

Landscapes of Injustice

Landscapes of Injustice Research Collective Working Paper #5

Record Group: People In-Between

by Nicole Yakashiro & the LoI Research Collective

Prepared March 2018

Summary of the records and why they matter:

The Government Records cluster defines “people in-between” as the witnesses, participants, professionals, bodies, and organizations that are frequently overlooked within historical narratives of Japanese-Canadian dispossession. They are the actors that intercede *in the space between the state and Japanese Canadians*. By centering this “in-between” position, we—the public and historians—may better understand and historicize the dispossession as more than a binary relation between the state and Japanese Canadians, and rather, as a multi-directional and multi-vocal process, involving numerous, varied, and complex bodies. This alternative framework, in effect, contends with how abuses of power and complicity, but also resistance, are found in the ambiguous, “middle” places often elided when discussing historical injustice. Interrogating these places is critical to understanding the mechanisms through which the dispossession occurred, and to understanding the specific on-the-ground practices that facilitated and intervened in the mistreatment of Japanese Canadians. The *Landscapes of Injustice* archive contains government records from several repositories that account for both the diversity and shared positionality of “people in-between”. From these records, we suggest just some of the types of positions these actors occupied:

- (1) *agents and officers*: these include real estate agents, appraisers, Soldier Settlement Board field agents, and RCMP officers utilized by government bodies to carry out and/or legitimize dispossession protocol, but who could also convey their own perspectives that diverged from state objectives (see Primary source example 1);ⁱ
- (2) *lawyers and politicians*: who both defended and persecuted, legally and publicly, Japanese Canadians during the period of internment, dispossession, and deportation;ⁱⁱ
- and (3) *organizations and businesses*: such as auctioneers, workers’ unions, churches, and non-profits that aided in the government’s dispossession and deportation policies, supported Japanese Canadians, or were positioned somewhere in-between these two positions (see Primary source example 2).ⁱⁱⁱ

A note on in-between themes:

Though these actors have diverse roles, we see them as connected by virtue of their “in-betweenness”. We suggest thinking about their roles *thematically*. A number of themes, or common modes of participation, recur in government records concerning people in-between: *mediation* (to negotiate between the state and Japanese Canadians), *facilitation* (to enable and make-possible state policies), *authorization* (to legitimize state procedure), *bearing witness* (to acknowledge, accept or call into question), or *complication* (to trouble dispossession procedure).

Primary source examples:

Below are two telling examples of how in-between actors were complicit and implicated in the dispossession of Japanese Canadians. (See endnotes for more related sources.)

- (1) **Lt. Col. Oscar Orr:** *“I think that proper representation should be made to someone to protect any future repatriates from having the greater part of their money taken away from them.”*

Lieutenant Colonel Oscar Orr was employed by the Canadian War Crimes Division Detachment as officer-in-charge and liaison for the Department of Labor, the department that facilitated the “voluntary repatriation,” or deportation of approximately 4000 people of Japanese descent (many of whom were Canadian citizens) to Japan beginning in 1946 under the authority of Order-in-Council P.C. 7355. Orr sent a number of reports to the Departments of National Defence and Labour from Japan between 1946 and 1947, detailing the conditions and progress of the program as he handled administrative tasks and received deportees from Canada. He managed issues of baggage and property loss or damage, and frequently wrote of the precarious position (financially and health-wise) of both individuals and families. He forwarded suggestions to the government to improve the process based on his observations and conversations with deportees. In this, Orr *mediated* between the deportees and the state, *witnessed* the injuries caused by the program, and simultaneously, *facilitated* and participated in the dispossession.

Orr’s reports and correspondence give us a different look at the property of Japanese Canadians during this time. They trace specific forms of dispossession and displacement within the broader narrative of Japanese Canadian history during the 1940s, but outside the forced-sales by the Custodian of Enemy Property. His accounts overwhelmingly demonstrate the dramatic losses incurred by those exiled from Canada, a place many considered home. Most persistently, Orr wrote to Ottawa of the alarming financial costs of the deportees due to the exchange rate. Many people were “losing about 80 cents on each dollar.”

See Appendix for sources.

- (2) **Auctioneers:** *“...the best market I had ever experienced.”*

Once the Office of the Custodian of Enemy Property decided upon a policy of dispossession in 1943, they were confronted with the task of carrying out the forced-sales in practice. Who would do the actual selling of property, furniture, and belongings on-the-ground? And who would come to profit from these sales? Along with real estate agents, automobile brokers, and other property sales people, auctioneers became conduits through which the state dispossessed Japanese Canadians. Hired by the Office of the Custodian of Enemy Property (and receiving approximately 10% commission), auctioneers placed advertisements in widely circulated newspapers in the 1940s, garnering a substantial number of attendees to regular weekly auctions in both urban and rural areas where Japanese Canadians had previously built their homes and communities.

Charged with revealing the scope of loss from property sales, the Bird Commission, or Royal Commission on Japanese Properties (1947-1950), met with these businesses. The records from the commission contain detailed testimony from a number of them, including (but not limited to): Thompson & Binnington Limited (Vancouver and Steveston), Charles

Spencer Pallot (Maple Ridge), and William Willard (Vancouver). Their accounts reveal much about the nature of the forced sales of Japanese-Canadian-owned property in the hands of actors in-between. It was, to many of these auctioneers, a lucrative market—with plenty of goods to sell during a time of shortage, at low costs, and to curious and swift buyers. In even their most mundane responsibilities, such as strategically displaying items for sale, auctioneers *facilitated* and indeed, *authorized* the dispossession’s injustice. It was only customary that property would be sold for less than the ceiling price if no knowledge of the item’s history could be provided to the purchaser. It was expected that “cultural” pieces, like Japanese dishes or steam cookers, would be sold at marginal prices or disposed of due to low demand among a predominantly white population. If products were damaged or worn (even if damage was caused from the Custodian’s mishandling), they would bring in less profit. In effect, auctioneers naturalized the sale of Japanese-Canadian-owned property for so little due to “normal” market protocol—but this was not a “normal” market.

See Appendix for sources.

Appendix:

(1) Oscar Orr reports and correspondence

Oscar Orr to the Department of National Defence, for the Department of Labour, 1946
December 17

Find complete file on Zotero: CA > LAC > RG27 > Volume 669 > File 23-2-17-20: Japanese Division. Segregation and Repatriation. Reception of Canadian Repatriates in Japan. 1946 - 1947/06. > .pdf page 27

"...I think that proper representation should be made to someone to protect any future repatriates from having the greater part of their money taken away from them by either the American Government or the Japanese Government by way of the exchange and banking regulations, the plain fact of the matter being that the money with which the Japanese repatriate leaves Canada shrinks in transmission to a small fraction of its real value, then on top of this, all except 1,000 yen per head is placed in a frozen bank account by the Japanese Government, this latter expression meaning that while the depositor gets the bank book showing a credit, he cannot withdraw money except at a specified monthly rate, this specified monthly rate being considerably less than what is required to live on, and I am not sure whether they are allowed to draw it out in addition to any money they may be earning."

"While this is strictly not a military matter, I have been in somewhat close touch with the people, and know many of them personally in fact just received a letter from a former employee, telling of the difficulties in obtaining food, etc, and I think the information should be passed along."

TOK-1-10

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GENERAL HEADQUARTERS
SUPREME COMMANDER FOR THE ALLIED POWERS

TOKYO, Japan
17 Dec 46

Secretary,
Department of National Defence,
OTTAWA, Ontario, Canada.

Labour

ATTENTION: War Crimes Investigation Section

Japanese Repatriates from Canada.
Baggage of Sieso YONEMURA
For Department of Labour.

2. Reference unnumbered telegram apparently dated 11 Dec regarding lost baggage. This wire is from the Department of National Defence, but no doubt had its origin in the Department of Labour.

3. A search has been made at Kurihama where the baggage was all stored for a short time, and this baggage is not there. It is likely that other friends going to the same district arranged to have the baggage sent to them. Inquiries are under way. Asajiro YOSHIOKA, the consignee mentioned, claims that he was told nothing about any of this baggage other than that he was the nominal consignee.

4. This man may consider himself very fortunate that he decided not to repatriate, and if he never recovers his baggage he will still be a great deal better off than those who have returned. In this connection I think that proper representation should be made to someone to protect any future repatriates from having the greater part of their money taken from them by either the American Government or the Japanese Government by way of the exchange and banking regulations, the plain fact of the matter being that the money with which the Japanese repatriate leaves Canada shrinks in transmission to a small fraction of its real value, then on top of this, all except 1,000 yen per head is placed in a frozen bank account by the Japanese Government, this latter expression meaning that while the depositor gets the bank book showing a credit, he cannot withdraw money except at a specified monthly rate, this specified monthly rate being considerably less than what is required to live on, and I am not sure whether they are allowed to draw it out in addition to any money they may be earning.

5. I occasionally come in contact with some of these repatriates, and also hear from them by letter. A great many of them are having a hard time to get enough food, others have been fortunate enough to get employment with the army of occupation, etc., but even their employment does not help much because they are only permitted to draw a certain part of their salary in cash, the rest is taken into frozen bank accounts again. As the Japanese have already had one experience with these-called "frozen bank account" they now refrain from using banks any more than they can help.

6. While it may be said that what happens to the repatriate after he comes to this country is no concern of the Canadian Government, my understanding is that many of the minors are Canadian citizens and from what they say have every intention of maintaining this right in the future if the opportunity permits. Secondly, it would seem that at the present time Canadian funds are being used to subsidize either the U.S. or Japanese Governments. One fact is outstanding, namely that a greater part of the money that leaves Canada does not in effect benefit the repatriate.

7. While this is strictly not a military matter, I have been in somewhat close touch with the people, and know many of them personally in fact just received a letter from a former employee, telling of the difficulties in obtaining food, etc, and I think the information should be passed along.

Oscar Orr
(O. Orr) Lt-Col
Officer in Charge
Canadian War Crimes Liaison Detachment
Japanese Theatre

Oscar Orr to the Department of Labour, 1946 July 4

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REPORT ON ARRIVAL OF JAPANESE REPATRIATES FROM CANADA
R.S.S. General Meigs

Department of Labour,
OTTAWA, Ontario, Canada.

TOKYO, Japan
4 July 46

The ship arrived 28 June 1946 at Uraga, a port on Tokyo Bay about 40 or 50 miles from Tokyo. Passengers came ashore by lighter and went by truck to Kurihama Camp, one of the group of camps forming 8th U.S. Army Repatriation Centre. The passengers were all in camp by about noon and the baggage by 2200 hours.

The mental patients were in charge of Mr. F.S. Pollard from the Provincial Mental Hospital at Essondale. They were immediately removed to the National Hospital at NOBI, a few miles from Kurihama. Mr. Pollard handed me the vouchers and I gave him a receipt. The personal effects of the mental patients were handed by Mr. Pollard to Japanese Customs Officers and a receipt taken. It was ascertained that the Japanese Customs Officer was authorized to receive the articles. Names of patients whose vouchers were handed to me have already been cabled and I now have arrangements under way to handle their funds as directed. One mental patient, Kitagawa, was able to travel and will be allowed to go in care of his wife but may not be able to travel on the same train with the other groups. Two others, N. Motowaki and T. Ozaki, made application through friends to be allowed to proceed to their homes. I accordingly made tentative arrangements to provide them with funds and to attend at Kurihama and Nobu yesterday with the money. Early yesterday advice was received that the Japanese Medical authorities did not consider them fit to travel. It was hard to find friends or relatives of the mental patients. The members of the group showed a common trait, viz, reluctance to claim relationship or close acquaintance with the insane. Some of the hand baggage of the patients became lost owing to being placed by passengers with the cargo baggage contrary to instructions. With the exception of two pieces, it is now located, and I have no doubt that the rest will turn up when a final check is made. One other repatriate is thought to have become insane 30 June. He was accompanied by his wife, and Japanese authorities took charge.

Passengers reported a rough foggy voyage, some sickness (appendicitis) and one birth.

Some inoculations were necessary and were commenced 29 June.

There was some trouble about a demand for payment for excess baggage on the Japanese Railroads, but this was adjusted. No payment required.

The Bank of Japan commenced paying about 1500 on the 29th, and continued until finished on the 30th. Two of the older people, Utsunomiya Hitare and Ichiki Hikohe, lost their No. 1 certificates. They had no money or relatives and I made arrangements with the Bank of Japan to pay them the 1,000 yen per head after they were sure that the certificates had not been presented. This was done. I do not anticipate that this will involve the Government in any extra expense, but it may take some time to straighten out. Both these men were old and somewhat helpless. They appeared to have lost some mental alertness. It might be possible in future to place such people or their possessions in charge of someone in full possession of all faculties.

The Japanese Bank pays only 1,000 yen per head, giving a certificate for the balance. This caused some complaint, but explanations that they would receive cheques for the balance seemed to satisfy. The rate of exchange is very inequitable and has the effect of mulcting these people of about 50 - 75% of their money. While the repatriates understand the arrangement, they are somewhat shocked when they realize the situation.

This draft of repatriates were very poorly organized internally. There was a large committee with all the drawbacks of that form of organization. One man, a Mr. Sato, was of assistance and furnished me with a good deal of information I required, but the rest of the committee was a washout. Generally the party was inferior in many ways to those on the Marine Angel. The party of the Marine Angel was tightly organized under Mr. K. Tsuyuki. He showed great capacity for getting things done and overcoming small difficulties. He was good enough to come down from his home to meet the General Meigs party and was invaluable in helping, but

"The rate of exchange is very inequitable and has the effect of mulcting these people about 50 - 75% of their money. While the repatriates understand the arrangements, they are somewhat shocked when they realize the situation."

not stay more than one afternoon.

The baggage again was not packed strongly enough in some cases. I noticed in particular that durable articles such as wash tubs would be packed in stout timber framing while fragile articles like bicycles and sewing machines would be crated in little better than laths. I also notice that the repats are bringing with them an enormous number of things that would be classed as junk in any country. There is plenty of that here now, and I strongly advise all future repats to concentrate on bringing food and clothes. Food, clothes, tobacco and cigarettes, especially food in concentrated form such as dried fruits, raisins, powdered milk will all be helpful during the transition period when they will all find present Japanese food both unpalatable and insufficient.

During both the "Marine Angel" and "General Heige" landings I received from all American personnel involved every assistance, co-operation and hospitality.

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(C. Orr) Lt-Col
Officer in Charge
Canadian War Crimes Liaison Detachment
Japanese Theatre

Acting as Liaison on behalf of
the Department of Labour

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Oscar Orr to the Department of Labour, 1946 June 20

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REPORT ON ARRIVAL OF JAPANESE REPATRIATES FROM CANADA

669 ex Marine Angel, 1 born during voyage

20 June 46

The ship arrived at Uraya, a port on the Tokyo Bay about 45 miles from Tokyo, at 1330 hours, Saturday, 15 June 1946. There is no wharfrage at this port, ships load and unload by lighter. It was arranged to commence the unloading on Monday 17 June. However, after waiting all day and unloading some of the baggage, it was decided that the sea was still too rough to transfer women and children into the open landing boats. On Tuesday, 18 June, the ship was moved over behind the breakwater where the water was much smoother, but this entailed a correspondingly longer trip in the landing craft. The passengers all left the ship about a quarter to 11, and duly arrived at the reception centre, about a mile from the landing point. The delay of a day was a benefit, because on Monday the Japanese had no fuel to supply trucks, but on Tuesday some gasoline was obtained and transportation by truck was supplied from the landing slip to the reception centre for the women, children and the very old.

The repatriation centre at Uraya consists of six large camps at various points around the peninsula, and a central reception point capable of handling and processing as many as 10,000 persons per day. The centre is under the command of Lt-Col King of the 8th Army, and all steps such as inoculation, delousing, customs examination, payment, discharge, bathing, etc. are carried out on a mass production assembly line system. Everything runs smoothly and there was no hitch in any of the arrangements. The whole operation is carried out by the Japanese civilian authorities under the control and supervision of the U.S. Army.

The Canadian repatriates were not required to go through all the stages imposed on returning troops, for example, their baggage was not examined by the customs, nor was any disinfecting resorted to. They were, however, each given a typhus and cholera inoculation on landing, and will be kept in the camps until tomorrow, when arrangements have been made to give them all railway tickets to their destinations. The railway station is about a mile from the camp and the baggage is now all in camp and will be transported to the railway station by truck.

The unloading of the baggage was a big task. The men among the repatriates worked three shifts until 6 o'clock yesterday morning getting it up. It was hardly possible to commence the payment until after the inoculation was over, but the Bank of Japan had a staff of four, and payment continued until about nine o'clock on the 18th, and at five o'clock on the 19th was thought to be all finished, but the Bank had to make a final check to be sure of this.

There was no sickness on the voyage except a considerable amount of sea sickness, and one female passenger was a mental case and was handled as such.

A good many of the passengers were personally acquainted with me, and they said they wished to express their thanks to the Captain and crew of the ship for the kindness they had received.

While they all understood the arrangements about exchange, some of them were rather shocked to find that the official rate of 13 1/2 yen per dollar was less than 1/3 of what the dollar is worth on the local markets. A loaf of rationed bread made of a mixture of barley, wheat, rice polishings, potatoes, ground silk worms, etc. costs 2 yen 10 sen per loaf (1 kilo). Rice of second quality costs from 2 yen 10 sen to 2 yen 30 sen per kilo. Fish costs from 2 to 5 yen per pound.

The majority of the younger people, especially those in their teens were obviously depressed and all desirous of returning as soon as possible. So far they have seen nothing of the desolation of Japan, and it was probably their contact with Japanese food that accentuated this feeling. Most of them in the teen age group were unable to eat the food supplied.

It will be seen from the above that the arrangements made

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by the Canadian Government worked out smoothly, and so far no one has made any serious complaint.

The following points are submitted for consideration in case any other shipments are being sent:

(1) The baggage receives pretty severe handling from the Japanese workmen. I would impress on all passengers that they should pack their baggage as strongly as possible, and that each group should be supplied with two or three hammers and plenty of suitable nails for repairing any damaged boxes, etc. Sewing machines especially should be packed more securely than some of them on the last shipment.

(2) Owing to the food situation in Japan, I think they should bring as much food with them as possible.

(3) The list of repatriates should be sent so as to arrive here ahead of the shipment. The list which the Finance people should have had has not arrived yet, but they paid on the certificates.

(4) Some arrangement should be made to allow these people to send at least one message back to Canada on arrival here. At present, there is no method by which civilians in Japan can send mail to Canada, and I received a great many requests for information on this point. If this is considered proper, I have no doubt arrangements at this end could be made for one letter to be sent through this Detachment.

(5) Most of the children were born in Canada and have never been in Japan. I received a good many enquiries from teen agers as to their status. I would suggest that they be told exactly what the position is before they leave, because I was unable to give them ~~any~~ information on this point, not knowing what changes, if any, may have been made in the law recently.

cel
(O. Orr) Lt-Col

Oscar Orr to the Department of National Defence, 1946 June 26 with news clippings
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Army To Use New Yen For Personnel Here

By UNITED PRESS

A new military-type yen currency will be issued soon to American forces in Japan, Korea and Okinawa in an effort to control the flow of money to the United States, it was announced yesterday.

Col. Harold S. Ruth, AFPAC fiscal director, disclosed that more money is being sent to the United States by American forces than is being drawn through payrolls.

There is no official rate of exchange on Japanese yen although the yen has been pegged 15 to 1 as a matter of military convenience since shortly after the occupation began. Economists have given private estimates that the true value of the yen might be 70 to 1 or an even higher ratio to the American dollar.

The new currency will not be legal tender among the Japanese.

On a day to be announced as "Conversion Day," all military and authorized personnel will present the yen they have on hand at that time in exchange for the new-type currency. Thereafter Japanese yen will not be converted although the new issue may be exchanged for Japanese yen at any time in order to permit purchase of Japanese goods.

CONSTITUTION HIT: Shidehara

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS
SUPREME COMMANDER FOR THE ALLIED POWERS

TOKYO, Japan
26 June 46

Secretary,
Department of National Defence,
OTTAWA, Ontario, Canada.

ATTN: War Crimes Investigation Section

Japanese Repatriates from Canada

The enclosed clipping is for the Department of Labor and indicates the losses incurred by Japanese Repatriates on the present rate of exchange of 13 1/2 yen for 1 Canadian Dollar, i.e., they are losing about 80¢ on each dollar.

Barron
(O. Orr) Lt-Col
Officer in Charge
Canadian War Crimes Liaison Detachment
Japanese Theatre

Encl.

"The enclosed clipping is for the Department of Labor and indicates the losses incurred by Japanese Repatriates on the present rate of exchange of 13 1/2 yen for 1 Canadian dollar, i.e., they are losing about 80 cents on each dollar."

(2) Auctioneers testimony and related documents

Testimony of Francis Edward Binnington of Thompson & Binnington Limited for the Bird Commission Proceedings (General Evidence), 1948 December 6

Find complete file on Zotero: CA > LAC > RG33-69 > Volume 76 > File: General Evidence (Dec. 1-6 1948) > .pdf pages 283-88 (Note: This is only a selection of his complete testimony, see the file, .pdf pages 275-308, for more.)

983
F.E. Binnington,
In Chief.

attend those sales?

A Yes, sir.

Q And in what capacity? A. I was cashier.

Q At all the sales held by Thompson?

A Yes, sir.

Q As cashier, what were your duties during the auction? A. I would collect the cash for the sales; all the small items it was cash at the fall of the hammer. The larger

10 items were charged temporarily until the invoices were made out.

Q In what part of the room would you be when the auction was held?

A I would be right in front of the auctioneer.

Q As such, would you have a full view of the auction hall? A. Oh yes.

Q You were telling us a few moments ago as to the manner in which the goods were laid out. Would you kindly tell his lordship in some generality

20 as to what procedure was followed as to the display of the goods?

A Well, as I mentioned before, the goods were spread across the auction floor, different piles. We had men specially go and pick out the items as to the best advantage of sale. The shoddy stuff, the kitchen utensils, small utensils were put in cartons, and of course, anything of reasonable value would be kept by itself.

Q Would you say there was a reasonable chance for

30 the public to observe the items for sale?

"...the goods were spread across the auction floor, different piles. We had men specially go and pick out the items as to the best advantage of sale. The shoddy stuff, the kitchen utensils, small utensils were put in cartons, and of course, anything of reasonable value would be kept by itself."

A Yes.

Q Following up his lordship's question did you have a policy in displaying the articles here vary from your normal policy with respect to auction sales?

10 A I would say yes to that question, for this reason that the late Mr. Thompson was very careful in getting the cartons and showing everything the cartons contained. He took a lot of time doing that, much more than the average auctioneer would.

Q Do I gather that there were some items made up into cartons there?

A Correct, sir.

Q How would that be done?

A The man that was sent down to do that work had years of experience and would use his own judgment.

20 Q Was there any display of goods prior to the auction sale?
A. No, sir.

Q What hour in the morning was the auction room opened?

A Well, I used to get down about ten o'clock. I don't know what time it opened.

Q At what time was the public admitted?

A Well, there were usually a few there when I got down there at ten.

Q What time did the sale commence?

A 10.30 to say a quarter to 11.

30 Q From your observation could you tell whether or not the members of the public examined the goods

prior to the commencement of the sale?

A The larger goods, yes.

THE COMMISSIONER: Q; When, on the day of the auction?

A Yes, the day of the auction.

MR. BRAIDWOOD: Q: What can you tell us about the attendance at the auctions, Mr. Binnington?

A We had very, very good attendance at the auctions, extremely good.

10 Q Can you say in rough figures how many people would attend the average auction?

A On Powell Street I would estimate 300 at a sale at least.

Q How did that number correspond with the number who might be attending one of your private auction sales, that is your business auction sales?

20 A. Well, the bailiff sales --- it would depend on a great deal the class of merchandise selling. If you were selling out a confectionery store, you would get quite a good crowd. If you were selling manufactured articles for some trade, such as large quantities of bolts of clothing and that, you can get buyers if you handle that quantity of sales.

Q In those Japanese sales, what would be your opinion of the number of people who came. Was it a good attendance, fair or poor attendance?

A A Good attendance.

30 Q Do you know what class of person attended the auctions of the Japanese goods in general?

"In those Japanese sales, what would be your opinion of the number of people who came. Was it good attendance, fair or poor attendance?

... A Good attendance.

F.E.Binnington,
In Chief.

A The working class and some second-hand dealers and oh, you take the radiomen would come for radios, piano men for pianos, and --

Q Go ahead.

A Anyone that was interested in that class of merchandise we were selling there would be a representative of each merchant there.

Q Did Mr. Thompson conduct the auctions himself?

A Yes.

10 Q What have you to say as to the manner in which he conducted auctions?

A I considered he was a very good. Understand, he only had one auction prior to starting those sales and for the first couple of sales he was nervous. After that he worked up and was a real good auctioneer.

Q What do you say about the bidding. Was it competitive bidding?

A Very much so.

20 Q What would be your opinion based on your experience of the results of the sales from the point of view of active selling and of the values obtained?

A. Oh, they were excellent all the way through.

THE COMMISSIONER: Q: These again would you make a comparison between the sales of Japanese goods by auction and the ordinary sales?

A They were very much better your lordship, for the reason there were so many people demanding goods at that time; wanting goods; so many people coming

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"...would you make a comparison between the sales of Japanese goods by auction and the ordinary sales?

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F.E. Binnington,
In Chief.

to the city and there were good payrolls and they all had lots of money.

MR. BRAIDWOOD: Q: Do I gather from your answer to his lordship's question that you thought the results of the Japanese sales were better results than with the other sales?

A Yes, sir.

MR. BRAIDWOOD: I am sorry. Did I interrupt your lordship?

10 THE COMMISSIONER: No, I got the point that I wanted.

MR. BRAIDWOOD: Q: You have just indicated there was quite a good market for goods at this time?

A Unquestionably.

Q Would you say that market was better than you had observed for some time, or what would be your observation on it?

A I would say that the price was better.

Q And to what do you attribute this change in the market?

20 A. I just mentioned there were a lot of people coming in. There was a scarcity in some lines. Consequently there was a good demand for them.

Q Now insofar as the auctions that you held in Vancouver were concerned, what would be your opinion as to the type and quality and class of the goods offered for auction?

A Well, my general opinion was that the household goods -- the radios and pianos and sewing machines and ranges would be fairly good merchandise, but the general run of the stuff, the beds and tables

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"Would you say that market was better than you had observed for some time, or what would be your observation on it?"

I would say that the price was better."

F.E. Binnington,
In Chief.

and cupboards were very medium .

Q You are telling us there were different classes of merchandise offered?

A Yes.

Q What did you observe with regard to the saleability of the different classes?

A Everything went well. You could sell anything in those days. There were very few items did not go.

10 THE COMMISSIONER: Bring out what the situation was as to fixed prices, ceilings and so forth?

THE WITNESS: I might add, if I may, that there were a few things at the sales did not go well, Japanese crockery and Japanese ceremonies -- what we call -- I don't know what they call them -- they went cheap because the average Canadian did not want them.

MR. BRAIDWOOD: Q: Now, Mr. Binnington, were there any reserve bids at those sales?

A To the extent that there were -- that the ceiling
20 prizes were put on certain merchandise. That was considered to be a reserve bid.

Q Now were there government ceiling prices in the existence of all your sales?

A I answered that -- latterly there were anyway.

THE COMMISSIONER: Q: In general would it be your impression that your sales were always subject to ceiling?
A. I would not like to answer that because I don't know. Thompson looked after all that.

30 MR. BRAIDWOOD: Q: Do you know whether or not the

"I might add, if I say, that there were a few things at the sales [that] did not go well, Japanese crockery and Japanese ceremonies -- what we call -- I don't know what they call them -- they went cheap because the average Canadian did not want them."

Testimony of William Graydon Willard of Willard Auctions for the Bird Commission
Proceedings (General Evidence), 1948 December 6

Find complete file on Zotero: CA > LAC > RG33-69 > Volume 76 > File: General Evidence (Dec. 1-6 1948) > .pdf pages 318-21 (Note: This is only a selection of his complete testimony, see the file, .pdf pages 309-329, for more.)

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Wm. G. Willard
In Chief

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A They could not pay the prices that the public were paying for certain goods.
Q How do you explain the fact that the public were paying a higher price?
A When the dealer takes goods they have to be moved to his place of business and sold, at the least 25 or 30% mark-up. It would be impossible for a dealer to buy a carpet--in order to sell, at auction he bids \$50.00 and he sells at \$75.00 and there is somebody in the auction room prepared to pay \$75.00 to \$80.00 for the carpet.
Q Have you any explanation to offer to his Lordship as to why the public were paying those prices, you have indicated they were paying?
A There was a terrific shortage of goods at that particular time, all furniture stores were practically devoid of chesterfields. Stoves, dining room suites, dinette suites--good stoves were practically impossible to obtain at that time, kitchen ranges.
20
Q As an auctioneer would you say that there was a good market or a poor market at that time for chattels?
A I would say it was the best market I have ever experienced.
Q During the course of the auctions would you classify the bidding as being competitive?
A Very competitive.
Q And what have you to say as to the actual prices obtained?
30

"I would say it was the best market I have ever experienced."

10 A I would like to say this, that in some cases if you had all the sale sheets before you, the actual prices obtained are no indication of the actual price for this reason. We see a radio, a certain type of radio. The radio sells for \$40.00. There is good reason for it. Possibly the radio is smashed or very badly damaged. And seeing we are selling goods without any guarantee at all, the average person wants to know "Is this radio working"; "No, it is not working, we don't guarantee it" Then of course the price would naturally go down for that particular machine. The people that would were buying would not know if it cost \$5.00 or \$25.00 to fix it, to make it work.

Q There was a ceiling price in effect at this time.

A That is right.

20 Q Perhaps you might help us out to tell us what the ceiling price represented to the buying public?

30 A The ceiling price in my auction room represented-- I will give you an illustration with regard to a refrigerator. We will say the selling price is \$197.00. In one case in my auction room that was the price. The Wartime Prices & Trade Board would intimate to us that we could sell that particular machine at \$197.50. That strictly was not the correct price because the price we sold them for was not guaranteed, and there is a vast difference between a guaranteed ceiling price

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"...and a non-guaranteed. The non-guaranteed ceiling price is 60% of the guaranteed ceiling price approximately."

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Wm. G. Willard
In Chief

and a non-guaranteed. The non-guaranteed ceiling price is 60% of the guaranteed ceiling price approximately.

Q I would like to clear that up. Is that right, 60%--

10 A I put it this way, supposing I am selling an article for you and there is a ceiling price on it. Your ceiling price is \$100.00 and you guarantee that article, say a washing machine, to work for 90 days. I can sell then that machine for \$100.00 if that is the ceiling price. But if I say I cannot guarantee it then it goes back to 60%; that is the guaranteed ceiling price--the ceiling price not guaranteed.

Q Would that be your explanation as to why the ceiling prices were not always obtained?

A Absolutely; that and the goods not being in shape. Some of the goods were not in as good shape as they should have been.

20 Q On this matter of ceiling prices. How did you obtain the ceiling price?

A We got the ceiling price from Mr. Smith. Mr. Smith got them from the Wartime Prices & Trades Board.

Q That is the same Mr. Smith in the Custodians Office?

A Yes, Mr. Smith was in charge of my auction room and responsible to the Government.

Q Did you have a representative of the Custodian's Department attend your auction?

30 A Very often there would be two there, always one.

"Your ceiling price is \$100.00 and you guarantee that article, say a washing machine, to work for 90 days. I can sell then that machine for \$100.00 if that is the ceiling price. But if I say I cannot guarantee it then it goes back to 60%; that is the guaranteed ceiling price--the ceiling price not guaranteed."

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Absolutely; that and the goods not being in shape. Some of the goods were not in as good shape as they should have been."

"...There were some great big - there was a great big steam cooker of Japanese origin, and this machine was badly damaged and everyone was scared of it and it was not sold and it was finally moved into storage, I believe at 992 Powell."

- Q Did you dispose of all the goods at your auctions?
- A What do you mean?
- Q Would you sell out all the goods offered for sale?
- A No, I think there was one or two articles I was not able to dispose of. There were some great big - there was a great big steam cooker of Japanese origin, and this machine was badly damaged and everyone was scared of it and it was not sold and it was finally moved into storage I believe at 992 Powell
- 10 Q Did you have any reserve bids at your auction?
- A No reserves.
- Q What would be your opinion as to the over-all results of the Japanese auction sales as compared with your private auction sales?
- A Much better than my own sales because of the greater variety of goods.
- Q Did you make a report to the Custodian at the conclusion of your sale?
- 20 A Well, we were in constant communication at all times. Goods were dropping off very very badly; that is in quantity, and towards the end of the period that I was working for them I had a chance to sell my auction room and the last few sales, the gross amount of the sales was much less, and I arranged with the Custodians Department I would absorb--that I would absorb half the advertising and we had that mutual arrangement on several sales.
- 30 Q And in general during the course of your auctions

Testimony of Charles Spencer Pallot for the Bird Commission Proceedings (General Evidence), 1948 September 28

Find complete file on Zotero: CA > LAC > RG33-69 > Volume 76 > File: General Evidence (Sept. 24-30 1948) > .pdf page 195 (Note: This is only a selection of his complete testimony, see the file, .pdf pages 190-212, for more.)

605

C.S. Pallot
In Chief.

Q Who would you use-first?

A I had a clerk and a cashier and I had a man to hold the things up for me.

Q And were there any representatives of the Custodian's office at these sales?

A Yes, I believe the Custodian's agent was there at practically all the sales.

Q Will you tell the Commissioner what type of attendance you had at these auctions?

10 A I had a very good attendance, your lordship.

THE COMMISSIONER: That was general, was it, at all the sales?

A Yes.

Q MR BRAIDWOOD: How many would you say came to an average sale?

A Oh, I would say anywhere from 200 to 400 people.

THE COMMISSIONER: How did the attendance compare with the average attendance at private sales?

20 A Just about the same, sir.

MR. BRAIDWOOD: Q Were there any factors in existence at that time that made the market good or bad for the sale of these chattels?

A Well, sir, just at that particular time the Japanese were evacuating these properties, and there were people coming in to live on those lands that were being rented, and they had to purchase furniture and implements and things, and then there was considerable shortage of new materials, and it certainly enhanced the value of goods at that particular time.

30

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Bird Commission General Evidence Exhibit no. 21, auction sale advertisements presented 20 September 1948

Find complete file on Zotero: CA > LAC > RG33-69 > Volume 78 > File: General Exhibits 1-63 > .pdf pages 146-48
(Note: This is only a cropped selection of this exhibit, see the file, .pdf pages 146-51, for more.)

SPECIAL AUCTION SALE

Under instructions from the Secretary of State of Canada, acting in his capacity as Custodian pursuant to the Revised Regulations respecting Trading with the Enemy (1943), we will offer for sale the following:

THURSDAY, AUG. 10th
10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Recommencing
Aug. 11th at 10 a.m.
Until All Goods Are Sold
at 1047 Seymour St.

Walnut bedroom suite, 4 steno oak desks 2 office desks, 5 oak steno chairs, small roll-top desk, oak china cabinet, oak library table, dressers, wardrobes, beds, springs, cribs, tables, chairs, cupboards, trunks, suitcases, ranges, including all-enamel McClary and Fawcett 6-burner gas range, cafe steam cooker, heaters, dining chairs, wall clock, mantel clocks, standard and table lamps, pictures, end table, lino runner, baby buggies, large assortment of crockery and glassware, kitchen ware, smoker stand, carpenter and gardener tools and many other items too numerous to mention.

SPECIAL
Wooden tub electric washer, gas fireplace, enamel garbage burner, oak sectional bookcase, auto radio, Hoffman No. 33 hot water heater, walnut bedroom suite, cafe dishes, portable gramophone.

W. G. Willard
Auctioneer.
Marine 5542. Res., MAR. 8686.
Sales Conducted Any Place in City.

AUCTION SALE

Large Stock of New Merchandise

Starting Wednesday, August 11th, at 10:30 a.m., and Continuing Same Hour Each Day Until Everything Sold at 314 Powell St.

Under instructions from the Custodian of Alien Property, we will offer the following new merchandise for sale by Public Auction:

Large stock of Crockery, Cups, Saucers, Vases, etc., Drygoods, Children's Ware, Tobacco, Groceries, Toys, Large Sunshade Umbrellas and many other items too numerous to mention.

Ladies, don't miss this sale. Many items so necessary in the modern home.

Everything to Be Sold, No Reserve.
TERMS of Sale—CASH

LEGALS
Thompson & Birmingham Limited
AUCTIONEERS AND APPRAISERS
Bank Trust Bldg. Pac. 3564

AUCTION SALE

Under instructions from the Secretary of State of Canada, acting in his capacity of Custodian pursuant to the Revised Regulations Respecting Trading With the Enemy (1943), I will offer the following for sale on

THURSDAY, NOV. 28

Commencing at 1:00 p.m.
in the Japanese Hall,
Corner Dewdney Trunk
Road and 14th Avenue,
1 mile East of Haney

Choice 3-piece chesterfield, bed chesterfield, 2 chesterfield chairs, china cabinet, dining table and other tables, beds, sewing machine, organ, ranges, heaters, chairs, lamps, carpet sweeper, ashstands, lanterns, tools and a whole lot of other articles too numerous to mention. Goods on view morning of sale from 10 a.m. Anyone requiring real choice furniture will do well to attend this sale.

TERMS—CASH.

C. Spencer Pallot
Phone Haney 196Y. Auctioneer

ⁱ For more records on agents and officers, see: Bird Commission records (LAC, RG33-69, general evidence Volumes 75-79), which includes revealing testimony from real estate agents, appraisers, and field agents for the Veterans' Land Act. Also see the VLA records for correspondence among and about field agents and appraisers who evaluated Japanese-Canadian-owned properties for the Soldier Settlement Board/VLA (LAC, RG38, Volumes 403-404). Of note are records relating to conservative timber appraiser Eustace Smith who valued Eikichi Kagetsu's company, Deep Bay Logging (for records relating to Smith, see TFRBL, F.G. Shears, Series 3, Box 9, Files 1 and 2; LAC, RG33-69, Volume 73, File 1388; LAC, RG117, Volume 2414, File 16700; LAC, RG117, Volume 2809, File 55165; UBC-RBSC, MacMillan Bloedel fonds, Box 1066, File 4; UBC-RBSC, H.R. MacMillan fonds, Box 100, File 6; UBC-RBSC, Thomas Norris fonds, Box 28, Files 12, 13, 17, and 20; also Provincial Records, BC Archives, MS0960, Box 1, File 7). Appraisers like Smith would determine the value of properties, often providing the means through which the state could sell the properties at low costs. Also of note are RCMP records concerning the "voluntary repatriation" of Japanese Canadians (LAC, RG18, in particular File C315-36-3), which

discusses questions of officer coercion and administrative roles RCMP officers held concerning deportee property and transportation.

ⁱⁱ For records relating to the work of lawyers and politicians, see: Bird Commission records and proceedings (LAC, RG33-69). Also consult materials relating to the Co-operative Committee on Japanese Canadians, who represented the interests of Japanese Canadians (LAC, MG28, CCJC fonds; MG30 D200, Grace Tucker fonds; MG30 E266, Saul Cherniack fonds; MG30 C160, Grace Thompson fonds; MG32 C26, F.A. Brewin fonds; and UBC-RBSC, Thomas Norris fonds). Of note are records of prominent politicians who mediated between the state and Japanese Canadians, including CCF politician Angus MacInnis (UBC-RBSC, Angus MacInnis memorial collection).

ⁱⁱⁱ For more on organizations and businesses, consult: Bird Commission records and proceedings (LAC, RG33-69, general evidence Volumes 75-79); materials relating to farming co-operatives in which Japanese Canadians were a large part prior to the uprooting and dispossession, including the Maple Ridge Cooperative Exchange and the Pacific Cooperative Union (LAC, RG117, Volume 2496-97, File 57899; RG38, Volume 403-405; MCA, Pacific Co-operative Union fonds). For more on the PCU, see the Veterans' Land Act report in this series. The question of Japanese-Canadian shares and ownership within these organizations was a source of great difficulty for the Custodian of Enemy Property administration. Other organizations of note: the United Church, who supported their Japanese-Canadian members through advocacy, storing and shipping their property, and corresponding with individuals and families (UCCBC, in particular, UCCBC-85, Superintendent of Home Missions fonds, W.P. Bunt Papers, Box 468 and 469); and the Canadian International Red Cross, particularly representative Ernest Maag who reported on the deportation process and the treatment of Japanese Canadians (LAC, RG36-27, Volume 16, File 622; RG25, Volume 3340, File 2966-40; RG25, Volume 2974, File 3363-40C; RG25, Volume 3634, File 3363-A-40; RG25, Volume 3005, File 3464-AC-40; RG25, Volume 3006, File 3464-AN-40C; RG25, Volume 3635, File 3464-BK-40; RG25, Volume 3005, File 3464-V-40).