

SIKHS TO RECEIVE AID FROM TORONTO

IN FIGHT TO HAVE FAMILIES ADMITTED

Resolution Passed by Representative Meeting—Petitions Will Be Sent to Ottawa

The matter of permitting the Sikhs in this province to bring their wives and children here is receiving considerable attention in the east, particularly in Toronto. Following is a full report from the Mail and Empire of the proceedings of a meeting held in that city which was attended by leading citizens, a brief account of which came over the wires a few days ago:

"Having heard from Dr. Sundar Singh and Rev. J. Wilkie, the present condition of the law as it affects the admission of Sikhs to Canada and the circumstances of the exclusion from Canada of the wives and children of the 4,000 Sikhs at present domiciled in the Dominion, this meeting believes that justice to fellow British subjects as well as the highest interests of the British Empire, demands immediate action to relieve conditions and hereby appoint a committee composed of J. K. Macdonald, President R. A. Falconer, Dr. Sundar Singh, Rev. Dr. J. Wilkie, John A. Paterson, K. C.; H. E. Irwin, K. C.; John Firstbrook (mover), and Thomas West (seconder), to bring these matters to public attention and take such steps as they deem advisable to the end that injustice may be removed."

Such was the resolution, that will likely prove the precursor of a public agitation in this city, passed by a coterie of the leading citizens of the city at a meeting in the Confederation Life Building, yesterday afternoon, presided over by J. K. Macdonald, Dr. Sundar Singh, of Victoria, B. C., and Rev. Dr. Thomas Wilkie, a missionary of Jhansi, India, explained the grievances of the Sikhs to the meeting. It was explained that the new immigration law, enacted by the late Laurier government, provides that Sikhs must take a "continuous route" to Canada. This provision is being interpreted by the immigration authorities at British Columbia ports to mean that Sikhs must come to Canada by one direct steamer and, as passage to Canada from India is impossible except by transshipment, this law is being manipulated to prohibit the admission of Sikhs into Canada. The authorities at the British Columbia ports have made things so irksome for the steamship lines, that the latter now refuse to issue tickets to Sikhs to Canada. Four thousand Sikhs, however, entered the Canadian gates before this law came into effect, but their wives and children have been refused entrance to the country.

Dr. Sundar Singh protested against the discrimination against the Sikhs who are required to pay a head tax of \$200 to obtain admission to Canada, whereas the Japanese are only asked for \$50, and Ruthenians, Galicians, Doukubors, Italians, Fins and other nationalities are admitted to the country on better conditions than the Sikhs, who are British subjects.

A Race of Farmers.

Dr. Sundar Singh said there was no caste, no superstition, nor idol worshipping amongst his people. They were enterprising farmers, who loved clearing the land and market gardening. He referred to the vallant service the Sikhs had rendered the British crown at Tiarh, in Thibet and Persia and other places. Their loyalty was,

wives and children, was having a serious and dangerous reaction in India, engendering amongst the Sikh regiments disloyalty and embitterment towards British government. They were not dealing simply with 4,000 men, but with 315,000,000, who were being leavened by this sense of injustice.

Immigration Problem.

President Falconer said two questions were involved. As to permitting the Sikhs to bring their wives and families into the country, the present prohibition was obviously a piece of injustice and immorality, and he thought the country could be easily moved to demand a change. As to the other question—he feared it would be very difficult to extend privileges to the Sikhs without doing so to all classes in India, and that question involved the bigger national issue of immigration. If Canada threw open wide its gates to everybody, would British Canadians be able to assimilate them and build up that type of citizenship for which they stood? He did not want to see the country overwhelmed by a world-wide wave of immigration. In taking this attitude, he held that he was not un-Christian nor un-British. It was a matter of expediency. How much moral content had they (Canadians) to assimilate an immense wave of immigration and yet retain their individuality. The United States was suffering from the bad effects of a heavy immigration which they had had difficulty in assimilating. On the other hand, he could not see why they shouldn't be as fair to people of British dominions as to people from outside the British dominions. He couldn't see why a modus vivendi couldn't be arrived at by the Canadian government and the Indian government that would solve the situation. Regarding the Sikhs already in Canada, they should be allowed to have their families. If they took that right away from them they would be opening the flood-gates for all sorts of immorality.

H. E. Irwin, K. C., declared that public opinion must be focused at once on such gross injustice. He referred to the case of a Sikh who had insisted upon the right to bring in his wife and child, and when the crown launched a case against him furnished \$2,000 bail and prepared to fight the issue. But before the case came to trial, the prosecution withdrew its charge and the Sikh was allowed to have his wife and family. It looks from that, said Mr. Irvine, that the administration of British Columbia is operated for the purpose of catching votes. His statement had not the party tinge, because this was an expediency common to both parties. It seemed to him these Sikhs were being kept out, although the law did not justify it.

John A. Paterson, K. C., also thought it might be dangerous to open Canada even to Indian immigration, but he asserted that the Sikhs now in the country should be allowed their wives and families. He suggested that a committee be formed to consider the best way to proceed.

Thomas West said that in all his travels he had not seen a better type than the Sikhs, and he was prepared to let them come in. A wise Providence over-ruled all labor unions, and while he conceded that there might be temporarily cheaper labor, he believed it would become scattered and no evil effects would be felt.

Secretaries Will Petition.

As a result of the conference held about a week ago of the various missionary board secretaries with Dr. Sundar Singh, the leader of the Hindu deputation from British Columbia, a committee was appointed to draw up a petition to the Ottawa government, asking for the removal of the restrictions on the families of Hindus entering the Dominion. The petition was accordingly drafted and forwarded.

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Matter of Continuous Journey by the Way of Suez and the Atlantic.

The Hindu question gave rise to an animated and prolonged discussion at the meeting of the Toronto Ministerial Association last week.

On the motion of Rev. Dr. R. N. Burns, seconded by the Rev. H. A. MacPherson, the meeting unanimously decided, "That in view of statements made by members of the committee which presented the case of the Sikhs to this association, setting forth a change in the situation, the matter be indefinitely laid upon the table."

All of which was not done without considerable uproar, says the Toronto Telegram.

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The Ministerial Association was not a unit by any means.

Dr. Wilkie pleaded for the admittance of the Hindu's wives, and asked if the labor party of this country, 120,000 in all, was to antagonize 350,000,000 British subjects. He told how a congress in India had been whipped into an anti-British passion because of the Exclusion Act of Australia, the South African states, and British Columbia.

"Let Them Fight."

"The labor party," he said, "had threatened to fight the church on the subject."

"Let them fight," came a ministerial chorus.

E. E. Scott was one of the opponents. He spoke against the introduction of the wives of the Hindus into Canada from a moral standpoint, emphatically declaring that labor had a right to be heard before any decision on the subject could be arrived at. He quoted the figures of Mr. H. H. Stevens, M. P., that 2500 of the resident Hindus had no wives at all, pointing out that it was interference in the affairs of British Columbia, and that the present Provincial Government, with Premier McBride, had pledged themselves to a white labor policy.

A Crimean veteran, Mr. Willson, tried to get a hearing, but was "swamped" as an outsider. He was told to sit down and stay down.

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Regarding the moral and physical status of the Sikhs, Dr. Singh referred to a statement made by Colonel Davidson, who employs 350 Sikhs in the Fraser mills near New Westminster, that the Sikhs made the finest workmen and were cleaner than other classes of immigrants.

Rev. Dr. Thomas Wilkie declared that in refusing the 4,000 Sikhs in Canada their wives and families, Canadians were allowing immoral conditions to develop that they professed to desire to eradicate and to avoid. They should not forget that to the Sikhs they owed much of the success that attended the British army during the Indian mutiny. The Sikhs made soldiers equal to any the world had yet seen. If they had stood side by side with them as comrades-in-arms, should they not be allowed to enjoy the privileges of British subjects in time of peace. British government stood for equality to all men. Again, the family relationship was a sacred thing with the Sikhs, and the refusal to admit Sikhs to Canada and to allow the 4,000 Sikhs in Canada to have their

whelped by a world-wide wave of immigration. In taking this attitude, he held that he was not un-Christian nor un-British. It was a matter of expediency. How much moral content had they (Canadians) to assimilate an immense wave of immigration and yet retain their individuality. The United States was suffering from the bad effects of a heavy immigration which they had had difficulty in assimilating. On the other hand, he could not see why they shouldn't be as fair to people of British dominions as to people from outside the British dominions. He couldn't see why a modus vivendi couldn't be arrived at by the Canadian government and the Indian government that would solve the situation. Regarding the Sikhs already in Canada, they should be allowed to have their families. If they took that right away from them they would be opening the flood-gates for all sorts of immorality.

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"The matter," said H. E. Irwin, K. C., "is probably out of the hands of the association, as word from Ottawa had come to the effect that if the Hindus' wives and children came from Bombay through the Suez Canal, across the railways and through to Toronto, according to the Immigration Act, nothing and nobody could stop them."

Interviewed with reference to statements published as coming from Mr. H. H. Stevens, M. P., Dr. Sunder Singh said: "I have got a telegram from my people advising me to stay here and see the matter through. The 300 Sikhs, whom Mr. Stevens quoting as leaving British Columbia, have only gone to India to bring over their families. They are only awaiting the result of a test case, and if necessary the amendment of the law before returning to the province."