

Black Dragon Inquiry Reports

By Jitaro Tanaka

Circa 1942

My family (wife and four small children) and I left Vancouver on October 30, 1942, with the last trainload of evacuees, mostly women, children and the aged from Hastings Park Manning Centre, leaving behind one hundred and eight sick people and a caretaker hoping New Denver Japanese Hospital would be ready before winter. Upon arriving at my destination, I was ordered back to Vancouver to attend Black Dragon Enquiry. I arrived in Vancouver on November 2, 1942, to attend the hearing as a member of the Protecting Power.

October 30, 1942, Friday 10:30 a.m. The Commission enquiry, headed by distinguished Judge M.J.C.A. Cameron, Belleville, Ontario, into the alleged activity of the Black Dragon in British Columbia, began at Assize Court. Senator Farris, K.C., counsel for the Vancouver News Herald newspaper, was assisted by C.L. Macalpine, K.C., and C.H. Locke, K.C., who appeared for the R.C.M.P. and B.C. Security Commission. Judge Cameron was appointed by the Federal Justice Department. Ten Japanese witnesses were recalled from various evacuation centres to attend the trial, which lasted until November 14, 1942. Three from the Japanese Maritime Security Committee and I (as a member of the Protecting Power) were called to witness. I will not divulge the names of Japanese people who may wish to remain anonymous, except for Mr. Morii, who is already known to the public as the main figure.

Senator Farris opening allegation source of the Japanese being forced by R.C.M.P. to intern over two hundred Japanese. Col. Mead testified that the Morii group was the major Japanese influence in B.C. The Commission facilitated the evacuation. The Centre figure in the investigation is Mr. Tsuji Morii, leader of the Black Dragon Group, who claimed that Mr. Morii was linked to a secret society reported to have been under Japanese influence in China and other countries in Asia. The News Herald article reported that Mr. Morii used his connection with the B.C. Security Commission to please certain Japanese at the expense of others. He is loyal to Canada, sound and honest.

The Senator asserted, "he is a dangerous character and would take advantage of any position." Major Taylor, Security Commission Chairman, attended the opening session, as did Col. C.H. Hill, R.C.M.P. Commissioner. The first witness was Assistant Commissioner Col. F.J. Mead, head of the force's Criminal Investigation Bureau. He outlined his dealings with the Japanese and his opinion on the war prior to Japan's entry. Under examination by Senator Farris, he said that Morii was known to him as President of the Nippon Club, the membership of which was composed of older Japanese, among whom was a greater sense of responsibility and traditional discipline than among the younger people. The hearing was adjourned for the day

When proceedings were resumed on November 2, 10:30 a.m. at the R.C.M.P. Barrack Hall on Heather Street, Senator Farris and G.L. MacAlpine, K.C., counsel for the News-Herald, called further witnesses to substantiate the newspaper's claim. They intended to call several Japanese witnesses. They called Mr. Winch, M.L.A., who is a member of the B.C. Security Commission advisory council, Grant Mechiel, M.L.A., former honorary Secretary of the Security Commission, Rev. William Norman, minister of St.

George's United Church and a former resident of Japan, who was asked to translate from a Japanese magazine.

Question by G.H. Locke, K.C., counsel for the R.C.M.P. and the Security Commission.

Witness No. 1, accidental: refuses to divulge the name of the Japanese who approached him. He said he had been sworn to secrecy. It would be difficult to persuade the Japanese to "come forward" because they feared the consequences of giving evidence against Morii if they repatriated after the war. It is alleged that Morii had his service individuals who could do bodily harm. They would never allow their names to be used for fear of what might follow.

Witness No. 2, accidental: Information that Morii had an affiliation with a Fascist Group, loyal to Japan and should be removed.

Mr. Locke objected very strongly to Mr. MacAlpine's style of questioning, helping witnesses say brothels and many gambling places, and he could not understand how witnesses were prominent citizens, all this hearsay and sworn secrecy evidence, cum without any truth or evidence until they brought in some Japanese witnesses to testify in the hearing. He asked Judge Cameron to warn the witnesses that, if they encountered difficulties in producing Japanese witnesses, they should even seek the Guard Protection. If not, testimony by these learned men should not be taken seriously.

Barrister MacAlpine called Rev. Norman to translate an article from the Japanese magazine Soko-ku (Fatherland), which was said to contain a picture of Morii. Mr. Locke objected to the introduction of the magazine when its authenticity could not be proven. When Mr. MacAlpine asked whether Mr. Locke had suggested attempting to obtain evidence from the editor in Tokyo, the court erupted in an uproar and was reprimanded by the judge, who said he would clear the room if it happened again. This kind of questioning and bickering continued for some time with other witnesses.

First Witness (Japanese), smartly groomed and well-spoken, came to the stand. He opened by stating that Mr. Morii was feared by B.C. The Japanese did not like him and did not want to relate to him in any way. That was the reason for their reluctance to go to Tashme (Japanese evacuation camp). At the outset, the witness said he was 26 years old and of the Christian faith. The Japanese believed he was behind the evacuation notice they received. There were many questions; however, Cameron asked the witness to substantiate any of his statements with tangible evidence. The witness replied that he had no proof.

Second Witness (Japanese). Spokesman for the Naturalized Canadian Society. He said he met Major Austin Taylor, Chairman of the B.C. Security Commission, between May 11 and May 18 and suggested he was being blackmailed. The witness asked whether all being shipped out might be deferred until May 31? Major Taylor said that orders from the R.C.M.P. had to be obeyed, but a witness suggested something fishy was going on. Pressed by the B.C.M.P. lawyer to name those of whom he suspected of blackmailing him, the witness said, "I figure it must be the Morii Group." Mr. Locke further pressed, "If figure it must be the Morii Group," which could not be accepted in any court in this country. Proof or evidence was another alleged hearsay. No further questions necessary for this witness.

Third Witness (Japanese), a naturalized fisherman, claims that Morii had been a spy for a long time, which is now becoming apparent. At one time, Morii was highly regarded by some elements of the

Japanese community, but hardly anyone thinks highly of him now. The witness who testified through an interpreter said he had known Morii for 20 years. In May 1939, Morii addressed the support of 200 Japanese Fishermen at Port Essington. The Japanese generally had trusted Morii until he cooperated in the evacuation of Japanese Nationals. Morii was reported to have said that if 300 to 500 Japanese Nationals left the coast voluntarily, it would be much easier for those remaining. "I disagreed. I could read English papers and could understand the situation. The matter could not be cleared up as simply as that." "Between February and March," said the witness, "orders were put out with Morii's name on them; we couldn't tell whether they were orders from police or orders from Morii." "On account of his attitude to this country, they were dissatisfied with Morii, feeling he favoured Japan; suddenly, he swung about and started talking of loyalty to Canada. Further, Morii provided information that led to the return of illegal entrants to Japan. The witness believed illegal entrants should be returned to Japan, but a man who reports such things has a low character." Senator Farris objected to Mr. Locke questioning the witness on the rounding up and deporting of approximately 1000 Japanese in 1931-1932, a process in which Morii had cooperated with the police.

Mr. Locke: I object to my learned friend playing fast and loose with this case.

The senator protested. "I don't like to be treated like a Jack in the Box. The witness stated that 200 fishermen heard the Morii speech." Mr. Locke said, "We can surely summon some to appear in this court, give the names of a few friends whom we bring to testify in this matter. It is a small fishing village, everybody knows everybody, you have no trouble with their names, they offer even one name." The witness cannot remember. Matter ended there, here, hearsay, etc., etc.

Fourth Witness (Japanese). The onus of presenting this witness rests with the News-Herald because the newspaper accused the B.C. Security Commission and R.C.N.P. xxx of misleading the Government as the defendant, but after some legal technicalities, the matter was cleared, and the witness took the stand.

His voice shattering with anger and sorrow, he spoke rather eloquently as spokesman for the Japanese Wartime Committee. Hikaru, "I heard so much about Mr. Morii being a person in the Japanese Community, and I was coerced by many friends to help. I am bilingual, English and Japanese, and it comes in handy as his spokesman. Here, I have listened to three witnesses blame everything on Mr. Morii. It is not what he did, it is Order in Council 1665 that brought about the total."

Regarding the evacuation of the Japanese race from the protected area, naturalized and native-born, they did not take it seriously as long as they were not involved. Now they blame everything on him. As a result, my children don't want to go to school or play with their friends, not even the children of the many friends who encouraged me to take this post. They all call us puppies, meaning small stool pigeon, every member of my family." Tears were visible on his face, the judge asked if he could recompense, but he was so nervous and angry that he twice. I asked the Court for a pardon and was granted.

Fifth Witness (Japanese). Morii's critics disliked him for acting like a racketeer. Morii was connected with many societies, but on the other hand, operated gambling houses. Morio's influence on the Japanese people was very, very strong because he had a group of Jiu-Jitsu experts behind him. The witness said another Japanese had told him he had taken \$300.00 to the Nippon Club, which Morii headed, to get a deferment of his evacuation. Until March, the Japanese community was content to let Morii shoulder

responsibility for Possible Evacuation, but when evacuation became definite, all Japanese organizations wanted to share the responsibility. Morii initially expressed willingness to cooperate with other Japanese organizations in evacuation proceedings, but he failed to attend meetings of a representatives' committee, which ultimately proceeded without him.

I was so tired of hearing the same events repeated, so I took off to see my factory, which was being managed by my Occidental junior partner. I was pleased that everything seemed to be in fairly good order. At about 7:30 in the evening, I returned to the Hotel where I was staying. I saw that Mr. H. was in a nervous state, and he wanted to sleep in my room. I asked him why, and he said that Mr. Morii gave him such a look that he might kill him. I said I invited him to go to the Nanking Restaurant. He said it was darkened, and I told him to follow the instructions. After a hearty dinner, I said he could come to my room for the night. I asked him why he was so nervous, and he replied: "I thought you were summoned because you had something to tell Mr. Morii." "Oh," said, "I thought so too, but it was not so." I tried to calm him and testified against Mr. Morii in court. I said to the Judge, I wish to tell the truth. "I know Mr. Morii is very nervous; barristers used to rub their legs to calm down." "I know untruthful testimony is easy." He said, "I am sorry, I am in jeopardy." I told him it could be done, and he was moved to New Denver about two weeks later.

Sixth Witness (Japanese). He was put on the stand. Senator Farris was very careful to question this witness. Here, he had a witness who could pin some evidence against Mori. He started very softly, trying to win confidence. He spoke in exasperation, in very casual language, asking why he seemed more nervous than other witnesses. "I want only the truth, nothing but the truth; otherwise, if you lie, the Court will deal with you very severely. Now, you evacuated to Tashme on October 13, with most of the other evacuees who left three or four months ago. Is it possible that the three hundred you gave to Mr. Mori was for deferment for evacuation?" Witness answered, "That was for the benevolent fund. The Nippon Club was collecting money to help families where the husbands were at the road camp." Now the questioning was getting louder and tougher. The Senator asked the witness, "Was that in Cash or Cheque. In Cash." "Why in Cash?" "Because the Club was only one block away and everybody wants cash since the war started." "Did you get a receipt?" "No." "Why not?" "I did not get it." "You mean to say no receipt? Impossible. You're hiding something, that is why you're nervous." The law will be kind to you if you tell the truth. Now, the witness was badgered by all the techniques of the famous barrister's strategy. Mr. Locke interrupted several times. "The Senator is trying to put words in the witness's mouth so that he will become scared and say that it was for deferment." Further questions will drive this witness crazy." The Senator, however, turned and rephrased questions so many ways, but the witness stuck to the benevolent fund. Judge stopped further questions. The witness was dismissed.

Seventh Witness (Japanese). He has been told by many customers that they got a deferment from Mori.

Ninth Witness (Japanese). He displayed "So-ko-ku" magazine and a picture of Mr. Morii with President Kita, leader of the Fascist group in the Japanese Diet. He said Kita came here in 1939 as a travelling emissary of the New Order in Asia. Etc., etc.

Then two more Japanese witnesses said several Japanese in the internment camp were beaten up or given money by the Japanese Wartime Committee. The judge directed that a telegram be sent to the internment camp asking if the Japanese mentioned could verify the statement, but the witnesses refused to give names.

Tenth Witness (Japanese) He was a veteran of the First World War, in the Canadian Army. He said he was thrown by Mr. Morii at the Nippon Club from the third-floor stairs to 2nd floor. If you look at Mr. Morii, he is only about five feet tall and a gentle-mannered man. How could he throw the Sergeant of the 1st World War so easily? This is the audience's impression. Mr. Morii is 3rd Dan; the court was told. The judge said he could sue Morii in Criminal Court for assault causing bodily harm, but that was all he said to this witness.

There were so many other witnesses by Occidental, Grant McNeil, M.P., Winch, M.L.A., Mr. Macpherson, head of the Custodial Department, Dr. Black, Kitsilano teacher, Mr. I, mysterious secret man suspected of being approached by the Japanese, and too numerous to mention.

Headlines in the daily newspaper in Vancouver:

The Japanese resent Morii's influence on the Security Groups.

Black Dragon still operates in B.C.

The Japanese are terrified by Morii. The report on Morii is still awaiting action.

Nippon Black Dragon operates within B.C.

These headings were all in a big front-page splash. あん d

Mr. Etsuji Morii called to stand in Black Dragon Hearing as the last witness. He denies Anti-British remarks in his 1939 speech. Questions put forward to him by Senator Farris were categorically denied.

November 14, 1942, Saturday, the last day of Enquiry.

Morii was mentioned rather intensely by Senator Farris, asking about Benevolent Work and Funds.

Witnesses denied very ably that it had nothing to do with deferment.

Now, the Senator felt let down by all previous witnesses, Japanese and Occidental, so he asked only superficial questions. He asked if he could get these people to Court. The Witness said they would never come forward.

Eighth Witness (Japanese). He was the secretary of the Fishermen's Association in B.C. He said he had never heard of the Black Dragon here but admitted reading of the society in the Japanese magazines, "So-ko-ku."

When the time came to testify, there was no evidence. No Japanese came forward to substantiate their information. It was an alleged rumour, or they were too afraid to come even under the Court Protection. Impressions of these prominent people did not help the News-Herald Newspaper at all.

BLACK DRAGON ENQUIRY failed to produce any evidence, proof, witness, or person who came forward to testify with tangible evidence. This Hearing ended with Mr. Morii being free of any wrongdoing. The court was closed on Saturday, November 14, 1942.

The Supervisor General of Slocan Valley District, Mr. Boulton, wanted me at New Denver as quickly as possible. Japanese carpenters at the Japanese Hospital are on strike. I hurried to the destination.

Source

The textual record consists of a four-page report titled “Black Dragon Inquiry” by J.C. Tanaka. The report references the Black Dragon Society and includes names such as Mr. Etsuji Morii; Judge M.J.C.A. Cameron, Belleville, Ont.; Senator Farris, K.C., counsel for the Vancouver News-Herald; C.L. MacAlpine, K.C.; C.H. Locke, K.C., for the R.C.M.P. and B.C. Security Commission; Nippon Club; Japanese Wartime Security Committee; Protecting Power; Sokoku magazine; Naturalized Canadian Society; Fishermen’s Association; Major [Austin] Taylor, Chairman of the B.C. Security Commission; Col. C.H. Hill, R.C.M.P. Commissioner; Col. J.F. Mead, head of Criminal Investigation Force; Mr. Winch, M.L.A.; Grant MacNeil, M.L.A.; Rev. William Norman; Nanking Restaurant; President Kita; and Mr. Boulbee, Supervisor General of Slocan Valley District.

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