and its ideology, pointed out the conflict such an explicitly racist policy had with British imperial and diplomatic priorities and overall British rhetoric on race.

Ultimately, due to these realities and sensitivities, the diction test was eventually agreed upon by the federal Parliament. The Immigration Act, passed in 1901, basically enacted at the national level the Immigration Restriction Act passed by the colonial legislature of Western Australia in 1897. The act barred the entry of any person into the Commonwealth who “when asked to do so by an [immigration] officer fails to write out at dictation and sign in the presence of the officer a passage of fifty words in length in a European language directed by the officer.” It also outlawed outright the immigration of “any person under contract or agreement to perform manual labour within the Commonwealth.” This latter provision was included to forestall opportunistic business interests desirous of cheap workers using signed contracts as proof of an immigrant’s literacy.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, v. VI, pp. 7331, 7332. The Labor Party was quite cognizant of the protests lodged by the operators of various shipping lines, who feared the drop in passenger traffic that such legislation would naturally entail. For more information, please see Yarwood, Asian Migration to Australia..., p. 35.

⁶⁷ Source: Yarwood, Asian Migration to Australia..., p. 157. In 1905 the Immigration Act was amended so that the diction test could from that year forward be administered in “any proscribed language.” For a further discussion of how employers in North America continually sought new sources of labor once traditional ethnic groups were subject to exclusion, please see Chapter 4 of this dissertation regarding the sudden attractiveness of the Japanese in the late 1880s and 1890s, and also Roger Daniels, The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion (New York: Athenium, 1968), Chapter I.

In the “one fell swoop” J.C. Stewart decried, but in reverse, the numbers of Asians allowed to immigrate to Australia plummeted. Due to the systematic application of the diction test, where almost all non-Europeans were asked to read a passage in a language they would have little familiarity with (in one particular instance, a particularly astute immigration officer chose to administer the test using the Transylvanian dialect of Romanian, in order to ensure that the otherwise multilingual immigrant would fail), the number of Asians resident in Australia at first stabilized, then started to fall.⁶⁸ In 1902, 33 immigrants were able to pass the diction test, out of 618 who were subjected to it. The following year, 13 people passed, out of 136. After 1903, following stricter enforcement of the Act’s provisions and better training, only 5 immigrants were able to successfully pass the test, the last one being a Filipino in 1909.⁶⁹ With these measures in place, the number of Chinese settlers throughout Australia fell from 30,542 in 1901 to 22,753 ten years later. Over the same period, the number of Japanese residents in the Commonwealth also decreased, from 3554 to 3489.⁷⁰

The Russo-Japanese War and Australia, 1904-1914

While it would appear that the rigorous application of the Immigration Act of 1901, and the resultant drop in the numbers of “undesirables” living in their midst might have relieved the anxiety many Australians felt over the threat that Asia posed to their

⁶⁸ A.C. Palfreeman, “Non-White Immigration to Australia,” in *Pacific Affairs*, v. 47, no. 3 (Autumn 1974), p. 345.

⁶⁹ Huttenback, *Racism and Empire...*, p. 49.

⁷⁰ Source: *Ibid* p. 163.

nation, still a general fear persisted regarding the danger their new Dominion faced from Asia. This dread only seemed to increase with the Russo-Japanese War in 1905. Prior to that conflict, with the virtual elimination of immigration from Asia that “White Australia” effected and the conclusion of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902, which formally bound Australia to Japan militarily, a general ease slowly started to emerge in Australia as far as its national security was concerned. China was in a drastically weakened position following its defeat in both the Sino-Japanese War in 1895 and the failed Boxer Rebellion against the West in 1900. For its part, Japan was now tethered to the British Empire by the Anglo-Japanese Commercial Treaty of 1894 and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902. Many Australians took solace in these agreements, which they argued neutered Japan’s ability to launch either its warriors or its immigrants against Australia. For now, it seemed as though the most immediate and proximate dangers had been solved. Indeed, many Australians seemed “vindicated when British Columbia and California were stormed with large Japanese migration” in the early 1900s, because they chose to proactively erect a “permanent legislative barrier” that prevented such an “invasion.”⁷¹

This security, however, proved to rather fleeting in nature. Japan’s victory over Russia in 1905 sent shockwaves throughout Australia, just as it had in British Columbia. As the historian Neville Meaney argues, suddenly “Australia’s fears of

⁷¹ In Neville Bennett’s chapter “Japanese Emigration Policy, 1880-1941,” in Christine Inglis, S. Gunasekaran, Gerard Sullivan and Chung-Tong Wu, eds., Asians in Australia: The Dynamics of Migration and Settlement (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1992), p. 31.

Japan were intensified. The British settlers were threatened now not only by Japanese immigrants but also by Japan's external ambitions. It was a threat not only of an alien people, but also of a hegemonic power. Japan had become the pre-eminent nation in the region."⁷² Almost immediately upon hearing of the destruction of the Russian Navy, the then-prime minister of Australia, Alfred Deakin, clamored for the creation of an independent army and navy to defend the new nation against possible Japanese aggression, regardless of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.⁷³ Japan's victory permanently "link[ed] the presumed threat from a *foreign great power* – till then a European monopoly – with the *non-European demographic*" that had to be kept out at all costs.⁷⁴ The Japanese victory over Russia led many in Australia to conclude that no power, not even Britain, was left to hold Japan's supposedly atavistic impulses in check. What remained to prevent Japan from forming a "pan-Asiatic confederation" that would "make the Yellow Peril a reality," starting with Australia, the nearest front?⁷⁵

This fear became so acute immediately following the war that the threat Japan posed to Australia permeated all sorts of debates, not only those concerning national defense. Almost overnight, the Australian popular conception of Japan changed from

⁷² In Neville Meaney, Trevor Matthews, and Sol Encel, The Japanese Connection: A Survey of Australian Leaders' Attitudes Towards Japan and the Australia-Japan Relationship (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1988), p. 19.

⁷³ In Michael Ackland's and Pam Oliver's introductory chapter in Ackland and Oliver, eds., Unexpected Encounters: Neglected Histories Behind the Australia-Japan Relationship (Clayton, VIC: Monash University Press, 2007), p. xv.

⁷⁴ In J. Fitzpatrick's chapter "European Settler Colonialism and National Security Ideologies in Australian History," in Richard Leaver and Dave Cox., eds., Middling, Meddling, Muddling: Issues in Australian Foreign Policy (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1997), p. 98. Italics are original.

⁷⁵ In Akira Iikura's, chapter "The Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the Question of Race," in Philips Payson O'Brien, ed., The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1922 (London: Routledge Curzon, 2004), pp. 225, 226.

that of “an idyllic country harshly treated in the past by the great powers” to one of Japan as an alien aggressor, the greatest threat to Australian security and indeed its very existence.⁷⁶ A testament to the power of this fear of invasion and the extent to which it came to pervade that national psyche is evidenced by a speech delivered by a member of the state parliament of Victoria regarding the topic of granting suffrage to married women. In his opposition to this expansion of the franchise, he directly cites the potential Japanese menace as the reason why he adopted this stance:

Whether the extending of the suffrage to women involves the same responsibilities and duties as attach to men in the maintenance and defence of the State. That problem must be considered. As the conditions in Australia are very rapidly changing...prior to the war between Japan and Russia the question may arise in Australia very shortly whether it will be necessary for every man who is able to shoulder a rifle to undergo a course of military training. We know that women cannot be expected, and are not physically able, to perform this duty in defence of their State, so it cannot be expected that they should be asked to do so. With half the voters in this country women who are naturally predisposed to peace, how are we going to maintain a defence against the hordes of Asia?⁷⁷

The defense this parliamentarian intimated was a large increase in the young male British population, who presumably would be able to defend Australia in both a martial and a racial sense against this newfound nemesis.

In the years following the Russo-Japanese War, Australia became acutely aware of its apparent need to defend itself against any covetous power that sought to conquer

⁷⁶ Charles Grimshaw, “Australian Nationalism and the Imperial Connection 1900-1914,” in The Australian Journal of Politics and History, v. III, no. 2 (May 1958), p. 177.

⁷⁷ Source: Humphrey McQueen, A New Britannia..., pp. 60, 61; J.D.B. Miller, Britain and the Old Dominions (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), p. 66.

this hard-won and far-flung outpost of British civilization.⁷⁸ A testament to the power and reach such lines of thought enjoyed at the time lies in the popularity of C.H. Kirness's novel The Australian Crisis, published in 1909. Kirness warned that there would soon be an epic struggle to see "whether the White or Yellow Race shall gain final supremacy. Christian civilisation cannot afford the loss of this continent. *For Australia is the precious front buckle in the White girdle of power and progress encircling the globe.*"⁷⁹ The author and his supporters concluded that Australia was the outermost perimeter of the British Empire. Should this line be breached, then the whole Empire would be threatened. To help protect against this danger, Australia needed to acquire a greater British population so that it would have more defenders when that inevitable battle erupted.

Luckily enough for Kirness and others, the number of British immigrants who arrived in Australia in the years immediately preceding World War I expanded dramatically. Between 1900 and 1910, the population of Australia rose by almost 700,000 people. This indicates that there was a vigorous policy of encouraging immigrants to undertake the long and comparably expensive journey from Great Britain halfway around the world to Australia.⁸⁰ In fact, this rather large increase in Australia's population was in large part due to the arrival of 393,048 British immigrants in the

⁷⁸ Freda Hawkins, Critical Years in Immigration: Canada and Australia Compared (Montreal and Kingston, ON, Canada: McGill – Queen's University Press, 1991), p. 22.

⁷⁹ Source: Huttenback, Racism and Empire..., pp. 314, 315. Italics are original.

⁸⁰ For more information on the subject of assisted immigration in the nineteenth century, please see Eric Richards, "How Did Poor People Emigrate from the British Isles to Australia in the Nineteenth Century," in the Journal of British Studies, v. 32 (July 1993), pp. 250-253.

years between 1906 and 1914 alone, almost half of whom (184,605) immigrated with the help of some sort of financial support from either the federal or the state governments.⁸¹ These arrivals, it was hoped, would simultaneously develop the Australian and the Western Australian economies, reinforce the “British” element and character of each, and defend against any alien power or entity that threatened said identity.

World War I, however, would blow this placid veneer asunder. As Western Australia would soon discover, much to its chagrin, this conflict would powerfully transform the way the world was structured. Policies and assumptions that had underpinned the prewar world order that largely worked in Britain’s, Australia’s and Western Australia’s favor suddenly became impractical and nearly impossible to pursue. New economic, political and racial challenges to preexisting philosophies directly confronted the very foundations of the British Empire, the Commonwealth of Australia, and Western Australia. In an attempt to confront and, it was hoped, to reverse some of these changes, the government of Western Australia, just as British Columbia had, cast its eye on the Outer Hebrides of Scotland as a panacea that it might solve all of these new problems.

⁸¹ *Ibid* pp. 15, 16.

CHAPTER XI: “MOO COW MITCHELL” AND THE GROUP SETTLEMENT SCHEME, 1918-1923

Western Australia emerged from World War I with a rightfully deserved sense of satisfaction in what the state and its people accomplished during that conflict. For example, unlike the rest of Australia, where pride in being “British” and “fighting the good fight” did not stop voters from twice rejecting referenda on conscription in 1916 and 1917, Western Australians endorsed the proposal both times by wide margins, the only state in the Commonwealth to do so.¹ In fact, “[Western Australia] provided more volunteers to the war effort, per head of population, than any other Australian State.”² The war years did pose their own problems, but Western Australia somehow seemed to thrive on the notions of sacrifice and duty the war effort instilled. The actual Gross Domestic Product of the state fell 1.13 percent between 1913 and 1920, almost wholly as a result of the privations caused by the abrupt reorienting of the state economy to meet the needs of the war effort. This was a modest drop, and one that did not seriously impact the overall economic health of the state, especially when compared to the

¹ F.K. Crowley, Australia’s Western Third: A History of Western Australia from the First Settlements to Modern Times (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1960), pp. 192, 193.

² Patrick Cornish, Western Australia in the Twentieth Century (Fremantle, WA: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1999), p. 40.

economic health of Australia's eastern states.³ The departure of so many young men for the trenches in Europe – and women who served in secondary capacities – actually created a labor shortage at home, which in turn afforded new opportunities for those who were traditionally marginalized from the workforce, just as it had in Britain, the Hebrides, and British Columbia.

Western Australia, Japan, and Empire Settlement, 1914-1921

Underneath this ebullient surface, however, a whole host of new concerns also emerged out of the hard-won victory in the “War to end all Wars.” The latent fear of Asia that propelled the very creation of the Commonwealth in the first place was reawakened by the grudging realization that the Japanese navy was responsible for the defense of Western Australia from the Germans, just as it provided the same guarantee for British Columbia.⁴ Indeed, a British Member of Parliament, Captain R. Gee, pointed out to his colleagues in a postwar debate in the House of Commons that “there was not a single transport bearing our comrades-in-arms from ‘down under’ during the War that left Australian shores without a Japanese cruiser as escort. We may forget that, but those who were escorted will not forget it.”⁵ Having to be defended by Japan during the war was emasculating for many Australians.

³ Source: G.D. Snook's chapter “Development in Adversity 1913 to 1946,” in C.T. Stannage, ed., *A New History of Western Australia* (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1981), p. 238. This was probably not aided by the fact that the GDP of Australia as a whole fell by 2.02 percent in the same period.

⁴ Crowley, *Australia's Western Third...*, p. 194.

⁵ *Parliamentary Debates of the House of Commons* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1922), p. 599. Debate occurred on April 26.

In addition to that humiliation, Japan's territorial acquisitions early on the war stimulated a widespread fear that Japan would use the Anglo-Japanese Alliance to wrest concessions through the Colonial Office on the White Australia policy. If Britain acquiesced here to Japanese pressures, as it apparently already had both in abandoning its defensive obligations in the Pacific and accepting Japanese postwar control over these acquired territories, many Australians feared the entry *en masse* of Japanese immigrants who would work unceasingly for their Empire to wrest control of Australia from its British occupiers.⁶

Such conspiracy theorists pointed to recent Japanese actions that supposedly confirmed their fears. For instance, in 1916, Japan made it known to the British Government that it would be willing to provide four cruisers and four destroyers to protect the Australian (and the Canadian) coastlines from enemy encroachment, but only on the condition that Australia and Canada became signatories to the Anglo-Japanese commercial treaty of 1911 that allowed unfettered access by Japanese merchants and traders to any part of the British Empire that was a party to that agreement.⁷ The Australian government, fearing the direct consequences this treaty posed to its "White Australia" policy, avoided the proposal. Eventually Japan capitulated and provided the requested ships without any preconditions. Japan's

⁶ Ian Nish, *Alliance in Decline: A Study of Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1908-1923* (London: The Athlone Press, 1972), pp. 172, 173. For a further discussion on the common correlation made between Asian immigrants naturally functioning as spies for their homeland, please see David Walker's chapter "The Evil Doctor," in *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia, 1850-1939* (St. Lucia, QLD: University of Queensland Press, 1999), pp. 168-180.

⁷ Nish, *Alliance in Decline...*, p. 171.

actions, however, were taken rather seriously by Australia as proof of its malicious and insidious intentions towards the Dominion.

Many throughout Australia also viewed the burgeoning population of Japan with alarm, especially when compared to the less than 5,000,000 Australians who occupied a continent many times larger than the Japanese archipelago. According to contemporary lines of thought, “population growth appeared unstoppable, seemingly unaffected by the Great War. The level of world population, however, was not as intractable a problem as its unequal distribution. The only way to respond to the situation was to ‘smooth’ the distribution.”⁸ In Western Australia, at the time the least densely populated state in the most sparsely populated nation in the world, what type of defense could be mustered against Japan?

Sir John Marriott linked the founding of Western Australia, the creation of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901, and the need for an activist immigration program. He argued that “it was, as we have seen, the presence of European neighbours in the southern Pacific which precipitated Federation; it is the realization of the presence of overflowing populations in the northern Pacific which has compelled a reconsideration of the policy of restricted immigration.”⁹ Japan, following its unbroken stretch of victories against foreign powers stretching back to its opening to the West in 1853, was perceived as having “a policy of acquiring territory for the sake of acquisition, looking

⁸ Sean Brawley, The White Peril: Foreign Relations and Asian Immigration to Australasia and North America 1919-1978 (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1995), p. 12.

⁹ In Empire Settlement (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 76.

doubtless to ultimate economic profit but ready to extend without prospect of economic profit.”¹⁰

To defend the Commonwealth against this threat from the North both physically and psychologically, many in Western Australia from early in the war turned to the postwar resettlement of British soldiers as a countermeasure. In January 1915, a man by the name of S.W. Copley “proposed to vest [Secretary of State for War] Lord Kitchener with 100,000 acres of farm land in Western Australia for the settlement of ex-servicemen.” To sweeten this incentive, Copley announced he “was ready to loan £50,000 for its preparation.”¹¹ The Colonial Office at the time politely declined Copley’s offer.

In 1916, the three most outlying states in Australia, Western Australia, Queensland and Tasmania, were determined by the Colonial Office to be those most likely to support and require schemes to obtain British soldier-settlers immediately following the war’s conclusion. All parties involved agreed that shoring up the outermost peripheries of the British Empire through the resettlement of soldiers would be a cheap and effective way to defend them against future aggression and reinforce the apparently loosening of the ties of kith and kin that bound Britain and the Dominions

¹⁰ National Library of Australia (NLA), MSS 882, File 5/66, official briefing for the Prime Minister Hughes, no date given.

¹¹ Michael Roe, *Australia, Britain and Migration, 1915-1940: A Study of Desperate Hopes* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 9, 10.

together.¹² A Commissioner Lamb of the Salvation Army practically implored at a meeting of the Royal Colonial Institute, one of the main institutions that advocated state-aided emigration, for all parties concerned to develop a systematic, large-scale plan of action to undertake such a massive endeavor. He pointed out that “to-day in Australia, we have a population 97 per cent of which is British. We have preserved the race, language, and all our traditions there. We cannot keep on doing that, if the main source of supply is not maintained.”¹³

These proposals marked but the start of a rash of assisted-passage migration schemes that originated from Western Australia over the next several years. In July 1916, the Liberal Party, under Frank Wilson, won the state legislative elections and consequently formed the government. The new administration let it be known that it was a ready to tackle aggressively “what The West Australian called the ‘Immigration Problem: An Empire-Wide Scheme.’ Under banner headlines, the West of 7 November 1916 prophesied ‘25,000 immigrants in a year.’”¹⁴ Western Australia also indicated that it would be more than willing to cooperate with the newly-formed Empire Settlement Committee in London should it draft or endorse a program to transport to and settle within British settlers in the state.¹⁵

¹² Kent Fedorowich, Unfit for Heroes: Reconstruction and Soldier Settlement in the Empire between the Wars (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 152.

¹³ In Harry Wilson and H.T. Montague Bell, eds., United Empire: The Royal Colonial Institute Journal, v. VII (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, Ltd., 1916), p. 622.

¹⁴ Source: J.P. Gabbedy, Group Settlement: Part I: Its Origins, Politics and Administration (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1988), p. 28.

¹⁵ Crowley, Australia’s Western Third..., p. 201.

Such plans were put on hold for the duration of the war. In February 1919, however, scant months after hostilities ended, the Agent-General for Western Australia, J.D. Connolly, submitted a proposal concerning soldier settlement to the Oversea Settlement Department, a branch of the Colonial Office in London. In his plan, Connolly offered to “settle on the land a thousand married ex-servicemen each year, for twelve years; London should provide loan money for the men’s needs and also £1 million at 4 per cent for associated public works; Western Australia would grant land in 500-1000 acre blocks.”¹⁶ At this particular juncture, however, the British Government was still loathe to sponsor such a large-scale enterprise, let alone finance one. The British Government was also concerned about the possible political fallout of “clearing” the veterans, of rewarding the wartime sacrifices these soldiers endured by shipping them off as they had their criminals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹⁷

Sir James Mitchell and Empire Settlement, 1919-1921

Many British officials eventually grew convinced of the merits of Western Australia’s rather ambitious plans through the boosterism and hyperbolic praise of that state’s premier, Sir James Mitchell.¹⁸ Mitchell, who became premier in 1919, was a passionate and forceful advocate for obtaining British settlers for Western Australia. He constantly warned of the perils Japan posed to Australia in both a military and a bio-imperial level. To him, British soldier-settlers would provide an effective

¹⁶ Roe, *Australia, Britain and Migration...*, p. 17.

¹⁷ *Ibid* p. 18

¹⁸ *Ibid* p 156.

counterweight to both Japanese troops should they invade and Japanese immigrants should they infiltrate the wide and poorly defended spaces of Western Australia. He also “was a firm believer in the adage, first in, best served.”¹⁹ Mitchell knew that the government that spoke the loudest and worked the hardest would be the one rewarded with the money and the immigrants. In his opinion, Western Australia was the least populated, most distant, and hence most vulnerable part of the British Empire; thus, it had the greatest need for British immigrants

He also was of the impression that “man’s noblest work was to increase production, and that rural production was morally and economically superior to any other form.”²⁰ This credo served him well in his public service from early in his career. Prior to his involvement in the field of Empire Settlement, Mitchell served as the state’s Minister of Agriculture in the early 1910s. In this capacity, he enjoyed considerable success in establishing a successful wheat industry in what came to be (and still is) known as the Wheatbelt, located a hundred miles or so due east of Perth.²¹ There, he divided the land, allocated the new plots to settlers, built roads, schools, and small settlements, and provided money and equipment to settlers to help them colonize and transform a large area previously unpopulated by Europeans. So successful was this

¹⁹ Gabbedy, Group Settlement, Part I..., p. 39.

²⁰ Source: G.C. Bolton, A Fine Country to Starve In (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1972), p. 13.

²¹ Gabbedy, Group Settlement, Part I..., p. 39. For more information on the growth and development of the Western Australian Wheatbelt, please see Quentin Beresford, “Developmentalism and its Environmental Legacy: The Western Australia Wheatbelt, 1900-1990s,” in the Australian Journal of Politics and History, v. 47, no. 3 (2001), pp. 403-407; Sean Glynn, Government Policy and Agricultural Development: A Study of the Role of Government in the Development of the Western Australian Wheat Belt, 1900-1930 (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1975).

program that by the early 1920s wheat had actually displaced gold as the state's major export.²² The ease with which Mitchell achieved this led him to believe this success could be replicated in the lush verdant forests that lay south of Perth.²³ All it would take to make the land productive was to place men on it; Mitchell's "facile optimism" led him to believe that it only took "hard work to make success inevitable."²⁴

To the premier, once these woods were cleared, the proper fertilizers applied, and the self-sufficient farms established by hardy Britons, the state would achieve several major goals simultaneously. First, the threat that Japan posed to the vast yet empty spaces of Western Australia would be countered by former soldiers. They also would augment substantially the number of able-bodied men with some military experience, men who could be relied upon to defend Western Australia from Japan should the occasion arise. Their dispersal throughout the state would broaden the area of white British settlement, thus further legitimating the British right to hold Western Australia.

Secondly, Western Australia, in further developing and diversifying its agricultural industry, would reduce its dependence on "foreign" suppliers for basic commodities. By building first a wheat, then a dairy industry, the state would achieve the self-sufficiency that Mitchell felt was vital to their state remaining healthy, vigorous

²² Cornish, *Western Australia...*, p. 62.

²³ Crowley, *Australia's Western Third...*, pp. 202-205.

²⁴ Stannage ed., *A New History of Western Australia*, p. 403.

and secure.²⁵ At a time when the relatively free-trading global economic system of the nineteenth century had largely collapsed and the power of the state as the ultimate engine of growth and change was on the ascendant, such autarkic views carried widespread currency.

Third, in encouraging small independent family farms in the countryside, Western Australia would simultaneously acquire a “British” population that would surely be rejuvenated by being removed from the feminizing and weakening dependence on industrialists and quasi-feudal landlords they endured in Britain. The hard work and physical labor of farming the land and pioneering a new society would restore their “manhood” and their inherent Anglo-Saxon robustness. This in turn would increase the state’s security, especially considering that over half of the population of Western Australia by the early twentieth century was concentrated in Perth, a percentage that only increased with each passing year.²⁶ In the words of the noted historian of Group Settlement in Western Australia Geoffrey Bolton:

The prevailing belief was that every man should have a chance to be a farmer, whether he had lived all his life in the bush, or whether he was a newly arrived London clerk...In choosing bush life, such a man showed himself more deserving than the parasites in the city, because he was attempting to add to the real productivity of Western Australia.²⁷

²⁵ Monica Keneley, “Closer Settlement in the Western District of Victoria: A Case Study in Australian land Use Policy, 1898-1914,” in the *Journal of Historical Geography*, v. 28, no. 3 (2002), p. 363.

²⁶ Victor Richard Draper, *Rockingham – The Visions Unfold: A History of the Rockingham District* (Rockingham, WA: City of Rockingham, 1997), p. 126.

²⁷ Bolton, *A Fine Country...*, p. 29.

Both the immigrants and Western Australia as a whole would be rejuvenated through the resettlement of Britons in that state's plentiful countryside.

In January 1921, Mitchell announced a much more ambitious and comprehensive plan to populate his state with tens of thousands of Britons. These immigrants would receive rebates on the cost of their passage to Western Australia. The state government also would provide these settlers with plots of land throughout the southwestern corner of the state.²⁸ The settlers were to be given stock animals and equipment to be used to clear the land and establish their farms. Supervised training by agricultural experts was to be administered to ensure their successful transition from urban to rural life. Lastly, all the materials and tools necessary for the settlers to build comfortable and sturdy four-room cottages were to be placed at each plot site.

Three months later, Connelly released the following statement to the press, sketching the parameters of this broader program of imperial resettlement to Western Australia:

Free Passage – Overseas Settlement Scheme

Present weekly applications entitled to free passage average 100 per week, covering 250 souls. This Committee [Overseas Settlement] are now granting free passages to those who are unemployed and use is being made of the Scheme and approval granted to many single men, farm and country workers, who are being supplied with money for equipment plus ten pounds to 15 pounds per head for remittance to the State; refund to be arranged on arrival.²⁹

²⁸ Colebatch, *A Story of a Hundred Years...*, p. 393.

²⁹ SROWA, File 1723, Agent-General to Premier, Weekly Report of Emigration, dated April 1, 1921.

The importation of such settlers would be tantamount to “injecting bourgeois value into the colonial bloodstream,” adding sturdy independent yeoman metropolitan stock to a state and a nation that still suffered from what was termed the “convict stain” of being descended from the utmost dredges of British society.³⁰

Unfortunately for Mitchell, just as the Colonial Office and the British Government appeared to be ready at long last to involve themselves in and fund such an endeavor, British bureaucratic infighting scuttled this preliminary proposal. Much of the appeal such schemes in Britain had garnered centered on the opportunity they posed for exporting its “surplus” population to the Dominions. Following such logic, the Ministry of Labour, the agency responsible for funding such endeavors, “insisted that anyone they helped should be unemployed, which scarcely comported with the bourgeois ideal” that Mitchell and others used to drum up support for the scheme in Western Australia.³¹ This glaring discrepancy between the aims and goals of the Ministry of Labour and the government of Western Australia ensured that this scheme was also put on hold for the time being.

The Origins of the Group Settlement Scheme, 1920-1921

Almost immediately upon hearing about the passage by the British Parliament of the Empire Settlement Act, the Western Australian government revived Mitchell’s ambitious scheme, hoping to secure as much of this imperial largesse as possible for itself. Indeed, the state had already made its preparations for such an announcement

³⁰ Roe, *Australia, Britain and Migration...*, p. 33.

³¹ *Ibid* p. 33.

well in advance. In 1920, the state government announced its intention of purchasing a large swath of land, 60,577 ½ acres in total, for the explicit purpose of settling immigrants there who would establish a dairying industry in Western Australia.³² This parcel was better known as the Peel Estate after its first proprietor, Thomas Peel (brother of British Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel).

Up until 1919, the Estate was for the most part deemed unfit for agricultural activity. The reason for this is because much of its land consisted of scrub or outright swampland lying atop sandy or clay soil.³³ Suddenly, with Mitchell as premier, the Peel Estate was now reevaluated and deemed able to be reclaimed and transformed into productive farmland. The assessments of surveyors going back to the days of Stirling were thrown by the wayside as more complementary evaluations of the Estate grew prominent. To cite a contemporary pamphlet touting the newly-discovered fertility of the area:

Until 1920 the Peel Estate was associated with the development of Western Australia only in historic record. Although it lay at the door of a modern capital city, the confines of which were rapidly washing outwards to its eastern boundary, only a few were aware of its exact location and fewer still deemed it to be of any great value. It was to them only a tiny strip in a mighty territory. Its hills were considered wastes; its swamps economically unworkable... When at length it became evident that there was beneath the chaotic tangle of forest and bulrush, and the black, uninviting waters, a deposit of immense value, the

³² Eventually, the Government of Western Australia, based on such salubrious assessments, would purchase 86,290 acres of land in the area for the purpose of settling immigrants. Source: Janice Powell, Group Settlement of the Peel Estate (Unpublished Thesis, Greylands Teachers College, 1959), p. 7.

³³ Nora Taggart, Rockingham Looks Back: A History of the Rockingham District, 1829-1982 (Rockingham, WA: Rockingham District Historical Society, c.1984), p. 129.

Government immediately set to work to reclaim it for the benefit of the State, the Commonwealth, and the Empire.³⁴

Once a suitable and systematic drainage system was built to eliminate the swamps, the mucky soil planted with subterranean clover that would inject the soil with much-needed nitrogen, and a sturdy yeoman peasantry ready for hard work introduced there, the Peel Estate could easily be transformed into a lush dairying paradise.³⁵

Mitchell also saw the Empire Settlement Act as the perfect mechanism through which he could develop the vast, relatively unpopulated stretch of land lying south and southeast of Bunbury, itself located one hundred miles due south of the state capital. The state's southwest had been surveyed in the early 1910s to determine if the region could support colonization attempts. At that time, most of this land, which was covered with incredibly dense forests of sturdy and gigantic jarrah and karri trees, was deemed "unsuitable" for agricultural purposes by the state's then-premier Frank Wilson, based on the reports he received from the surveyors.³⁶

Once Mitchell became premier of the state, these negative assessments vanished, just as they had with regards to the Peel Estate, and were replaced with more favorable evaluations. Emboldened by what he saw in the Wheatbelt, Mitchell was convinced that the large trees that grew in this corner of the state were in themselves evidence of

³⁴ "Group Settlement in Western Australia: At Work on the Peel Estate: Reclaiming a Great New Province: Australia's Foremost Illustration of Land Development" (Perth: Fred Wm. Simpson, 1923), p. 7.

³⁵ *Ibid* p. 130, Monica Keneley, "Land of Hope: Soldier Settlement in the Western District of Victoria, 1918-1930," in the Electronic Journal of Australian and New Zealand History, (2000), www.jcu.edu.au/aff/history/articles/keneley2.htm, accessed May 19, 2007.

³⁶ Crawford, Patricia and Crawford, Ian, Contested Country: A History of the Northcliffe Area, Western Australia (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 2003), p. 78.

the soil's fertility.³⁷ In a telegram Mitchell dispatched to Connolly, the premier declared that he had just "completed highly successful tour including Pemberton to Donnybrook to Peel Estate and Upper Swan. Stop. Says entirely satisfied."³⁸ Mitchell was convinced that this area too should be cleared and opened for Group Settlement. By 1921, the "Great Southwest" was for the most part charted and subdivided into groups and sections so that it could be parceled out for prospective immigrants.³⁹ This area and the Peel Estate cumulatively became the main loci for what would be known as the Group Settlement Scheme.

The First "Groups" are Planted, 1921-1922

The first trial settlements were established in March 1921 near the town of Manjimup, located on the main road between Bunbury and Albany approximately 189 miles southeast of Perth. The land was cleared with little difficulty, and the settlers were conveniently located near an established village with good commercial, transportation and communication links with Perth. These settlements were to serve two vital purposes. First, they were to demonstrate the efficacy of a new type of community, one that would ultimately lend its name to the entire scheme as it came to be known in Western Australia – the "group" settlement. This concept, in which individuals and their families, oftentimes arriving *en masse* from the same town or village in Britain or Australia, were settled on plots next to each other. This was seen as

³⁷ *Ibid* pp. 79, 80; Gabbedy, Group Settlement, Part I..., p. 76.

³⁸ SROWA, File 1723, cable sent April 26, 1922.

³⁹ Gabbedy, Empire Settlement, Part I..., p. 79.

advantageous when compared to previous methods of recruiting individuals in that it supposedly afforded the replication of the natural “social life which is possible in a settlement under these conditions” already extant at home. This would be “an undoubted attraction to most settlers from [Britain]” who might otherwise be loathe to subject themselves to the isolation of residing on a self-contained farm.⁴⁰ The aim or group settlement was to induce a chain migration of sorts. A Colonel Newcombe wrote that the groups “can select their [own] leaders, who in turn will get their 20 or more from their own village, their old battalion or ship with such necessary mechanics as the scheme may require.”⁴¹

Second, these first groups, almost all of which were established in fertile, well-watered, well-supplied locales like Group 1 discussed above, were also to serve as exemplars, as “model villages,” to be used as propaganda of sorts. The state incurred the expense of setting up these settlements in no small part because Mitchell was well aware of the impending passage of the Empire Settlement Act. He wanted to as quickly as possible show the state’s commitment to this project. With five other Australian states, nine Canadian provinces, and the Dominions of New Zealand and Newfoundland all competing for their shares of a relatively paltry £3,000,000 pie, Western Australia through the course of 1921 and 1922 feverishly built these model settlements to show it was the most worthy recipient of these funds. These first lucky groups were designed

⁴⁰ “Report, May 1924, to the President of the Oversea Settlement Committee from the Delegation Appointed to Inquire into Conditions Affecting British Settlers in Australia,” (Melbourne: H.J. Green, Government Printer for the State of Victoria, 1924), p. 27.

⁴¹ National Archives of Australia, Series A-457, Item E400/5, undated.

as *faits accomplis* of sorts, “shop window[s] in its migration emporium, to display to likely customers among United Kingdom and Australian politicians the excellence of the first of the promised six thousand farms.”⁴² This would demonstrate to the Colonial Office and other relevant parties that “Britain should show a readiness to assist the 360,000 people in Western Australia who have taken upon themselves so heavy a share in the task of Empire development.”⁴³

A year following the establishment of Group 1, approximately 200 men were creating dairy farms out of the dense forest in the state’s southwest not only near Manjimup. All of these first groups were situated near pre-existing towns such as Augusta, Margaret River, Pemberton, and Busselton, located to the south of Bunbury. Also in 1922, the first assisted settlers arrived on the Peel Estate on September 18, 1922.⁴⁴ According to contemporary reports, these pioneer settlers, all of whom were supported entirely by the state government, were provided with their own small houses, wells, and wages that allowed them to sustain themselves as they cleared the brush, built the houses, sowed the clover and fattened the cows. As they prospered, the Western Australian government hoped to prove to the British Treasury that its

⁴² *Ibid* p. 90.

⁴³ “Ten Million Scheme: Premier Makes Known New Idea,” in the Albany Advertiser, November 7, 1923, p. 3.

⁴⁴ NAA, Series A786, Item Y22/5, memorandum by Brown, L.O. entitled “Migration Agreement – Western Australia – Question of Inclusion of Peel Estate in the Scheme of Land Settlement Arranged under the Old Land Settlement Agreement,” dated August 5, 1929.

ambitious Group Settlement Scheme would offer the best return on its investment of vital British funds and equally importantly British manpower.⁴⁵

The Group Settlement Scheme Comes into Being, 1922-1923

Such efforts were rewarded shortly following September 25, 1922, the date the Empire Settlement Act came into effect.⁴⁶ As the new Agent General for Western Australia, H.P. Colebatch, wrote to the Duke of Devonshire, the Colonial Secretary, in 1923:

It is felt that the risk the Imperial Government is asked to undertake is very small indeed. So far our percentage of failures has been negligible and as the advances are made only against improvements actually effected, even if the individual fails, the assets remain. The advantages to the Imperial Government are the early settlement in profitable production of very large numbers of people now without employment who will quickly become growers, within the safe confines of the Empire, of Great Britain's food requirements, and most profitable consumers of her manufactured goods.⁴⁷

In a proposal designed specifically to appeal simultaneously to the chronic parsimony of the British Treasury, to the need to relieve the unemployment rolls of Great Britain, to the ability to aid the domestic British economy, and to the necessity of populating Western Australia to keep it with the imperial orbit and thus defend against potential Japanese aggrandizement, the state legislature offered to the Colonial Office a proposal

⁴⁵ Crowley, *Australia's Western Third...*, p. 212.

⁴⁶ "Colonization in W. Australia: 'Group Settlement at Work,'" in *The Times* (London), June 24, 1926, p. 15. Colebatch replaced Connolly as Agent-General in 1923.

⁴⁷ SROWA, Cons. No. 1150, Item 1809, Box 34, File 3, "Empire Settlement 1920-1955," dated November 13, 1923.

to settle no less than 6000 families on farms to be hewn out of the Great Southwest and on the Peel Estate.⁴⁸

To personally plead his state's case to the paymasters in London, Mitchell traveled to Britain in March 1922 and embarked on a nationwide tour to boost his state and to tout its financial stability and its regenerative capabilities.⁴⁹ On the 21st and 22nd of that month, the premier visited with Leo Amery to discuss imperial financial backing for his scheme. Despite Amery's opinion that Mitchell was "incredibly inarticulate and incoherent in exposition," he eventually found that the premier's program "is really a sound one" and on that basis recommended that the scheme should be one of the first beneficiaries of the funding soon to be made available by the Empire Settlement Act.⁵⁰

Negotiations between Western Australia and the British Government, however, dragged on throughout the remainder of 1922 and into the beginning of 1923. This occurred because despite the fact that all parties involved were in general agreement over the necessity and desirability for implementing such a scheme, the Australian government insisted it be a party to any agreement the British government made between it and one of its constituent states. In 1921 an agreement concluded between the states and the Commonwealth established that the Australian government was the sole entity responsible for selecting and transporting immigrants to Australia, not the

⁴⁸ Marriott, *Empire Settlement...*, p. 79.

⁴⁹ Anne Bradley, *Group Settlement on the Peel Estate 1920-1928, with Emphasis on Personal and Social Aspects of the Settlers' Lives*, (unpublished thesis, University of Western Australia, 1986), p. 3.

⁵⁰ John Barnes and David Nicholson, eds., *The Leo Amery Diaries, Vol. I: 1896-1929* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), pp. 283, 284.

states.⁵¹ Mitchell, however, insisted “that the Agent-General for the State should approve of the class of men being selected for passage to Western Australia” and that “there shall be no restriction on the state’s right to do propaganda work.”⁵²

Eventually, such hurdles were overcome. On February 9, 1923, a final agreement was reached between the British Government and the Legislative Assembly of Western Australia. Under its terms, the Western Australian government was to be advanced £6,000,000 in the form of a loan to be raised by the Commonwealth Government on the state’s behalf. The money was specifically earmarked to be spent on clearing the land, developing the requisite infrastructure (roads, railroads, drainage), erecting suitable housing, and creating viable towns and markets amid the groups in the Great Southwest and on the Peel Estate.⁵³ This money was also to be used to cover the costs of transporting at least 75,000 men to Western Australia. Out of this pool, 6000 were to be established on their own farms, each of which was to be equipped “with reasonable equipment and stock.”⁵⁴ This meant that each farmer and his family would be provided *in toto* with £1000 worth of support, which they were obligated to repay to the state at a fixed rate of interest.

⁵¹ Roe, *Australia, Britain and Migration...*, p. 41; NAA, Series A458, Item G154/7 Part 1, “Activities of Immigration Office,” undated.

⁵² NAA, Series A461, Item T349/1/5, letter from the Prime Minister’s Office entitled “Immigration – Request by Western Australian Government for Information on Certain Points,” dated September 27, 1920.

⁵³ NAA, Series A461, Item S349, Copy of the Migration Agreement between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Governments of Australia and Western Australia, dated February 8, 1923.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

In a letter written by Colebatch to the Duke of Devonshire, the Agent General broke down exactly how this £1000 was to be spent to outfit these settlers: “Cottage – £200. Sheds – £50. Clearing and Fencing – £500. Ploughing and Putting Down Pastures – £50. 10 Cows Eventually – £150. Horse... & Plant – £50.”⁵⁵ With all parties now in agreement, Western Australia could finally proceed apace fulfilling its longstanding desire to transport to its shores as many Britons as possible. Likewise, though much less explicitly, Great Britain would “reduce the competition for unemployment, increase wages, and raise the standard of living” by ridding itself of its more “ignorant” and “credulous” classes.⁵⁶

The news that an agreement had been at long last reached was almost universally acclaimed by the media in Western Australia, a response that reflected the broad consensus of that state behind borrowing imperial funds to attract as many Britons as possible to journey to and settle in their state.

Since the British were feeling particularly Empire-minded in the aftermath of the First World War, Mitchell’s publicity for Western Australia fell on receptive ears, and he succeeded in attracting many British migrants, particularly to the new ‘Group Settlements’ of the Southwest. These policies gained the assent of the whole State, and the Labor government which succeeded Mitchell in 1924 took over his programme without major changes. Many politicians and most of the Western Australian public shared Mitchell’s enthusiasm for bold policies of rural development, but none was more closely identified with the process of actually getting families on the land and leaving them to thrive by their own efforts.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ SROWA, Cons. No. 1150, Item 1809, Box 34, File 3, letter dated December 28, 1923.

⁵⁶ NA, CO 721/16, “Relations with the Self-Governing Dominions and their Representatives, pp. 4,10.

⁵⁷ Bolton, A Fine Country to Starve in, pp. 14, 15.

These immigrants, for the time being at least, were almost to a man viewed as unfettered assets to the continued development and progress of Western Australia.

What Group Settlement Was to Achieve

Mitchell and his colleagues wasted no time promoting his scheme to all who would listen. He repeatedly tailored his message to his different audiences depending on which particular aspect of his scheme appealed to them the most. At a luncheon at Bradford University in 1922, then-Agent General Connolly warned that “Western Australia was the most vulnerable part of the Empire, and therefore most likely to be attacked in the next war.” As such, he called for the “better distribution of population within the Empire” to counter potential Japanese aggression.⁵⁸ For those more concerned about the postwar weakening of the ties that bound Britain and Western Australia to each other, Mitchell warned the Nottingham Chamber of Commerce that “how long this policy of ‘Australia for the British’ can be maintained – and its maintenance amounts to a passion with the great majority of its people – depends on this stream of willing emigrants from this country.”⁵⁹

For Britons more concerned with unloading themselves of their unemployed rather than the more altruistic notions of rejuvenation and Imperial solidarity, the premier wrote that “it is a profound satisfaction at such a time as the present, when unemployment is so rampant in the Old Country, to be able to assert that to quite an

⁵⁸ SROWA, Con. No. 1496, File No. 607/22, “Vulnerable Country: More Settlers Vital to Imperial Security,” in the Daily Mail (London), dated May 29, 1922.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, “Australia for the British,” in the Nottingham Guardian, May 25, 1922.

appreciable extent Western Australia can assist in remedying this great and perplexing evil...our scheme is to help men as soon as they come by giving them immediate work.”⁶⁰ For those who privileged the rehabilitative capacity of agriculture, Mitchell rather playfully boasted that they should “get among the sun-browned, big-handed, big-hearted men of our wide shores. Then will begin the Alphabet of agriculture, which will demonstrate that these lands can grow anything from A for Apples to W for Winegrapes. For anything from A to W you go to ‘W.A.’”⁶¹ Whichever of these arguments one subscribed to the readiest, there is little doubt that to many in these various and widely divergent audiences, Mitchell’s optimism “came like a breath of springtime” to a Britain still reeling from the devastating changes World War I had just wrought.⁶² It almost seemed as though there was something for everyone should they decide to either support Mitchell’s scheme or, better yet, participate in it.

New settlers were not the only individuals cajoled into making the long journey to Western Australia to explore the wondrous opportunities and plentiful jobs Mitchell promised. A stream of British and Australian government officials also visited the Peel Estate and the Great Southwest to evaluate and applaud what was expected to be the largest single program involving the transfer of Britons to the Dominions in recent memory. They were especially attracted to the anachronistic ideal of a nation comprised of numerous small, self-sufficient, autarkic villages populated with young,

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, “Hope for the Unemployed, By Sir James Mitchell,” in Lloyd’s Weekly News (London), April 9, 1922.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, “Giving Farms Away and How to Get Them,” in the Daily Mail, May 20, 1922.

⁶² Bolton, A Fine Country to Starve In, p. 29.

strong and virile farmers of sturdy Anglo-Saxon stock. This Social Darwinist rural utopia, so it was felt, was the only way the strength of the British race and a “British” Western Australia could be maintained in the face of the challenges the new mechanized, urbanized, cosmopolitan and interconnected world order that Britain no longer effortlessly dominated. Sir William Beach Thomas, a noted advocate of such schemes, offered the following glowing assessment of Group Settlement:

I think this scheme one of the most statesmanlike and prolific I have come in contact with since I was first able to understand life at all. One may be enthusiastic enough although it is an experiment. Some people may not do well, but still it is a great imaginative scheme which, whatever its failures may be, will have a great influence upon the future of this Empire. I seem to see in the future of this State rural villages which will be the admiration of the whole civilised world.⁶³

William Bankes Amery paid his own visit to the groups in 1925. His assessment of the progress made in the Great Southwest was equally rosy and celebratory:

There were many in the UK who doubted the possibility of turning town dwellers into farmers, and who viewed with some misgivings the determination of the Imperial Government to spend money in the Dominions, subject to the co-operation of the appropriate Governments for the purpose of assisting in the agricultural development of urban workers. I am now in a position to report to the Imperial Government that I am quite satisfied that the experiment is working out most hopefully, and bids fair to go down to history as one of the most successful ventures in government assisted migration and settlement on a large scale which has taken place up to the present date...I found very few who were not delighted with their new life or who would contemplate returning to England except for a holiday. One muscular Scotsman – of all people – assured me that he would not go back again for a pension, and many others declared that not even a free passage home would tempt them away from their blocks.⁶⁴

⁶³ As quoted in Bolton, *A Fine Country to Starve In*, pp. 37, 38.

⁶⁴ SROWA, Con. No. 1496, File 342/25, “Group Settlement: This Great Scheme,” in the *West Australian*, November 25, 1925. Amery’s interesting aside regarding the Scot he interviewed, and the meanings and

Both Thomas and Amery envisioned Group Settlement as the panacea that would cure all the British Empire's and Western Australia's newfound woes by returning them both to an idealized bucolic rural past.

Even fellow Australians from the eastern states were impressed with the success of the "shop windows" Mitchell provided. The Minister for Justice for New South Wales, T.J. Ley, confessed that "if any doubt existed as to the effects upon employment and the conditions of employment in a properly organised system of immigration it has been dispelled by the practical experience of Western Australia. There immigrants are arriving in large numbers weekly...and as rapidly as they arrive they are being absorbed."⁶⁵ Not only was Western Australia doing its part to relieve unemployment elsewhere and augmenting its "British" population, the state also simultaneously expanded its agricultural base so it could provide for itself in the new quasi-mercantilist postwar global economy. Mitchell boasted that the £6,000,000 he procured would allow for the cultivation of 100,000 acres of vines of grapes, 1,000,000 acres of apples, and 100,000 acres of other various fruits to be planted. Such production would raise the value of the state's agricultural production by half, to £33,000,000.⁶⁶

prejudices it encapsulates, will be discussed in the following chapter regarding the fate of the Hebrideans who participated in the Group Settlement Scheme.

⁶⁵ "Migration: Success in West Australia: Mr. Ley Impressed: No Unemployment," in the Sydney Morning Herald, February 8, 1925, p. 9.

⁶⁶ "A Bold Policy: Money for West Australia: Immigration and Land Settlement," in the Sydney Morning Herald, July 17, 1922, p. 9.

These early successes of the first groups were widely publicized by the media in Australia, Great Britain and elsewhere, via numerous articles, pamphlets, presentations, speeches and other vehicles of propaganda. All of these were designed to entice as many Britons as possible to seek their fortunes in a land of seemingly endless possibilities. For the most part, this publicity blitz was an unqualified success. British men, women and children arrived in Western Australia in numbers unseen since the 1890s gold rush. Between July 19, 1922 and August 1923, 6641 settlers migrated to Western Australia under the assisted passage scheme. In 1923, 10,190 immigrants came from the United Kingdom.⁶⁷ By 1924, “some 22,000 people altogether [had] been brought out under the scheme.”⁶⁸

In these first heady years of Empire Settlement, there seemed little on paper that could be critiqued or attacked by potential enemies of Mitchell’s grandiose scheme. In fact, the belief that it could resolve multiple problems for all parties concerned simultaneously seemingly rendered the project all but unassailable. For Britain, this scheme was posited as a means through which the twin problem of mass postwar unemployment and the concomitant strife this engendered could be removed permanently. A confidential paper containing talking points intended for Lord Milner and Winston Churchill of the Overseas Settlement Committee, celebrated this primary

⁶⁷ Source: Gabbedy, *Group Settlement, Part I...*, pp. 148, 149.

⁶⁸ “Migration within the Empire: Address by the Premier of Western Australia (The Hon. Philip Collier, M.L.A.) and Report of Proceedings of the Committee of the Empire Parliamentary Association Dealing with ‘Migration and Land Settlement within the Empire,’ at a Meeting Held on 18th March 1925, in the Rooms of the Association, Westminster Hall” (London: Empire Parliamentary Association, 1925), p. 5.

goal of Empire Settlement for much of the British political establishment, so long as it remained hidden from overt public consumption.

Of the 20,000 heads of families, covering 37,000 souls, for whom free passages were issued last year, about 70 per cent were unemployed and as a general rule the departure of each of these heads of families made room directly in the industries of this country for an unemployed person where it did not directly remove an unemployed person from this country.⁶⁹

Without this redundant population, Britain would not only be saving itself from a large drain on its Treasury in the form of lower unemployment benefit payments, it also would regain its moral and racial vitality many at the time thought had been sapped in recent decades by degeneration and decline.

The immigrants themselves would be provided with gainful hard labor in at first clearing the land and then building the infrastructure necessary to make their groups and their farms viable. This work, it was thought, would transform these weakened men and women who at home had grown dependent on either the state or the industrialists, landlord or merchant for their sustenance into sturdy, self-reliant, independent producers. Yet they would not be totally on their own. To combat the isolation often encountered in rural frontier life, Group Settlement encouraged the chain migration of individuals and their families so that a ready-made support system would be available. This also was done to keep each group as homogenous as possible to prevent unnecessary conflict, microcosms of the broader Western Australian and Australian

⁶⁹ NA, CO 721/30, Item no. 254, "Points for Lord Milner's and Mr. Churchill's Use – Conference of Ministers," confidential. This was made confidential for fear that it would cause a backlash in the Dominions, for fear that they would be seen as a "dumping ground" for the "refuse" of Britain. In fact, on this very page, the author insisted that "stress cannot be laid on this fact in public statements."

phobias on racial disharmony and its perceived links with miscegenation and degradation. In this way, Group Settlement attempted to mix the Victorian ethos of self-help with the omnipresent tutelage of the state that was increasingly in vogue in the twentieth century.

Western Australia would also benefit immensely from the massive resettlement of Britons in its vast empty spaces. To again quote Mitchell, “I am...anxious...to populate this land of ours, for the dual purpose of production and defence – the latter the more important.”⁷⁰ The twin benefits the premier mentioned were intertwined. The state would be able to increase its relatively scant population with the British settlers it so ardently desired. These workers would be put to use, much as their convict predecessors did in the 1850s and the 1860s, to help build up the economy and the infrastructure needed to further develop and strengthen Western Australia, at little to no cost to that state’s taxpayers. Equally as important, this augmentation of the “British” population of Western Australia would serve as a bulwark against any threats that a foreign power might pose, most notably Japan.

Fairly early on, however, problems of a fundamental nature with the land, the settlers, the planning of Group Settlement, and even the rationale behind Group Settlement started to appear, cracks that ultimately undermined of the hopes and intentions that, to Mitchell, the Colonial Office, and other such minded individuals, Group Settlement embodied. These problems are best revealed by the experiences of

⁷⁰ SROWA, Cons. No. 1150, Item 1809, Box 34, File 3, letter written to Agent-General H.P. Colebatch, dated November 13, 1923.

the “Scots Group,” otherwise known as Group 80 after the order within which it was established.



Illustration 13.

Plans for the Group Settlement Scheme. Source: State Record Office of Western Australia (SROWA), Cons. No. WAS -2451.



Illustration 14.

Group 80 (The “Scots Group” and its neighbors. Source: SROWA, Item No. 1924/02820 v. 1.



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Illustration 15.

Top: Photograph of the remaining settlers on the “Scots Group,” taken in 1928. Source: State Library of Western Australia, Call No. 005528D.

Bottom: Photograph of Group 80 as it existed in October 2006. Image taken by author.

CHAPTER XII: THE “SCOTS GROUP”: THE HEBRIDEANS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

On October 4, 1923, The West Australian, the paper of record for Western Australia, proclaimed the arrival in Fremantle of several crofters from the Outer Hebrides of Scotland. An article in that newspaper welcomed “‘the Mac ship,’ [because] the greater number of the new settlers came from Scotland. Had an adventurous person called out ‘Mac!’ on the steamer he would have been deafened by the number of replies. To complete the atmosphere of a traveling ‘New Scotland,’ the sound of the bagpipes could be heard above the many noises that attend shipboard life.”¹ Upon disembarking the vessel, these immigrants were transported to a large parcel on the eastern shores of the Walyungup Swamp in the eastern portion of the Peel Estate. This land came to be known as Group 80, for it was the eightieth group established as part of the ambitious Group Settlement Scheme.

Why the Hebrideans I: Their Homogeneity

Their collective transportation from the Hebrides to the Peel Estate aboard the *Bendigo* and their establishment on Group 80 were indicative of one of the key aims of Group Settlement. By transplanting established communities wholesale to the Western Australian countryside, it was hoped, to cite the British Minister for Labour Sir

¹ “The Mac Ship,” p. 3.

Montague Barlow, that these immigrants would be bound “with the same local sympathy and friendship.”² The perceived benefits of the homogeneity of each group in general, and Group 80 in particular, seem to have been validated by the experiences of two of these “Groupies,” as these assisted settlers were often perjoratively called by native-born Western Australians. A Hebridean immigrant named Marian Nicolson begged to be transferred from a group in the Great Southwest to Group 80. She wondered, “why can’t [my family and I] be allowed to join our country folk on Peel Estate? They’ve written to us that they have no big trees. And we speak their language.”³ Nicolson felt isolated from her “British” compatriots and neighbors. She clearly preferred to reside amongst her fellow “Gaels” Her request was granted, and she took up residence amongst her fellow Hebrideans shortly thereafter.

In stark contrast, one of the few non-Hebridean settlers on Group 80, an Englishman named E.P. Wall, asked for his own transfer away from this group. Six months after his arrival, Wall’s isolation from the Gaelic-speaking Presbyterian majority had reached critical proportions. Allegedly Wall farmed his land on a Sunday. Such actions were completely anathema to the strict Sabbatarian Free Presbyterian Hebrideans. He was “attacked” in some fashion, “and he apparently anticipate[d]

² National Library of Australia (NLA), Series 16, Subseries 2, Part 1, Folder 40, “Friendship Overseas,” in the Daily Telegraph (London), February 20, 1922.

³ Source: J.P. Gabbedy, Group Settlement, Part 2: Its People: Their Life and Times – An Inside View (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1988), p. 161.

further violence.”⁴ Shortly thereafter, he eventually was transferred later that year to Group 50, where most of the settlers were English like him.⁵

The experiences of both Nicolson and Wall seem to confirm that the state’s policy of encouraging group immigration and resettlement was ideal for the collective and harmonious establishment of a thriving, large-scale dairy industry. The homogeneity of Group 80 and the other groups on the Peel Estate were also microcosms of the pride Western Australia and Australia as a whole took in its almost uniform “Britishness.” Again, political leaders in Western Australia and throughout the Commonwealth, viewing North America with its mixture of races and ethnicities as a model to be avoided at all costs, were in agreement that at every single level of society, threats to this ideal were to be dealt with promptly and aggressively. To quote the second Prime Minister of Australia, Alfred Deakin:

Those sacrifices for the future of Australia are little, and are, indeed, nothing when compared with a compensating freedom from the trials, sufferings, and losses that nearly wrecked the great republic of the west, still left with the heritage in their midst of a population which, no matter how splendid it may be in many qualities, is not being assimilated, in the nation of which they are politically and nominally a part...The unity of Australia is nothing, if that does not imply a united race...Unity of race is an absolute essential to the unity of Australia.⁶

⁴ State Record Office of Western Australia (SROWA), Cons. No. 724, File 2806/23, Letter from the Field Supervisor (Peel Estate) to the Assistant Undersecretary, dated August 6, 1924.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, September 12, 1901, v. 4, pp. 4805-4817. Source: F.K. Crowley, Modern Australia in Documents: 1901-1939 (Melbourne: Wren, 1973).

Accordingly, British immigration was to be vigorously promoted. The arrival in Australia of anyone who was not purely “British” was seen as posing a grave danger to the race-supremacy that underpinned and justified the British holding of Australia.⁷

Why the Hebrideans II: Potential “Defenders” of Western Australia

The urgency Mitchell assigned this task can also be explained by his determination to populate the state in order to stave off a potential invasion. In the 1920s, the greatest threat to “British” Australia was Japan. For Mitchell it was imperative to fill Western Australia with Britons so that Japan and the Japanese could not “get a foothold in this island.” An “empty” Western Australia represented “barren soil for the Japanese to cultivate.” Consequently it was of paramount importance that that state take in as many surplus Britons as could be conveyed there.⁸

The Hebrideans, men and women from the frontier of Great Britain, were seen as being ideally suited to this task. They helped defend the British Empire during World War I against the Germans, just as they had ensured Canada’s independence from the United States throughout that Dominion’s history. It was widely hoped that they would perform the same function against possible Japanese encroachment against

⁷ NAA, Series A458/1, Item No. P156/1, Part 1, Letter from Senator E. Needham to Prime Minister Stanley Bruce, dated February 23, 1926.

⁸ NAA, Series A981, Item JAP101/Part 1, cablegram from the Prime Minister Hughes to his Acting Prime Minister, dated March 31, 1919; letter to Hughes from the Director of the Pacific Branch E.L. Piesse, dated July 14, 1919. An additional incentive for Western Australia to attract immigrants without any regard for their care or their rehabilitation lies in the fact that as the Commonwealth Government increased its power over the states in the 1920s, in particular regarding taxation, the new revenue sharing arrangements negotiated between the states and the federal government allocated Commonwealth tax dollars based on a state’s population. For more information please see Sean Glynn, Government Policy and Agricultural Development: A Study of the Role of Government in the Development of the Western Australian Wheat Belt, 1900-1930 (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1975), p. 121.

Western Australia, the Commonwealth's own "Achilles Heel."⁹ These crofters supposedly represented a "reservoir for populating the Empire" filled with "strong men armed, to defend hearth and home...loyal defenders...kin of those who have already fought and bled for the country," to cite two contemporary depictions of the Hebrideans.¹⁰

These particular Scots were also rural farmer-fishermen. Thus, unlike the slum dwellers of urban England and even Lowland Scotland, this combination of penury and experience with agriculture, completely free of any urban taint, made them especially attractive to Western Australian officials, for they were already "virile" from the fresh air and hard labor of the countryside, with "sturdy" constitutions. This was precisely the group of men and women Western Australia needed to build up its security.¹¹ To those who preferred economies in state expenditures on Group Settlement, the Hebrideans were especially attractive because of their familiarity with farming at home.

The converse of being "strong" was that it was up to the Scot to make due with what he or she was provided with, so that he or she would live up to this reputation. After all, in the words of an anonymous editorialist clearly imbued with the Social Darwinist rhetoric of the day, "only the fittest are intended by nature and circumstance

⁹ In Keith D. Lilley's chapter "Imagined Geographies of the 'Celtic Fringe' and the Cultural Construction of the 'Other' in Medieval Wales and Ireland," in David C. Harvey, Rhys Jones, Neil McInroy and Christine Milligan, eds., *Celtic Geographies: Old Culture. New Times* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 36.

¹⁰ SROWA, Cons. No. 1496, File 549/27, "Back to the Heather," in the *Sunday Times* (Perth), April 22, 1928; NAA, Series A2910, Item 417/4/70, "Solving Problems of the Empire: Nationalists and Plight of Scotland,"; NAA, Series A2910, Item 417/4/70, Hornby, M.L., "The Case for Organized Empire Migration" (Ottawa, Empire Conference, 1937), p. 22

¹¹ T.M. Devine., *The Scottish Nation: A History, 1700-2000* (New York: Viking, 1999), p. 482.

to develop our primary industries” and defend the security and identity of Western Australia against its perceived enemies.¹² These heightened expectations meant that if the Hebrideans failed in their assigned tasks, criticisms surely would be heaped upon them rather than on the inherent flaws in the scheme itself.

Typically one of the most attractive attributes assigned to the Hebrideans, one frequently touted in the press, was their supposed inherent military prowess. Indeed, two private proposals to encourage the importation of Hebridean crofters to Western Australia, made by a L.T. McGrath and a P. Anderson, seized upon this favorable characterization by pointing out that “the naval point of view would be for such men to defend your shores in time of need” and that “the crofter fishermen” were needed “as our empty coast line [sic] must be populated if we are to keep Australia white,” respectively.¹³ The fact that the Hebrideans were unmistakably “British” meant that their very presence would serve as a bulwark against any threat to that fundamental identity and that reality from any potential “foreign” aggressor.

Problems with the Hebrideans

Yet while at one level the Hebrideans who settled Group 80 were at one level unquestionably British, and accordingly were welcomed in Western Australia, and at yet another level Scottish, with all the benefits their reputation as sturdy pioneers conferred, they also held a third status that to many rendered them unwilling or worse

¹² SROWA, Cons. No. 1496, File 82B/1928, “£3 a Week for Pioneers!” in the Call (Perth), July 27, 1928.

¹³ SROWA, Cons. No. 541, Item No. 1926/2250, letter from McGrath to Agent-General Colebatch, dated November 18, 1926; SROWA, Cons. No. 1496, Item No. 30/22, letter from Anderson to Premier Mitchell, dated 1923.

unsuitable for rehabilitation, both for themselves and for Western Australia. The Australian Natives' Association, one of the leading advocates of empire resettlement, informed the then-Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia Stanley Bruce in 1926 that, on matters of immigration, "on the defence side they felt that the British races had made this country what it was and it was most desirable that Australia [sic] should keep British and should not develop into a community of small sections of foreigners."¹⁴ To many Western Australians, the "Celtic" nature of the Hebrideans rendered them as outsiders, as much "foreigners" as any non-British immigrants. This perception for many outweighed or cancelled out any benefits their presence might provide Western Australia. This dichotomy ultimately in part doomed Group 80. The majority Anglo-Saxon population both of the state as a whole and of the Peel Estate could never agree on whether the Hebrideans were agents of rejuvenation and security, or degeneration and insecurity.

To complicate this, unlike almost all their British counterparts on the Peel Estate, most of the settlers bound for Group 80 did not speak English as their first language, if at all. Most Hebrideans, even in the 1920s, still used Scots Gaelic as their mother tongue. While the use of Gaelic within this particular group by no means hindered their attempts to establish their own farms and create a self-contained community, it certainly did mark them as a people apart and impacted their ability to communicate effectively with the other groups. It also reinforced many popular

¹⁴ NAA, Series CP362/2, Item No. 32, "Notes of a Imfutation from the Australian Natives' Association Which Waited on the Prime Minister."

conceptions of the Hebrideans as a distinct, “inferior” people apart from the majority Anglo-Saxon population. Their continued use of Gaelic, both at home on Lewis and on Group 80, was seen at best as a sign of their stubbornness and unwillingness to progress. At the time, the English language was seen coded as “modern,” while the continued presence and usage of Gaelic was “synonymous with backwardness and squalor” in general. Their reluctance to exclusively speak in English thus became further proof that these crofters were a “race” apart that could never be assimilated into the broader “Anglo-Saxon” society that most Australians prided themselves as being.¹⁵

Such fears of “polluting” elements threatening to destroy the hard-won “purity” of Western Australia were central to how the Hebrideans were treated by the state government and by their fellow settlers from the outset.

It’s worth noting that the Scots themselves, and in particular the Highlanders, could find themselves victims of ethnic prejudice because of their Celtic roots and because they were of a culture alien to the Anglo-Saxon powerbrokers. Sir Charles Nicolson pompously declared that the sluggish and listless habits of the Highlanders would suit well with the life of a shepherd. Gaelic-only speakers ran into difficulties.¹⁶

Even before these crofters arrived in Fremantle, doubts about the willingness or the ability of the Hebrideans to be rehabilitated were circulating in the Western Australian press. On board the *Bendigo* it was reported that “the single Scotchmen in the Stornoway party refused farm work...after several attempts through the Caledonian

¹⁵ Robert Clyde, *From Rebel to Hero: The Image of the Highlander, 1745-1830* (Phantassie, UK: Tuckwell Press Ltd., 1995), p. 44.

¹⁶ Jim Hewitson, *Far Off in Sunlit Places: Stories of the Scots in Australia and New Zealand* (Edinburgh: Highgate, 1998), p. 177.

Society and others to gain their end, [they] eventually accepted situations.”¹⁷ The author of this quote reveals the popular conception of the day that the Hebrideans were an idle people unwilling or unable to perform the hard work necessary to rehabilitate themselves, let alone secure Australia for the British Empire. Just as in British Columbia, and as in Scotland, it was widely assumed that the Hebrideans had no work ethic, nor any desire to improve themselves as the other “Anglo-Saxon” settlers did.

One of the main beliefs that underpinned this entire enterprise was that all that was required for these immigrants to succeed, after receiving some initial help from the relevant governments, was their own initiative and energy. As one settler warned, “this is a land of golden opportunities, but not of feather beds.”¹⁸ While such efforts were demanded from all the “Groupies,” they were especially expected from the Hebrideans. Their poverty at home was attributed to the natural laziness and sloth supposedly inherent in their “Celtic” character. The typical Celt could not possibly prosper because he or she was driven by a “furious fanaticism; a love of war and disorder; a hatred for order and patient industry; no accumulative habits; restless; treacherous; uncertain.”¹⁹

These stereotypes actually became self-fulfilling in a way. Because the Hebrideans were seen as biologically inferior, unlike the English unemployed whose debased status was a product of postwar circumstances and thus remediable, the “Celts”

¹⁷ NAA Melbourne, Item B4094, letter from the Immigration Officer for Western Australia to the Deputy Director, Commonwealth Immigration Office, Melbourne, dated October 30, 1923.

¹⁸ “Colonization in W. Australia: ‘Group Settlement’ at Work,” in The Times (London), June 24, 1926, p. 15.

¹⁹ L. Perry Curtis, Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England (Bridgeport, CT: Conference of British Studies, 1968), p. 70.

were considered by many to be beyond any hope of rehabilitation. If they failed to succeed, that was seen as further proof of their immutable inferiority. To top such considerations, any failures of former city dwellers on the Peel Estate could be chalked up to their inability to adapt to country life on a remote frontier. No such explanations or excuses could be extended to the Hebrideans, who were themselves from a rural isolated frontier. As an article in The West Australian noted, “Scotland is not a country rich in resources as that term is commonly understood. She has a repellant climate: much of her soil is poor – a ‘land of brown heath and shaggy wood.’ Her people have, because of the comparative poverty of their land, been compelled to struggle for their existence.”²⁰

The Hebrideans were particularly caught in this dilemma. They at one level were a self-reliant warrior race that helped defend the furthest perimeters of the Empire from Afghanistan to the Sudan to – it was hoped – Western Australia from any external threats to the *pax Britannica*. At another level, the Hebrideans were also a vanquished people, a “remnant” from the pre-industrial era that, according to the British and the Western Australian governments, needed to be brought however reluctantly into the twentieth century and modern capitalist relations by outside means. This paradox rendered the Hebrideans attractive to those who emphasized the former virtues, and simultaneously pilloried by those who viewed their “backwardness” with outright contempt. It also explains why the state targeted them with vigor, why they were so ill-

²⁰ “The Scottish Delegation,” dated April 20, 1928. Source: SROWA, Con. No. 1496, File 549/27

equipped to fulfill the tasks assigned to them, and why blame was squarely placed at their feet when they inevitably failed.

Such people accordingly were to be provided with the bare minimum of assistance, because their racial heritage and their occupational experience rendered such aid either unnecessary or a waste of precious resources. After all, a major rationale behind Group Settlement and imperial resettlement as a whole was one that assumed that “rural production was ‘morally and economically superior’ to other forms of production” due to “the valorisation of the characteristics of independence, ruggedness and practicality [that] were part of a masculinist national identity.” Seeing as the positive valuations of the Hebrideans rested on their “ruggedness” and their “masculinity,” they of all groups should prove successful in taming the most insurmountable difficulties of the Peel Estate.²¹

Problems with Group 80

Such preconceptions explain why the Hebrideans were provided meager assistance and resources to perform the primary task assigned to them – to transform their portion of the Peel Estate into a landscape dotted with dairy farms. The land set aside for the Hebrideans, even when measured by the overall pitiful standards of the swamps and sandbars that filled the Peel Estate, was particularly abysmal. As the immigrant Morris Mundy pointed out, in order for a successful dairy farm to be established on the Peel Estate, or anywhere for that matter, “the soil must be suitable for

²¹ Kellie Abbott, “Producing Men? Masculinities, Boys’ Employment and Farm Labour in Early Twentieth-Century Western Australia,” in *Limina*, v. 9 (2003), p. 45.

growing pasture, together with nature's help through rain and sunshine. The PEEL ESTATE had the rain and sunshine, but unfortunately for the Group Settlers, pasture does not flourish in sand."²² Every winter Group 80 would flood, due to its substandard soil, the lack of any elevation that might facilitate runoff, the exceptionally high water table, and the failure of the state to construct the adequate drainage system it promised to build under the terms of the agreement it had reached with the British Government.²³ The Hebrideans, so it was thought, would simply "make due" with these conditions, because they apparently would leap at the chance to settle a remote and hardscrabble landscape consisting of "low scrub and generally deep sand" that the state government automatically considered more "arable" than the barren and rocky isle they used to call home.²⁴

Not only was the land allocated to the Hebrideans for all intents and purposes completely useless, the living conditions they were provided were also atrocious, even when compared to the other groups. The state government had promised to erect four-room wooden cottages for each family settled on the Peel Estate under the terms of the agreement signed with the British Government.²⁵ The housing that awaited the Hebridean immigrants, however, proved to be far less permanent or hospitable.²⁶ In

²² "Group Settlement on the Peel Estate From January 1923 to April 1926," Manuscript, January 1979, p. 4

²³ Janice Powell, Group Settlement of the Peel Estate (Thesis, Greylands Teachers College, 1959), p. 18.

²⁴ J.P. Gabbedy, Group Settlement: Part II: Its People: Their Life and Times – An Inside View (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1988), p. 161.

²⁵ SROWA, Cons. No. 1150, Item 1809, Box 34, File 3, dated December 28, 1923.

²⁶ A draft agreement from December 1921 that barely diverges from the ultimate agreement signed in 1923 explicitly states that it was the responsibility of the Western Australia government to provide each

fact, the crofters arrived at their group to discover that no shelter of any kind had been built. Instead, they found corrugated iron sheets, which they were to use to erect rudimentary shacks.²⁷ In fact, this iron, along with some timber and a scant number of tools, were, as one settler put it, “the only signs of civilization” in the Peel Estate “to be seen.”²⁸ The paucity of building supplies on Group 80 meant that families there often had to “double-up” in these one-room shacks for months, if not years. Initially these immigrants were told this was a stopgap measure until wood and glass were procured. Yet these promised supplies were never delivered. The Minister of Lands for Western Australia, W.C. Angwin, upon taking his first tour of the groups in 1924, expressed wonder when he heard that “a woman with seven children...live[d] for two years in a shack instead of a home.”²⁹ Ironically enough, as Group Settler Archie Jackson, a Scot from Kintyre, recalled in an interview, “our home was a shack that looked like a ‘chook house’ with its six poles, a corrugated iron roof and walls. It was a far cry from the houses of Scotland with their two foot thick walls of stone.”³⁰

farmer with a “house, water, necessary clearing and fencing to bring farm to productive stage where the farmer can live comfortably and pay his way.” It would seem foolish to believe that in anyone’s true opinion a one-room shack made out of iron would fulfill this obligation, yet it did for group after group. Source: NLA, MS 1538, Series 16, Item No. 3025, letter to Australian Prime Minister Hughes from Western Australian Premier Sir James Mitchell, dated December 5, 1921.

²⁷ State Library of Western Australia (SLWA), Item No. OH476/1, interview with N. Moore conducted in 1980.

²⁸ Source: M.R.H. Southcombe, *To Call Our Own: Pioneering the Group Settlements* (Carlisle, WA Hesperian Press, 1988), p. 5.

²⁹ “Civic Reception for Mr. Angwin: Group Settlement Eulogised,” in the *Group Settlement Chronicle and Margaret Augusta Mail* (Augusta, WA), no page given.

³⁰ Source: Alison Daubney, ed. *Northcliffe: ‘I Remember When:’ Fourteen Families Remember*. (Northcliffe, WA: Self-Published, 2001), p. 287.

To compound the chronic flooding and lack of adequate shelter, the Hebrideans who settled Group 80 also soon discovered that they had no access to potable water for irrigation and personal consumption. Angwin promised potential immigrants that: “in the extreme South-West [which is the wettest part of the State]...in the dairying and fruit-growing districts, there are many small rivers and numerous brooks, while water may also be obtained within a few feet of the surface.”³¹ Unfortunately, the water was more often than not brackish, and flowed through vast expanses of swampland. Without adequate drainage, most of the groups simply became bogs, especially during the wetter winter months.³² Eventually, Angwin’s successor, M.F. Troy, admitted that “the Peel Estate is one of the most difficult propositions of Group Settlement...If this settlement is going to suffer each year by floods, the position from a dairying standpoint will become untenable.”³³ Even the state’s executive engineer, R.J. Anketell, concluded that while most of the Peel Estate could be redeemed for agricultural uses, Group 80 was completely uninhabitable unless a suitable system of drainage was constructed immediately. The official response from the Undersecretary for Lands was blunt. No drainage was to be built, for Group 80 was a “workable proposition.”³⁴

³¹ SROWA, Cons. No. 1496, File 573/1925, “Western Australia: This is the Spot for the Settler: Land and Advances. Issued under the Direction of the Honorable W.C. Angwin, MLA, Min. for Lands” (1925), pp. 6, 7.

³² Southcombe, To Call Our Own..., p. 77.

³³ SROWA, Cons. No. 1496, File 82B/1928, “The Peel Estate: Effect of Recent Floods,” in The West Australian, July 31, 1928.

³⁴ SROWA, Cons. No. 4069, Item No. 1924/02820 v.1, letter from Anketell to Assistant Under-Secretary McKay, dated May 24, 1926; letter to W.C. Angwin dated May 22, 1925

Even under the best of circumstances, it would be difficult for any farmer to be able to make a decent living if he or she had no reliable access to markets where his or her produce could be sold. Unfortunately, in addition to the aforementioned difficulties, the Hebrideans on Group 80 found themselves far from any adequate transportation routes. The few maintained roads and railroads that existed in the Peel Estate for the most part linked the preexisting towns and cities to the north and to the south. The state government, obsessed with procuring as many British immigrants as could be sent, spent most of the money it borrowed from London under the Empire Settlement Act on recruitment and transportation of settlers to Australia. Accordingly, no money was left to construct a viable road network, just as none was really budgeted for land clearance, housing, and drainage. The dirt tracks that passed as roads were more often than not hindrances to rather than facilitators of development.

To quote an immigrant who commented on the deplorable state of the roads in the groups:

We had traveled about five miles when we got bogged for the first time. The 'road,' or rather track, was covered with water about eighteen inches deep and the track wheels had sunk into the soft mud underneath and were skidding around and digging in deeper with each revolution. All the men and elder children jumped out into the slush and grouping around the truck began pushing with all their might. After a great deal of effort the truck began to move...

However our ride this time was short lived. We had scarcely traveled a hundred yards when the wheels started to skid again and the truck again settled into the mud. Once again we jumped out and began pushing and again the truck started to move.

The next five miles was an endless repetition of bogs and pushing and at three o'clock, by which time we had traveled ten miles, all our efforts failed to move the truck.

The driver advised us to walk the last two miles.³⁵

The report commissioned by the British Oversea Settlement Delegation to investigate the complaints that were emerging from the Peel Estate as early as 1924 placed the primary blame on the difficulties many settlers experienced on the “considerable addition for transport having to be made to the initial cost of groceries and other stores.”³⁶ Still, the state failed to act to remedy this situation. Group 80 was one of the easternmost and thus furthest removed groups from the coastal roads. The Hebrideans once again were marginalized, much as they had been at home.

As if these problems were not enough to surmount, the state also consistently failed to provide these settlers with adequate training and supervision as promised under the terms of the agreement. The government of Western Australia, following a “sink or swim” mentality, threw these “Groupies” headfirst into clearing the land and establishing farms, something most immigrants, the Hebrideans included, had no familiarity or experience with. The government initially promised to found a school where “Groupies” would have been provided with a cursory education on clearing land, establishing farms and settlements, and learning about dairying.³⁷ To Mitchell and others, however, this was considered an unnecessary expenditure. If the settlers could

³⁵ Source: Southcombe, To Call Our Own..., p. 5.

³⁶ “Migration: British Oversea Settlement Delegation to Australia: Report, May 1924, To the President of the Oversea Settlement Committee from the Delegation Appointed to Inquire into Conditions Affecting British Settlers in Australia” (Melbourne: H.J. Green, Government Printer for the State of Victoria, 1924), p. 28.

³⁷ Patricia Crawford and Ian Crawford, Contested Country: A History of the Northcliffe Area, Western Australia (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 2003), p. 97.

not become successful dairy farmers on their own initiative and know-how, then it was their own fault they failed; they would disappear and be replaced with British immigrants who could. The Hebrideans again were an extraordinary case in this regard. No training was ever provided them, for their failure apparently was preordained and inevitable. No record of a single expert visiting Group 80 exists in the historical record. “The promises of expert supervision and agricultural training” for the Hebrideans, a group that had no previous experience whatsoever with dairy production, “never materialised.”³⁸

Problems with the Other “Groupies”

Much of the negative stereotypes surrounding the Hebrideans harkened back to earlier and even more disparaging characterizations of the Scottish Highlander, albeit in the 1920s they were supported by the widely accepted pseudo-sciences of eugenics and Social Darwinism. Likewise, another idea recycled from the nineteenth century – self-help – was a main pillar of Group Settlement, even though the entire project of imperial resettlement was very much a product of the new paradigm of statism and a rejection of laissez-faire. Even as late as 1928, by which time Group 80 had been totally condemned, many people still believed that the problem with the groups lay not with the state, but with the immigrants themselves. A contributor to the Call of Perth still argued that “all the time in the world would not be sufficient for some of those who have been put on the Groups. They may be good citizens, but they are not all good

³⁸ Kent Fedorowich, Unfit for Heroes: Reconstruction and Soldier Settlement in the Empire Between the Wars (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 176.

settlers and the country will never make them good settlers.”³⁹ The West Australian also railed against many of the group settlers. A reporter called them “the best of a bad lot, and the position is bound to remain so unless something is done to induce a better class of settler to blend with these so-called undesirables.”⁴⁰

There was at best a blatant contradiction between the very nature of such a massive social experiment such as Group Settlement – which was very centralized and collectivist, where the state essentially was the sole supplier and sole purchaser of and for these settlers, and dictated almost every aspect of their lives – and the stated aim of the project, which was to rejuvenate these immigrants and transform them into a healthy yeoman peasantry through their individual hard work. The state government on the one hand was to provide the “Groupies” with everything they needed to survive and flourish. Yet when the state failed to do so spectacularly, and fulfill its end of the contract, the settlers inevitably failed, and the state laid the blame for this outcome on them.

While most sponsored immigrants who came to Western Australia under the Group Settlement scheme endured many of these depredations, the Hebrideans who pioneered Group 80 were subject to additional indignities that can best be explained by their additional “Celtic” status. Nelba Moore, an English settler on Group 68, which immediately abutted Group 80, recalls her opinions of the Hebrideans.

³⁹ SROWA, “£3 a Week for Pioneers!,” July 27, 1928.

⁴⁰ “Immigration Problems,” October 6, 1923, p. 9.

Migrant and Australian children mixed well, yet there was ill feeling towards the Scottish children which she remembered as very strong but could not remember any particular reason. Certainly there seemed to have been a desire among the Scots to retain their separate non-Australian identity and this was perhaps resented by others. It was recognised that Scot migrants preferred to be together, and on the Peel group 80 was known as the Scots Group.⁴¹

Even the local schoolchildren derided the Scottish lads from Group 80. Moore says that her classmates often used to “get into it” with the “Scotch,” though never on school property.⁴²

This separate identity as far as language and race are concerned immediately set them apart from the other Anglo-Saxon groups and operated as a signifier of difference - something that certainly did not endear them to their neighbors who were obsessed with uniformity.⁴³ At a time when homogeneity was seen as essential for a society to function smoothly, the presence of any population that would inherently threaten that self-conceptualization might contaminate Australia, and leave it open for conquest and degeneration.⁴⁴ Following such logic, if the Hebrideans were to establish themselves in Western Australia, to continue this medical metaphor by quoting the contemporary historian Vaughan Cornish, the state “might receive an alien development in future

⁴¹ SLWA, OH 476/1, interview with N. Moore.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Nora Taggart, Rockingham Looks Back: A History of the Rockingham District, 1829-1982 (Rockingham, WA: Rockingham District Historical Society, c. 1984), p. 172.

⁴⁴ Gregory Tobin’s chapter “Australian Immigration Policy and Politics,” in Michael LeMay, ed., The Gatekeepers: Comparative Immigration Policy (New York: Praeger, 1989), p. 47; Douglas Cole, “The Crimson Thread of Kinship’: Ethnic Ideas in Australia, 1870-1914,” in Historical Studies, v. 14, no. 56 (April 1971), pp. 516, 517; Douglas Cole, “The Problem of ‘Nationalism’ and ‘Imperialism’ in British Settlement Colonies,” in The Journal of British Studies, v. 10, no. 2 (May 1971), pp. 168, 169.

generations owing to biological causes.”⁴⁵ These Hebrideans, the very men who were lauded as valorous defenders of Britain and the British Empire, were also now cast by some as an inherent danger to those very ideals. Far from being assets to Western Australia, as many of the political and economic elites made them out to be, many native-born Western Australians, not to mention even other “Groupies,” saw the Hebrideans as Nelba Moore did, as a danger to the very security of the state they were supposed to defend.

Their parallel “Celtic” status was itself seen as a potential threat to the many Australians who defined their nation in narrower terms, as one populated with Anglo-Saxons “of our own race and blood.”⁴⁶ Notes from a meeting of the Australian Natives Association in 1927 reflect this duality. A Mr. Green pointed out that “on the defence side they felt that the British races had made this country what it was and it was most desirable that Australia should keep British.” This broader definition clearly included the Hebrideans, even if they were still considered a distinct subset under that broader umbrella. The sentence continues, “and should not develop into a community of small sections of foreigners.”⁴⁷ Here, the Gaelic-speaking Celtic Hebrideans could be considered alien “foreigners,” an out-group that, far from helping defend Australia, might serve to tear the hard-won Anglo-Saxon Australian identity asunder.

⁴⁵ NLA, Series 32, Subseries 2, Folder 12, “White Australia: Professor Vaughan Cornish,” in the Evening Sun (Melbourne), September 14, 1923.

⁴⁶ NAA, Series A461, Item A349/1/3, Part 3, summary – “Immigration – Resolutions Passed at the Imperial Conference”

⁴⁷ NAA, CP362/2, 32, “Notes of an Imputation...”

If the Hebrideans rejected attempts to “redeem” them at home through massive injections of private capital from the Lever Brothers at no expense to them, then what hope was there for Western Australia to rehabilitate these crofters on the Peel Estate at public expense? An article in The West Australian makes an important distinction between the Lowland Scot, whose presence in Western Australia should be boosted, and the Celtic Hebrideans, who represented the “failed catch” of the immigration recruiters.⁴⁸ The state government publicly welcomed the importation of Hebridean crofters by stressing the “British” side of their identity and their supposed ability to defend the state against Japan. This task, however, required the reinforcement in Western Australia of “a sturdy British race,” yet one that also “replicat[ed the]...social hierarchy...as nearly as possible that of the mother country.”⁴⁹ The Hebrideans, on the other hand, squandered their biological inheritance that stemmed from their “whiteness.” Their lethargy and unwillingness to “progress” threatened to corrupt their Anglo-Saxon neighbors, just as they supposedly corrupted the notion of “Scottishness” when they were lumped together with their industrialized Lowland compatriots. With that in mind, it is easy to see why the state placed these same people on some of the worst and most inaccessible land in the Peel Estate, and consistently neglected to provide them with the materials needed to improve their situation, for their “Celtic” nature rendered any such assistance automatically pointless.

⁴⁸ SROWA, Cons. No. 1496, File 549/27, “The Scottish Delegation.”

⁴⁹ Paula Hamilton and B.W. Higman, “Servants of Empire: The British Training of Domestic for Australia, 1926-31,” in Social History, v. 18, no. 1 (January 2003), p. 72.

This was the stance taken by another constituency that opposed the Hebrideans – labor. Much of the push for the White Australia policy came from the burgeoning trade unions that exploded onto the political and economic scene in the years immediately preceding federation. While racist attitudes and fears permeated almost every social strata in Australian society practically since its foundation, the laboring classes seemed to be particularly hostile to the presence of “alien” laborers. This was in large part due to the direct threat to their livelihoods that foreign workers posed, due to their supposedly “inferior” standards of living.

The desire of the political and economic elites of Western Australia to import Hebrideans was seen as yet the latest attempt by the bourgeoisie to procure a source of cheap labor, a twentieth-century version of the now-excluded “Chinaman.” The wary eyes of the laborer turned to the non-Anglo-Saxon Europeans who were starting to arrive on their shores in increasing numbers in the 1920s. The same arguments that were lodged against Asians in the nineteenth century were revived in the 1920s and redeployed against the Hebrideans. In a rather self-fulfilling fashion, the deplorable living conditions these settlers endured at home, especially when compared to their Lowland Scots and English compatriots, were seen as proof that the Hebrideans subsisted on a far lower standard of living than the Anglo-Saxon. If this was replicated in Western Australia, the dairy processors of the state would turn to the Hebrideans, for it was assumed that these settlers would accept lower prices than anyone else in the state could. It was widely feared that the business and political elites of that state

privileged their own economic self-interest over the supposedly greater need to keep Western Australia secure, prosperous, and thoroughly “Anglo-Saxon.”

These were all concepts that most working class Western Australians wholeheartedly subscribed to. To quote the historians David Pope and Glenn Withers:

Labor saw two principal channels through which increased immigration could impair its economic position. First, the capitalists, it was said, ‘wanted six men competing for one job to drive down wages.’ In fact, by the mid-1920s money and real wages were largely protected by Australia’s elaborate system of state and commonwealth ‘awards’ [that is, legal wage minima]. The second channel was the more obvious carrier of economic debasement. Immigration, said flamboyant Labor parliamentarian King O’Malley – and his view was typical – would result in ‘working men fighting for jobs like dogs for a bone.’⁵⁰

Premier Philip Collier (who succeeded Mitchell in 1924) condemned the fact that “these foreigners were in the timber areas and the wheat belt, and they would take work at wage and under conditions which Australians would not take.”⁵¹

Here, too, a disconnect emerged between the economic and the bio-imperialist impulses of the laboring classes, and how they in turn impacted their perceptions of the Hebridean Scots. Whereas labor for the most part opined that the bourgeois were importing “Celts” to rein back or even eliminate the relatively high wage levels “Anglo-

⁵⁰ In “Do Migrants Rob Jobs? Lessons of Australian History, 1861-1991,” in The Journal of Economic History, v. 53, no. 4 (December 1993), p. 722.

⁵¹ NAA, Series A1, Item No. 1927/15940, “Foreigners in W.A.: The Premier Indignant,” in the Age (Melbourne), March 17, 1926. It should be noted here that “these foreigners” Collier attacked refers to the 704 non-British immigrants who had arrived in Western Australia between July 1925 and March 1926. This relatively trivial influx was enough to spark outrage throughout the state, due to the “British ethnic definition” of the Australian nation most Australians entertained that viewed the entrance into their country of anyone who was not “British,” or even more narrowly, “Anglo-Saxon,” as a pathogen and a step on the road to mongrelization and degeneration. For more information on what constitutes a “British ethnic definition,” please see Jose E. Igartua, The Other Quiet Revolution: National Identities in English Canada, 1945-1971 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006), especially pp. 16-35.

Saxon” workers earned vis-à-vis any other nation, they also in so vociferously decrying the resettlement of Hebrideans in Western Australia allowed their own economic self-interest to take precedence over their strident concern to keep their state “British” at all costs.⁵² By employing a more exclusionary definition of Western Australia as an “Anglo-Saxon” society, one that necessarily excluded these crofters in a way a “British” definition did not, they chose to privilege their financial well-being over their racist fears of a Japanese invasion and ensuring that this outermost outpost of the British Empire and British civilization remained British through acquiring as many Britons as possible, especially Highland Scots.

Problems with Britons as a Whole

That is, if this redeployment of Britons to the state *en masse* was indeed something most Western Australians still embraced or even welcomed. World War I introduced a deep scar into the hitherto dominant “British” character of Australia. A farmer by the name of J.R. Skenk wrote about the changes that that conflict wrought to the Australian psyche.

The First World War cuts like a chasm across the life of the country. It marks the end of the horse and cart age and ushers in the era of the internal combustion engine and electric power. It marks, too, the end of the pioneering days. The man who tackles things single-handed, the bush settler and skilled craftsman, gives way to state control and mass production.⁵³

⁵² Jim Wilkie, *Metagama: Emigration from the Isle of Lewis in the 1920s* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing Co., 1987), p. 88.

⁵³ From *Memories of Myrtle Bank* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1952), pp. 201, 202. Source: Russel Ward and John Robertson, eds., *Such Was Life: Select Documents in Australian Social History, v. 2, 1851-1913* (Chippendale, NSW: Alternative Publishing Cooperative Ltd., 1980), p. 361.

The Hebrideans for the most part supposedly still lived in that idealized prewar environment. Consequently they would thus be the perfect instrument through which that way of life, of a self-reliant population blissfully secure in the *Pax Britannica*, could be retained.

Group Settlement was intended to be a means through which the British Empire could be rejuvenated through effecting a broader dispersal of its “British” population. It was an attempt to wed the age-old Poor Law tradition of casting emigration as “a great service to those sent away” and the similarly entrenched notion of personal rehabilitation through tilling the land, with the new realities of state involvement in such an endeavor.⁵⁴

Unfortunately for Western Australia, these competing priorities were never properly reconciled. Nor did they take into account the recent emergence of a nascent “Australian” identity that was still profoundly “British” in many respects, but also struggled at the same time with a sense of British decline and the realization that Australia had its own interests and needs that did not necessarily go hand in hand with those of the Colonial and, after 1925, the Dominion Office. With the achievements scored by Australian troops in the Middle East and in the Pacific, coupled with the Commonwealth’s separate participation in negotiating the Treaty of Versailles, many in Australia started to question previously held preconceptions of their country merely being a far-flung recreation of Britain. To some Australians, the notion that their

⁵⁴ James Jupp, *The English in Australia* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 123.

Dominion was called upon to ensure the security of the “Mother Country” was profoundly shocking; to others, it directly challenged notions of the innate superiority of the Royal Navy, of subservience to Britain, and of hitherto largely unchallenged notions of British superiority in general. Australia started to cast itself as a “young country developing brawny muscle and a great and sturdy population.”⁵⁵ Would this be maintained if disadvantaged and supposedly effete and degenerate Britons, especially “Celtic” Hebrideans, dependent on government handouts, were “dumped” onto a young, rural, masculine and robust frontier society?

By 1925, Mitchell felt the need to counter a growing consensus against the whole notion of Group Settlement. He wondered, “were the 100,000...British people in the State...to be condemned because of a reference to the few who should never have come here?”⁵⁶ Cast in this light, almost all British settlers in Australia were viewed as agents of both degeneration and infiltration. These “Poms,” and the Hebrideans in particular, came to be seen as potential “cancers” through which Australia would be weakened. They were also seen as agents of Westminster, dispatched so that the limited autonomy, respect and prestige that Australia earned through its military exploits in Europe and in the Pacific would be weakened.

Considering the myriad of handicaps the Hebrideans faced almost from the day they arrived in Western Australia, it is little wonder that many of the Hebrideans

⁵⁵ Senator G.F. Pearce, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, July 27, 1922, v. 99, pp. 821, 822. Source: Crowley, ed., Modern Australia in Documents..., p. 358.

⁵⁶ “Group Settlement: Sir James Mitchell Replied to Mr. Willmott,” in the Group Settlement Chronicle and Margaret Augusta Mail, May 4, 1925, p. 4.

quickly abandoned the group less than a year after they arrived there. The MacKay family, for example, evidently left the district in April 1924, mere months after being placed on the Peel Estate.⁵⁷ They were but the first of a slow but steady exodus of Hebrideans from the Malgup swamp. One by one, they simply threw in the towel and abandoned their group, either leaving for better economic opportunities in Perth or in some cases returning to Scotland.⁵⁸ By early 1928 there were only a handful of settlers left on this, “the poorest and sandiest of all the groups.”⁵⁹ In June of that year Group 80 was officially condemned by the state Reclassification Board. It was one of the very first groups to be officially declared an absolute failure by a state that had for so long ignored the group’s plight.

Numerous vested interests in Western Australia were diametrically opposed to their importation of the Hebrideans. Labor in particular failed to perceive of these particular soldier-settlers as “a means of putting the defence of the Empire...on a sound footing,” as the British Minister of Labour characterized them. They preferred to focus on their less-palatable “Celtic” character.⁶⁰ To competing farmers and ardent alike, the Hebridean was more likely to be considered “sluggish and listless,” a people “of simple character” who at best would undercut their wages, and at worst form the nucleus of a

⁵⁷ Rockingham Historical Society (RHS), “Beldivis School, 1924-1930.”

⁵⁸ RHS, Western Australia Towns Directory, p. 316.

⁵⁹ J.P. Gabbedy, Group Settlement: Part I: Its Origins, Politics and Administration (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1988), p. 161; Taggart, Rockingham Looks Back..., p. 176.

⁶⁰ NLA, Series 16, Subseries 2, Part 1, Folder 40, “Friendship Overseas: Novel Emigration Plan,” in the Telegraph (London), February 2, 1922.

“canker” that would sap Western Australia of its hard-won Anglo-Saxon character.⁶¹

While employers and producers might want to obtain “Brits on the cheap,” “Britons” who due to their Celtic heritage would accept lower wage rates and living conditions, the ascendancy of the labor movement in Western Australia helped mute popular public approbation of such a “worthy” cause. Those most attuned to Social Darwinist and eugenic theories then ascendant also worried if such a population would actually weaken Western Australia from within, rather than strengthen it against the Japanese threat that inevitably would come.

The experience of Group 80 is but an extreme example of the conflicting priorities and haphazard planning that ultimately scuttled Group Settlement in Western Australia. This scheme may have been born out of high hopes to enrich and enliven the Hebrideans, Western Australia, the Commonwealth, and the Empire during one of the darkest periods they collectively had faced to date, but it also failed to take into account the new dilemmas and new realities that World War I wrought. The bifurcated status of the Hebridean immigrant to Western Australia is a window to analyzing the simultaneously bivalent attitudes towards Empire Settlement and the goals it was to achieve and the weaknesses that tore it asunder.

⁶¹ Malcolm Prentis, The Scots in Australia: A Study of New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria, 1788-1900 (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1983), pp. 71, 73.

CONCLUSION

In the years following World War I, public opinion in the British Empire slowly started to swing towards the active involvement of governments in resettling Britons from Great Britain in the Dominions. To many in Britain, the war revealed that the Dominions were indeed valuable assets essential to augmenting the strength and vitality of the British Empire in an increasingly competitive world economically, militarily, and geopolitically. The Dominions immediately rushed to arms with almost no hesitation once Britain declared war against Germany. The forces they amassed, the provisions they shipped, the materiel they supplied, and the support they extended proved crucial to the Allied victory. Many statesmen and others concluded that the ties of “kith and kin” that bound both Great Britain and the Dominions to each other so successfully throughout World War I should be reinforced in the war’s aftermath. With each passing year, more statesmen grew convinced that the most effective means of ensuring this would be to encourage the migration of Britons to the comparatively underpopulated Dominions.¹

Advocates of Empire Settlement also boasted of the need to shore up the defenses of the entire British Empire. The Washington Naval Conference of 1922 represented an official recognition of Britain’s inability to maintain the unchallenged

¹ Stephen Constantine, ed., Emigrants and Empire: British Settlement in the Dominions between the Wars (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1990), p. 7.

supremacy over the world's oceans that the Royal Navy enjoyed over the previous two centuries. Both Britain and the Dominions were well aware of this new diminution of British power and prestige. With imperial defensive capabilities thus weakened, combined with Japan's new forward positions in the northern Pacific and advancements in military technology (such as airpower), it became imperative for both Britain and the Dominions to augment whatever resources were available to them to counter these new challenges. One of the cheapest ways security could be procured was through the creation of a "reserve" of troops that could face any challenge to the British in that remote theater.

Increasingly in the 1920s, that challenge was seen as coming from Japan. The abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1922 was commonly perceived in that nation as a gigantic affront to its international clout. Japan being cut free from its alliance with Britain was especially worrisome for both British Columbia and Western Australia. These furthest outposts of the British Empire feared for their security in the face of seemingly unending and effortless Japanese expansion over the previous seventy years. The deployment of Britons to British Columbia and Western Australia would, it was hoped, entrench their security and eliminate any claims of *terra nullis* that these societies feared Japan might lodge to justify their seizure of these entities.²

Many British Columbians also feared that the termination of the imperial alliance with Japan at Britain's behest meant that Japan was no longer disposed to honor

² National Library of Australia (NLA), MSS 1538, Series 32, Subseries 2, Folder 12, "White Australia – The Low-Pressure Center of the Globe," in Liberty, May 26, 1928, p. 38.

the “gentleman’s agreement” that informally limited Japanese immigration to Canada. An easy way for Japan to extract some revenge on the British Empire for the indignities it suffered was for it to renege on this pact and unleash a flood of immigrant laborers that would, in the minds of racist politicians and the voters they represented, strive to claim British Columbia for itself. To quote a Reverend John McKay from Vancouver:

We must realize that we have rivals just as intelligent, just as alert, just as wise, racing across the pacific [sic] for supremacy. The intermingling of the white and yellow races will offer no very great difficulty eventually, but if we admit these people in large groups, we must stop and remember what would happen in case of war between this country and the country from which they came. We can only expect that they will do as the Germans and Austrians did when the war broke out, prove traitors to us.³

Japanese immigrants, no matter how assimilated they became, represented an “advance guard” that remained loyal to Japan and were preparing for an inevitable Japanese invasion. Their own bifurcated status on contemporary Social Darwinist hierarchies meant that their presence in British Columbia either weakened the province through their supposed inherent degeneracy as an Asian people, or weakened British Columbia through the deliberate acts of espionage and sabotage of a people who proved more than capable of evolving faster than any other “race” had in history. While these characterizations appear to be wholly contradictory, they operated in tandem to generate a widespread fear that British Columbia might be “drowned in a sea of brown-skinned fecundity,” to quote but one contemporary commentator on this topic.⁴

³ “Predict Danger from Orientals,” in *The Daily Colonist* (Victoria, BC), July 18, 1919, p. 2.

⁴ Thomas R. Berger, *Fragile Freedoms: Human Rights and Dissent in Canada* (Toronto and Vancouver: Clarke, Irwin and Co., Ltd., 1981), p. 102.

These fears of an invasion from within were much less conspicuous in Western Australia. This was in large part because Australia had for the past twenty years excluded almost all Japanese immigration due to the systematic application of the “White Australia” policy, whereas Canada preferred, in large part due to Quebec, to pursue a more covert policy of discouraging, but not entirely eliminating, the immigration of non-Europeans to the Dominion. Western Australia was not only more sparsely populated than British Columbia (indeed, more so than any other portion of the British Empire), it was also located much closer to Japan and to Asia. This simple fact of geography amplified anxieties in Western Australia, and indeed Australia as a whole. So, while Western Australia felt more secure about withstanding an invasion of Japanese laborers than British Columbia, it certainly felt less secure when it came to a possible Japanese military invasion. This in turn led to a greater desire at the national level to take whatever actions necessary to maintain the bonds that underpinned their continued membership in the British Empire.⁵

British immigrants in general were for the most part welcomed by the governments of British Columbia and Western Australia as a means of entrenching their security, rejuvenating fraying British imperial ties, stimulating the broader imperial economy and defending against enemies both real and perceived. Within this broader context, both entities aggressively pursued the importation of what was hoped to be hundreds if not thousands of Hebrideans as immigrants who could fulfill all of these

⁵ Gwendolen Carter, The British Commonwealth and International Security: The Role of the Dominions, 1919-1939 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1947), p. 89.

tasks. Their presence in both British Columbia and Western Australia would achieve several objectives for both frontier societies. In addition to serving as natural reinforcements to the common racial tie then seen as essential to Imperial solidarity, the Hebrideans would also function as automatic consumers of British cultural and commercial products. Through their rehabilitation from their negative valuation as effete and impoverished farmer-fishermen at home to virile and prosperous self-made men in Canada and Australia – or so the rhetoric produced for public consumption read – they in turn would be the instruments through which the depressed British and imperial economies could lock up valuable export markets in an age of virtual global autarky.⁶

These imperatives played a central role in explaining why the Hebrideans in particular were so assiduously targeted by both British Columbia and Western Australia for resettlement. The Hebrideans were unquestionably men and women from the Scottish Highlands and Islands. As such, they were products of a land that had a reputation of producing brave warriors who routinely and bravely came to the defense of the Empire when it needed them the most, especially on its outermost peripheries.⁷ This gave them a concomitant positive valuation that made them doubly attractive as far as the defense of these frontiers was concerned. As Rome used “civilized” Germans along its frontiers to defend against the barbarians to the north, so would Britain

⁶ In Keith William’s chapter “The Politics of Empire Settlement, 1900-1922,” in Constantine, ed., Emigrants and Empire..., p. 38.

⁷ John MacKenzie, “Empire and National Identities: The Case of Scotland,” in the Transactions of the Royal Society, v. 8 (1998), p. 226.

defend its *pax Britannica* through “civilizing” its Celts and deploying them along its tenuous imperial borders with Japan, itself seen by many contemporaries as barbaric.

Unlike the majority of settlers who migrated to British Columbia and Western Australia under the auspices of the Empire Settlement Act, who were unemployed and came from the slums of the cities of England and Lowland Scotland and had little to no experience with country life, the Hebrideans at home were farmers and fishers. In recruiting such a people, the governments of British Columbia and Western Australia would save themselves the time and expense of training and supervising the Hebrideans, for it was assumed that their natural propensity for such occupations would render that unnecessary.

They would also be gaining a rural, pre-modern population supposedly uncorrupted by capitalism and “civilization.” Such settlers were reputed to rely on their own skills and their own labor to succeed or fail, so proponents of both schemes believed. In this framework, they were held up as representatives of the continued ascendancy of the ethos of “self help” and the valuation of the stalwart rural peasant or yeoman over the weakened factory worker from the city. In an age in which the decline of the British Empire started to permeate the public discourse, the Hebrideans, much like Empire Settlement in general, represented a sort of throwback to days of yore, representatives of the independent and virile Britons who amassed the unparalleled Empire of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Yet were these warrior-crofters the instrument through which the British Empire, British Columbia, and Western Australia would be rejuvenated? Were they the model of vitality to which the English and Lowland Scottish settlers should aspire? Or was it the other way around? The dichotomous nature of the Hebrideans themselves according to Social Darwinism, their more positive valuations surrounding their ability to provide security to both frontier societies, rendered them attractive to politicians in Britain, British Columbia and Western Australia. It also, depending on one's economic situation, attachment to Britain, or racial prejudices, mitigated or entirely cancelled their appeal. While the government of British Columbia publicly welcomed the infusion of Hebridean Celts into the body politic, many of the province's residents were loathe to admit a class of immigrants who might weaken the strong Anglophilia and strident Anglo-Saxonist character of their society. They feared the Hebrideans would merely replicate the poverty and degradation they had suffered at home for almost two centuries, despite several attempts by the British Government and private benefactors to "improve" them.

Many powerful constituencies, most notably the fishing operators and the burgeoning labor movement, preferred to emphasize the Hebrideans' Celtic identity. Both groups inverted the Social Darwinist hierarchies of the day, arguing that these crofters were either beneath the Japanese they were to replace – the stance taken by the business elites – or were below their own new-found elevated status – as the working classes believed. Consequently, far from rejuvenating British Columbia, the

Hebrideans instead would function almost as much as agents of regression and degradation as the Japanese they were to replace.

These particular immigrants arguably were looked at with even further suspicion in this regard in Western Australia. Its exposed position both demographically and geographically vis-à-vis Japan, combined with its more uniform “British” population, caused many Western Australians to pay more strident attention to matters of ethno-racial vigor, for fear that their tenuous hold over such a large, remote and under-populated landmass would be usurped. Whereas British Columbia contained sizeable populations of Native Americans, Americans from the United States, and immigrants from Continental Europe in addition to the Japanese, Western Australia for the most part never allowed the non-British population of the colony/state to grow above a few thousand, save for some sporadic attempts during the lean years of the 1870s. To do so would undermine the very *raison d’etre* of Western Australia – the triumph of British power and British civilization over other, more inferior, cultures and races.

The maintenance of this existence, however, required the state to ensure that its population remained as “pure” and “homogenous” as possible. In Western Australia, the arrival of the Hebrideans signified the introduction of a group of people many considered at the time to be inferior, a threat to “Anglo-Saxon” supremacy and race vitality that needed to be dealt with immediately and swiftly “as a matter of national

security and survival.”⁸ The Hebrideans were deemed by many to be more akin to the Irish than to even their lowland Scottish brethren. Many contemporaries would most likely concur with the author of the following, who devised some talking points for Lord Milner and Winston Churchill for the upcoming Council of Ministers meeting in 1923. He stressed that “the result” of such a large “Celtic” immigration to Australia has resulted in “a large proportion of the population” of that Dominion to be “of low Irish origin, disloyal...and even Bolshevik.”⁹ Not only were the Hebrideans considered to be incapable of rejuvenation, they were also possibly subversive, especially when confronted with the dismal conditions they found of Group 80 that were to be their “reward” for their service in World War I. Were these the soldier-settlers who would help build up, to quote Sir Joseph Carruthers, “a sufficient population capable of defending Australia by land and sea from foreign invasion”?¹⁰ The answer as the 1920s progressed seemed to be a categorical no.

The debates surrounding the ability of the Hebrideans to provide both British Columbia and Western Australia with security in an increasingly insecure age were part and parcel of the skepticism surrounding the entire project of whether Empire Settlement as a whole was the panacea its advocates touted. Much of the tone of the arguments supporting assisted immigration schemes as a whole took on an air of almost desperation, as if its advocates knew that the economic, political and racial ties that

⁸ Gerald Horne, Race War: White Supremacy and the Japanese Attack on the British Empire (New York: New York University Press, 2004), p. 43.

⁹ National Archives (London) (NA), CO 721/30, Item no. 255, p. 2.

¹⁰ NLA, Series 16, Subseries 2, Part 1, Folder 40 (MSS 1538), p. 5.

bound the Dominions and Great Britain up to and including World War I were slowly subsiding. Even in Australia, where the overwhelming majority of the population was British either by birth or through recent descent, many started to worry about the “estrangement of mentality between two grades of persons – the Australians on the one hand and the Englishman on the other.”¹¹ Australia’s collective rejection of conscription twice to support the Allied cause during the war, its decision to establish its own navy, its quasi-independent participation in the peace negotiations in Paris, and its acute sense of betrayal when Britain abrogated the Anglo-Japanese Alliance that safeguarded the “White Australia” policy – all served to reinforce the notion that perhaps Australia had its own interests and its own destiny that may, however tentative at this stage, not necessarily agree with those of Britain.¹²

The Canadian government proved to be even more reluctant to embrace Empire Settlement. Much to the chagrin of men like Pattullo, British Columbia found itself somewhat isolated in its overarching desire to secure British immigrants as a means to bolster its security and shore up the central British character and traditions that dominated the province and were embedded in its very name.¹³ Throughout the early 1920s, Dominion Prime Minister William Mackenzie King presided over a minority government whose support was firmly entrenched in the distinctly non-Anglo-Saxon

¹¹ In “Warns Against Americanization,” in the Victoria Daily Times, September 22, 1924, p. 15.

¹² For a further discussion, please read Gavin Souter’s concluding chapter “Land of Echoes” in Lion and Kangaroo: Australia 1901-1919. The Rise of a Nation (Sydney: William Collins, 1976).

¹³ Philip Resnick, The Politics of Resentment: British Columbia Regionalism and Canadian Unity (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000), p. 6; Smith, Allan, Canada: An American Nation? (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), pp. 201, 291.

province of Quebec. That province's electorate made it clear through the ballot box that it was loathe to support the "establish[ment of] plantations of Imperialist settlers... who may serve future Imperialist plans."¹⁴

Even if King was not so dependent on Quebec for the survival of his government, he was particularly sensitive to any attempts to sacrifice Canadian autonomy in domestic affairs to British imperial fiat. He was adamant that Canada approach its own foreign affairs in this same spirit.¹⁵ It was largely King's refusal to countenance a unified Imperial foreign policy that led to the Balfour Declaration of 1926 that spelled out the virtual independence of all the Dominions.¹⁶ In an age when King could boast that "the day is past when Canada should in her relations with other parts of the Empire... take the position of a colony subordinate in position and inferior in status," any influx of British settlers was seen by skeptics as a means by Britain to undermine Canadian autonomy by stealth, not to mention a crafty way to deflect Britain's "surplus" population by "dumping" it onto Canada.¹⁷ As such, British Columbia, in attempting to attract this very "type," would receive no aid from Ottawa in its pursuit of the Hebrideans.

¹⁴ National Archives of Canada (NAC), MG-26, J1/79/66783, Charles Murphy to King, dated October 16, 1922. Source: Constantine, Emigrants and Empire..., p. 153.

¹⁵ Nicholas Mansergh, The Commonwealth Experience: Volume Two: From British to Multiracial Commonwealth (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1969), pp. 16, 17.

¹⁶ For more information please see Bruce Hutchison's chapter "The Fatal Blunder," in The Incredible Canadian: A Candid Portrait of Mackenzie King: His Works, His Times, and His Nation (Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1953), J.D.B. Miller, Britain and the Old Dominions (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), pp. 61-64.

¹⁷ In "Empire Position of Canada is Stated," in the Victoria Daily Times, August 16, 1924, p. 1; The Globe (Toronto), February 4, 1921. Source: Constantine, ed., Emigrants and Empire..., p. 153.

Such attitudes certainly played a major role in determining the ultimate failure of the assisted settlement of Hebrideans in both British Columbia and Western Australia in the 1920s. While the political leaders of both saw these immigrants as the perfect instrument through which they could each reinforce their British character, they also had to encounter a burgeoning consensus on the part of an increasingly significant segment of the Canadian and Australian populations that perhaps such an infusion of metropolitan settlers was not precisely what they needed or even desired. Just when Britain sought to reinforce the ties between itself and the Dominions that proved so vital to the Imperial war effort and attempted to draw them ever closer, the Dominions viewed their own substantial efforts in this pivotal conflict as a means to reevaluate the almost automatic subservience to London they so readily exhibited in the past.¹⁸

Cast in such a newly skeptical light, any British immigrants might automatically be viewed in a somewhat askance manner. An editorial in The Sunday Times of Perth sums up this position rather nicely. It reads, “the increasing number of new arrivals who are being shipped back to the Homeland as physically unfit is all the evidence required...they are bodily, and in some cases mentally, quite unsuited and unable to cope with the exigencies of the life required of them.”¹⁹ While proponents of Empire Settlement espoused the virtues of British immigration as far as rejuvenating the

¹⁸ For a further discussion of the impact of World War I on the development of a uniquely “Australian” nationalism, please see Souter, Lion and Kangaroo, especially the concluding chapter, and Dale James Blair, “‘Those Miserable Tommies’: Anti-British Sentiment in the Australian Imperial Force, 1915-1918,” in War and Society, v. 19, no. 1 (May 2001), especially pp. 85-90.

¹⁹ In “How the West is Worsted: The Unfit Migrant: Sent Out and Sent Home,” October 28, 1923, p. 4.

weakened Imperial ties and reviving a moribund postwar economy, many in British Columbia and Western Australia started to reevaluate the prevailing notion that importing Britons of all stripes was an unqualified good. Rather, they might bring with them the pathos of decline and degeneration that would threaten their own vitality at a time when their youthful vigor was under attack as never before.²⁰

The attempts by both British Columbia and Western Australia, two of the most distant frontiers both within their respective federations and of the “white” British Empire as a whole, to lure Hebrideans to resettle in their comparatively empty spaces to bolster their physical and psychological security are microcosms in many ways of the numerous contradictions inherent in the whole conceptualization of imperial resettlement. The dichotomous stereotypes and assumptions that surrounded the Hebrideans are indicative of the broader inconsistencies and bifurcated motivations that simultaneously propelled the whole program of Empire Settlement forward and helped tear it asunder. The conflicting priorities of Britain and the Dominions, the tensions between laissez-faire and excessive centralized control, the disconnect between government, capital and labor, the valuations of self-help vs. highly circumscribed and controlled situations of both schemes, the conflict between the themes of rejuvenation and permanent regression, the fight between an idiosyncratic rural ideal and the reality of the urbanized and industrialized world of the twentieth century – all of these

²⁰ “Immigration Problems,” in the West Australian, October 6, 1923, p. 9.

contradictions existed in both Empire Settlement as a whole and the experiences of these crofters within this broader social experiment.

Where the plight of the Hebrideans diverges, however, from that suffered by their “British” counterparts is that these Scots were targeted in particular, for good and for bad, specifically because of their unique position on the Social Darwinist hierarchies of the day. The failed resettlement of the Hebrideans in both British Columbia and Western Australia reveals that racist and eugenicist beliefs played as much a motivator behind the promotion of Empire Settlement, as far as these crofters were concerned, as did economic or political motivations. By the same token, the rise and fall of the schemes to redeploy these crofters also shows that the presumably immutable racial and ethnic hierarchies that motivated them turned out to be rather flexible, as stereotypes were accentuated, downplayed or outright manipulated in order to fit the prerogatives of politicians, industrialists, workers, nationalists, and the crofters and the Japanese themselves. The birth and death of both plans to recruit Hebridean crofters to British Columbia and Western Australia in the 1920s reveals a great deal about the fluidity surrounding concepts of identity and security in a very unstable time. The debates surrounding the status of the Hebridean Scots, especially vis-à-vis their “British” compatriots and the Japanese, are representative and reflective of the much wider dialogues taking place regarding the status of the British Empire both internally and on the global stage, on the changing role of race as the arbiter of last resort, and the

clashes between the Victorian and the modern ways of defining and conceiving of Empire.

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