

[047]

Correspondence

THE HINDU QUESTION. A REPLY TO MR. BIRD.

To the editor of The Sun:—My attention has been recently drawn to letters from Mr. Bird and others on this most important and vital question. Will you kindly allow me to occupy a column or so of your valuable space in which to point out the weakness of the argument brought forward by those who favor unrestricted Hindu immigration. Those writers' tender sympathies go out toward Mr. Gurdit Singh and his deluded followers, and they evidently regard them as poor persecuted martyrs to whom a gross and crying injustice is being done. Now what are the real facts? Briefly these. For nearly three years the labor market in British Columbia has been in an increasingly congested condition. Thousands of men of all nationalities have been walking the streets of the cities and tramping hundreds of miles through the country seeking the means of supporting themselves and their families. Driven by sheer force of circumstances, the federal government passed orders in council forbidding the importation of unskilled labor into British Columbia until the situation improved.

Gurdit Singh knew this or had every opportunity of knowing it, and if in the face of those circumstances over which neither the government nor the immigration authorities had absolutely any control, Gurdit Singh chooses to load up a ship with his countrymen and bring them here in hope of enriching themselves, Gurdit Singh is to blame and no one else. If in broad daylight the Komagata Maru had run stem on to Cape Flattery, neither Gurdit Singh or Mr. Bird could reasonably expect Cape Flattery to move out of the way and make a flattering excuse for being there. And yet this is precisely what those gentlemen are attempting.

Mr. Bird says we have "forced" ourselves into other countries without consulting the wishes of the people of those countries. Certainly! We "forced" ourselves here without consulting the Siwash, otherwise there would have been tall timber standing where Mr. Bird's commodious offices are located, and not one of Mr. Bird's East Indian clients would have dreamt of breaking into the solitudes. But I think it would puzzle a cleverer lawyer than even Mr. Bird to find a place on the globe that has not benefitted by this so-called "forcing."

Why, for instance, is the population of India increasing at such a rate as it is?

1st. The British by reclaiming vast arid tracts of country by irrigation and introducing modern methods of cultivation are gradually lessening the frequency of the periodical famines.

2nd. By establishing in the face of strenuous opposition and prejudice improved sanitary conditions in the cities, are slowly but surely stamping out the plague.

3rd. By keeping a strong hand on the native rulers and fanatical sects they are preventing internal wars, and by policing the northern frontier they are protecting the peaceable lowlanders from the incursions of the Himalayan freebooting tribesmen.

And in return the Hindus are "politely" knocking at the door of a self-governing dependency of the British crown and demanding that the laws be altered to suit their convenience in order that they may swarm in and crowd out the white population. If this is a sample of their politeness may we be delivered from their impudence.

Has Mr. Bird or any of his sympathisers worked on the railroad in drenching rain with the skin frozen from his fingers handling ties and steel rails, etc., for 17 cents per hour, or waited anxiously on the wharf for the arrival of a steamer in order that he might work fourteen or fifteen consecutive hours at 20 cents per hour; or tugged and strained at roots, stumps and boulders until his muscles nearly cracked and his veins swelled almost to the point of bursting in the struggle against Oriental competition? The writer of this letter has, and therefore he has unbounded sympathy for his countrymen who are situated as he was twenty years ago, but not a grain for a crowd of Asiatic adventurers who are trying to force themselves into the country and starve out the wives and children of those who are struggling against fearful odds for

IS HUNGER STRIKE REAL FANATICISM OR ONLY PRETENDED?

Hindus on Ship Reject Food
Sent From Shore and Say
They Will Not Eat Until
Allowed Ashore.

No fresh features in the Hindu emigrant situation arose yesterday to break the dullness of a rainy Sunday afternoon on the waterfront. Apparently the emigrants marooned on the ship are still hunger striking. At about 9 o'clock on Saturday night a large quantity of provisions, in which fresh fruits and vegetables were included, was sent out to the ship by some city Hindus. The supplies were taken out by the immigration launch, but Gurdit Singh, the leader, rejected them, saying, "I and my brethren are determined to die if we are not allowed to land. We will not eat." One of the Hindus on the ship threatened to shoot Mr. Malcolm Reid, the superintendent of immigration.

The Hindus on the steamer are trying to evoke pity by a hunger strike, but it is difficult to find out whether the hunger strike is real or a pretense. Nobody appears to know whether the Hindus have a supply of food or not. The immigration officers who have been aboard the vessel recently say that the Hindus have not the appearance of starving men. The religious devotions are still going on and prayers arise constantly from the Komagata Maru.

H. H. STEVENS MOVES FOR EXCLUSION OF ASIATICS SAVE JAPS

(Sun's Leased W. A. P. Wire.)
OTTAWA, June 7.—Mr. H. H. Stevens, M.P. for Vancouver, gave notice to the house last night of an amendment to the immigration act, providing for the exclusion of all natives or naturalized citizens or immigrants coming to Canada from any country in Asia north of the 50th parallel, north latitude.

The amendment excludes from its provinces the citizens of any country with which the government of Canada has an agreement regarding immigration.

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Malcolm Reid

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Mr. Bird says that as a Canadian he is thoroughly ashamed of our immigration department and their methods. I reply that it is a good thing for the country that Mr. Bird does not find the head of that department "a Reid shaken with the wind," and judging from the way Mr. Bird is trying by every means in his power to hamper those gentlemen in the conscientious performance of their duty, Canadians have no particular reason to be proud of him, and if he sees fit to don a turban, take the name of "Songh Birdhi Singh" and sail away on the Komagata Maru, we will try to bear our loss with dignified Christian resignation and fortitude.

FRANK L. VOSPER.

South Vancouver, June 6, 1914.

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