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TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 1908

THE HINDU SITUATION.

If Professor Tejah Singh spoke for the East Indian residents of British Columbia on Sunday, when he said that the proposal to settle them in British Honduras would be absolutely rejected, then we have a situation confronting us which is not without its alarming features. Looking at it simply from the local standpoint it seems to us that the white population of the province have a grievance, no less than the Hindus. We find ourselves to the conditions, and who by reason of that fact are, in the vast majority of cases, unable to obtain work. The winter season is at hand. What will the result be? Unless they receive assistance they will endure misery and suffering to which in this age and country human beings should not be subjected.

But how, it is reasonable to ask, can adequate assistance be furnished such a number of destitute to tide them over the next four or five months? How can it be furnished by the local community? Many of our own fellow countrymen here are also in serious straits for lack of money and employment. The public will say, and who can blame them for saying it, that our destitute white population must be our first care. And the probability(Sic) is that to provide for them will exhaust our available means of supplying help.

With this situation staring us in the face we can realize very fully the injustice which was done by the government in permitting, or to put it more accurately, in encouraging the immense influx of the Japanese. Work which the Hindus might have done, is being done by the Japanese, and the Japanese will continue to do it because they do it better than the Hindus can do it. Through the immigration policy of the Dominion government we are saddled with a burden which it is unfair to ask us to bear, but which if not borne will be a sin against humanity.

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Under the circumstances is it not reasonable to place upon the federal authorities the onus of providing for these East Indians who, without aid, are bound during the months of cold and rain to starve and freeze? It will not do to say that their refusal to go to British Honduras places them outside the pale of sympathy. If the report which their delegates are alleged to have made of what awaits them there should they go, is true, they are not to be blamed for refusing.

It is impossible that we as a people should consciously doom any human beings, much less fellow subjects, to what is no better than serfdom. Existence, no matter how devoid of comfort is better when coupled with freedom, than life, such as Tejah Singh pictured that of his countrymen in Jamaica and British Honduras. But the question for us is what is the solution of the difficulty here. The federal government has the right to deport those out of work, and who therefore are a public charge. Will it do so? It has done so in the case of Englishmen both in Eastern and Western Canada who could not support themselves. But those were isolated cases. Will it undertake to deport 1500 or 2000 Indians?

Tejah Singh speaks of his people settling on farms in British Columbia and says that they hope to obtain money from an Indian bank to enable them to purchase land. There is nothing definite about this scheme and it is to be feared that the speaker was carried away by his enthusiasm when he spoke so confidently. It is a vision and a vague one at that. It is "up to" the Ottawa government to take steps in the matter, to provide against the wretchedness which is bound to result if the Hindus remain here this winter and are unable, as they will be unable, to find employment.

The charge made by Tejah Singh that the official interpreter attempted to bribe the Indian delegates to report favorably on British Honduras as a place for settlement should be regarded with caution. It is a serious accusation and one which properly enough should entail a heavy punishment on the persons making it, if it is not true. And how are we to credit it? Who would be so interested in sending these Indians to British Honduras that he would spend \$3000 in deluding them? Certainly not the interpreter. Nor can we

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credit the Dominion government with any such improper design. Is it likely the governor of Honduras or any of his officials would permit such a crime to be attempted? We think not. It is to be hoped that the charge has not been concocted to stir the Hindu popularion(Sic) here and make it a ready instrument in the hands of men whose designs not only are inimical to this country and the empire, but are hos- (rest of article not on newspaper copy)