Between the World Wars, over 460,000 individuals migrated from Scotland. Although the majority were attracted to neighbouring England, a large proportion sought opportunities outside the British Isles, making these years one of the most intensive periods in Scotland’s long history of overseas emigration. As recently released Fisheries Board for Scotland files reveal, there were several public and private attempts to direct at least some of that number to the coast of British Columbia. The most detailed plan, put forward by the British Columbian government in February 1924, sought to import Scottish fishermen for the Pacific deep-sea fishery. The scheme, however, was anticipated and followed by proposals from several commercial fishing operations in the province. The deliberations and reports, recorded in the files, failed to produce a plan agreeable to all concerned parties. Nevertheless, the context in which these proposals were developed is worthy of the historian’s attention.

Important insights have been gained through recent studies of similar late nineteenth-century schemes. Jill Wade’s examination of British Columbia’s 1887 proposal has revealed a remarkable willingness, on the part of government, to intervene in the development of the province’s off-shore resources. The public opposition to the plan, which helped to defeat it, demonstrated how out of step the provincial politicians were with the “individualistic” attitudes of their constituents. Stuart MacDonald has demonstrated the link between the establishment of two crofter colonies on the Canadian prairie and the late nineteenth-
century attempt to deal with Highland discontent. In addition to proposing a modicum of secured tenure for crofters, achieved with the passage of Crofter’s Act, the Napier Commission recommended state-aided emigration as a more permanent solution to Highland distress. Despite the disastrous failures of the settlements which were established in Manitoba and Saskatchewan in the 1880s, the concept of crofter colonisation remained attractive both at home and abroad.

The very existence of British Columbia’s inter-war proposals attests to the longevity of the appeal. The majority of the Fisheries Board files relate to Commander David G. Jones’ 1925 report on the British Columbia government scheme and to a 1936 proposal from the Canadian Fishing Company of Vancouver. The documents reveal a great deal about political relations between the Provincial, Dominion and Imperial governments, the state of the Pacific coast fishery between the World Wars and, perhaps most importantly, the racist policies of the British Columbian government toward the Japanese. To a lesser degree, they also highlight the antipathy of Britain’s governing elite toward the crofter.

I

The British Columbian government offer, which was announced to the press in February 1924, was modelled on the earlier 1887 scheme. It suggested that employment could be found in the province for “Hebridean settlers” and that each fisherman-immigrant would be provided with “a small piece of agricultural land, on which he could erect a house, keep poultry, and grow vegetables.” A recreation of the crofting life was clearly intended. As with the earlier plan, British Columbia proposed that the Imperial and Provincial governments share the expense of settlement. A combined loan of $600 was deemed adequate for the purchase of necessary building materials, boats and fishing equipment.

The initiative for the scheme came from the Provincial government, for neither London nor Ottawa had been consulted. The most likely source of the proposal was Duff Pattullo, an Ontarion of Scottish ancestry. Pattullo, who would become
Premier in 1933, was serving as the Liberal government’s Minister of Lands. In 1917, he had overseen legislation for the creation of a Land Settlement Board, with powers “to acquire land from either the crown or private owners, to improve it for agricultural purposes, and to advance loans to settlers.” It was hoped that the dislocations of the World War would be eased by this legislation, as it allowed returning soldiers or widows of fallen servicemen to purchase land from the Board at reduced prices. The veterans would prove to be less than eager rural settlers, but Pattullo had also viewed the Settlement Board as a means of attracting immigrants to the province. The positive results of such migration would be a widening of the domestic market along with the development of new areas of settlement. As a consequence, one of the Board’s mandates was to provide general information to prospective immigrants.

As with the majority of British Columbians of his day, the Minister of Lands’ wish to encourage the immigration of “British stock” was matched with an equally keen desire to discourage Oriental settlement in the province. From 1908, the Japanese fishermen, who had previously settled on the west coast only long enough to earn sufficient capital to be able to return to Japan with some economic independence, began to arrange for “picture brides” to be sent from the homeland. This not only created a more permanent settlement, but also a new generation of Canadian-born Japanese. For the white population, this development heightened the fear of being swamped by a “yellow peril” which would eventually gain control of the entire west coast. After the war, the white fishermen were particularly alarmed at the number of Canadian-born Japanese receiving fishing licenses from the Dominion government. They feared that the “marvellously skilful” and “excessively industrious” Japanese would drive down prices in a market already suffering from the post-war depression. British Columbia’s provincial and national politicians took up the white fishermen’s cause and used it as part of their argument for the restriction of Oriental immigration to the province.

As a consequence, the Dominion Government’s Department of Fisheries did establish a Parliamentary Commission, staffed largely by British Columbian MPs, to examine the Japanese
presence in the west coast fishery. In 1922, the Fisheries Commission recommended that licenses issued to those “other than white, British subjects and Indians [aboriginals]” be cut immediately by 40% and then by another 15% in 1925. Enactment of this recommendation had an immediate impact. From a 1919 high of over 3,000 licenses, more than half the provincial total, the numbers of licences issued to Japanese fishermen dropped to just below 2,000 in 1922 and to just over 1,000 by 1925. The effect of these restrictions was a short-term overall drop in the size of the fishing fleet, but by 1925 spaces vacated by the Japanese were almost entirely taken up by whites and aboriginals. Of greater significance to the province’s commercial canning operations was the loss of a comparatively cheaper, more productive labour force. As a consequence, the provincial government’s 1924 offer was not only designed to bring in fresh infusions of British immigrants, but also to replace the Japanese with a supply of cheap white labour.

The Dominion government found no difficulty with this project and endorsed the proposal. The documentation in the Scottish Fisheries Board files is incomplete, but it would appear that the Overseas Settlement Committee in London was contacted from Ottawa and informed of the plan. They then forwarded the idea to the Scottish Office, who in turn consulted their own Fisheries Board. The Overseas Settlement Committee, a professional branch of the Colonial Office, had been established immediately after the war in order to deal with the expected increase in emigration to the Dominions “during the period of reconstruction.” It was the obvious body to approach with the British Columbia scheme, but the members quickly determined that it was a matter for the Scottish Office. Nevertheless, the responsibility for the scheme and the body potentially accountable for its costs, is far from certain in the correspondence. It is possible that this administrative confusion contributed to the plan’s ultimate failure.

Eventually, the Scottish Office took the lead and negotiated a tentative agreement with the Canadian Dominion government. The draft, which was sent to Pattullo, stipulated that should the scheme be enacted, the immigrants must have “regular and constant supervision” for at least one full year.
Upon further reflection, the Scottish Office decided that before any action was taken "it was essential that an expert representative of the Fishery Board for Scotland should visit British Columbia, and study the problem on the spot from the point of view of the British government."\(^{17}\) The Board nominated their own Commander Jones for the task and he left Southampton on December 3, 1924 for British Columbia, via New York and Ottawa. Two days earlier the Overseas Committee supplied Jones with a detailed memorandum designed to guide his investigation. They wished to be informed of probable locations for settlement, the type of accommodation available, the availability and fertility of the land, the likelihood for mobility on arrival and the opportunity for off-season employment for men and women. In addition, they wished to know if the settlers were likely to be exploited by cannery owners or local store-keepers and the nature of government supervision, queries that suggest an awareness of the underlying motives for the proposal. In general, Jones was instructed to

satisfy himself as to the suitability and adaptability of Scottish fishermen and their families to the conditions and circumstances of British Columbia...[bearing] in mind that...it will be necessary to circulate full particulars regarding the scheme to fishing communities in Scotland and the adjacent islands.\(^{18}\)

Upon his arrival in Vancouver on December 18, Jones discovered that, two days earlier, the Provincial Assembly had appropriated £4,000 in order to assist schemes of settlement.\(^{19}\) Encouraged by this news, Jones embarked on an extensive four week tour of British Columbia and claimed to have "traversed over 15,000 miles on land and sea" and "during most of that time...remained only a day or two in any one place."\(^{20}\) After examining the coast from Prince Rupert to Victoria, Jones argued that two locations were probably best suited for a trial settlement which, if successful, could be followed by a more extensive migration. Twenty-five families should be settled at Alberni on the west coast of Vancouver Island and five more in the Queen Charlotte Islands, ostensibly because of the availability of cleared, tillable land and proximity to the fishery.\(^{21}\)
Commander Jones' recommendations also identified the areas of friction which would dominate subsequent governmental discussion, in particular, the appropriate extent and relative share of the scheme's costs as well as the exact responsibility of each branch of government for the implementation of the plan. Jones argued that to be successful, each family should be advanced at least $1,000 to meet the cost of "cleared land, the erection of a wooden house, and the provision of a cow and poultry...leaving a margin of 225 dollars for food and other contingencies." He was convinced that, a parsimonious policy would be fatal to the success of the experiment, as it has been shown repeatedly that the success of most settlement schemes is dependent on the nature of the news sent home by the settlers as to their treatment, and a good beginning is half the battle, as well as the best and most economical form of propaganda.

Jones was not the first to suggest that the $600 loan proposed by the British Columbia government was insufficient. The Fishery Board files contain a Reuters story from Winnipeg, dated November 21, 1924, which quotes one Father A. MacDonell, an individual "instrumental in bringing 1,000 settlers to Canada", as declaring the offer "quite inadequate." He suggested that "a sum of 1,200 dollars" was the minimum requirement for "each family to have its own house and a few acres of land" and he scoffed at the suggestion of some that the proposed loan would be adequate if the "Hebridean fishermen...[were] to live in tents until they have enough money to build homes of their own." 24

The nature of the shelter to be provided, as well as its cost, would prove to be another controversial issue. In his original instructions, Jones was directed by the Overseas Settlement Committee to determine if crofters would be satisfied with tents "even for a comparatively short period of time." Jones reported that "a 'tent' in the British Columbian sense is a structure of a raised wooden floor with wooden sides about two feet high and a canvas roof." He believed that although these might be adequate for the summer months they "could only be regarded as a temporary arrangement." It would, in the long run, be more "economical and satisfactory...to provide a wooden house in the first place." 25
The insistence on the provision of permanent housing increased the overall cost of the proposal, as did the Overseas Settlement Committee’s demand that employment be guaranteed to the incoming crofters and that the Province establish a welfare committee to look after the new settlers. Jones believed that part of the loans necessary to cover the cost might be obtained from the Highlands and Islands Distress Committee which is understood at the present time to have funds available. [They]... might with advantage assist suitable immigrants by placing at their credit at a bank in British Columbia an amount (say 400 or 500 dollars) to be drawn on only in a case of need and for purposes approved by the Treasury of the Provincial government.26

The Fisheries Board files, though, provide no evidence that this suggestion was acted upon.

When Pattullo received a copy of a new draft agreement, based upon Jones’ recommendations and the Overseas Settlement Committee’s employment and welfare stipulations, he objected on several grounds. The Minister of Lands argued that the expense of the proposal was much greater than the Settlement Committee realized. Jones’ estimate of the land costs at $50 per acre was based upon an agreement entered into by himself and the corporation of the City of Alberni. Pattullo’s own investigations revealed that while the timber had been removed from the lots in question, “the ground cannot be considered cleared land and would probably cost from $50 to $100 an acre to put in shape for the growing of farm produce.” He also believed that the prejudice against the ‘tents’ was artificially inflating the total costs.27

Pattullo’s overall objections, though, were with the fixed settlement locations and the Provincial government guarantee of employment and support. Of the former he wrote, “I have never thought that [the settlers] should be tied down to one locality nor to a piece of land until they have had [an] opportunity to get their bearings and thereafter make a decision for themselves.” As for guaranteeing employment in the canneries, that would be counter to the entire intent of the scheme. Major Brude, the stridently anti-Oriental MLA for Alberni, agreed that
the best "means of getting the Japanese fishermen on the west coast of Vancouver Island replaced by white men", was to have them own their own vessels and sell their catch "to the local cannery or available market." If this policy was followed, however, it "would cost very much more than the advance that has been suggested" and Pattullo would not embark upon a policy of buying fishing outfits, as there will be a demand all up and down the coast for the government to supply every fisherman who wishes to own his own boat. Our assistance, heretofore, has been confined to assisting people to go on the land and I think there is no doubt that we must confine ourselves to this policy.\(^{28}\)

The level of Provincial government involvement envisaged by the Settlement Committee was, therefore, both practically and philosophically unacceptable to the Minister of Lands. Pattullo abandoned the scheme early in December, 1925.\(^{29}\)

II

The inability of the various government bodies and departments to agree upon a *modus operandi* meant that Commander Jones' report has languished in the archives for almost seventy years. It deserves a new reading. True to his mandate from the Overseas Settlement Committee, Jones provided a full account of the west coast fishery, paying close attention to the type of settlements as well as the nature of the industry. For this information alone, it is worthy of attention.

Jones presented a picture of a fishery ripe for development. He noted that the British Columbia grounds, while employing only 25% of Canada's fishermen, generated 50% of the nation's revenue from fishing. According to Jones, "only the fringe of the resources available" had been touched. This was "due to the lack of any considerable population in British Columbia and the neighbouring provinces and the consequent difficulty in disposing of fish in a fresh state."\(^{30}\) His report, however, illustrates that even in the 1920s conservation and management of stocks had become an issue. With regard to the salmon runs, he noted
the deplorable accident attending the construction of the Canadian National Railway in the Fraser River Valley in 1913 [which had] caused a serious obstruction to ascending spawning fish, and over-fishing on the American side [had] resulted in a serious decline in the returns.

Expectations were, however, that this situation was temporary and that 1925 would prove to be a “productive season.”

Jones rated salmon as the most valuable of the west coast fish, with halibut and herring following. He pointed out that British Columbia had become one of the “principle sources of the world output of canned salmon”, highlighting the Imperial taste for the west coast product:

The different varieties of salmon taken in order of quality are the sockeyes (whose deep red colour and excellent texture has created so keen a demand for it in the British market), ‘spring’, cohoes, ‘pinks’ and chums. Generally speaking it may be said that they are almost as abundant as herring are in British waters. The mode of conducting the industry is also very similar, canning factories being used in place of curing stations, tins instead of barrels, and machinery in place of women gutters...The boats and nets are usually supplied by the canners, particularly in northern waters, and the fish are disposed of almost exclusively to the canning factories.

The importance of women in the canning industry was clearly reflected in Jones’ report, as was the latent racism of employers:

At the canneries the fish are headed, gutted and sliced by machinery and the canning is done by female labour - white, Japanese or Indian women being employed. The Indian men are engaged for the fishing largely in order to secure the services of their women, but the canners would prefer to employ white labour...if this could be secured.

The conditions of work which prevailed in the 1920s were also vividly described:
The salmon, when sliced in steaks, are conveyed to the filling table, when...they are placed in cans by women using gloves scrupulously clean, and each can is carefully inspected to see that it is properly filled. A case of salmon usually contains either 48 one lb. cans or 96 half lb. cans, and the packers are paid by results. The packers in Rivers Inlet earned last year about 3 dollars a day in a season of six weeks and they paid for their own food.\textsuperscript{34}

Although the salmon industry was the most lucrative, Jones did not believe that “it would absorb an appreciable number of additional men.” There were greater opportunities in the halibut and herring fisheries, located in more remote parts of the province. Prince Rupert monopolised the halibut catch, where the bulk of it was frozen and placed in cold storage, the remainder was “iced and transported in refrigerator cars to the United States and Eastern Canada.” Most halibut fishermen rented their boats from the town’s companies and in such cases the boat was “allocated one-fifth of the gross return and, after expenses deducted...divided share and share a like among the members of the crew. A hard-working crew frequently earns as much as 1,500 dollars(£300) to 2,000 dollars(£400).”\textsuperscript{35} For those employed in the cold storage plant, the prospects were less attractive, but according to Jones would suit the crofters:

Unskilled labour is paid at the rate of 140 to 150 dollars a month and there are a few unoccupied houses in the town. Rents range from 10 to 12 dollars a month.\textsuperscript{36}

It was these ‘opportunities’ in Prince Rupert which prompted Jones to conduct a survey of neighbouring settlements to assess the possibility of recreating the crofting life on the northern coast of the province. His interviews at Smith’s Island, Porcher Island and Jap Inlet revealed the multi-national nature of the ‘white’ labour in the industry as well as the limitations of the land. At Osland, on Smith’s Island, Jones interviewed Mr. Christmassen, a member of a small Icelandic settlement. The group, which had moved from the prairie provinces five years earlier, had cleared the land of standing timber and built wooden houses:
[Christmassen] had just completed building an excellent new house and had made a clearing of about one acre on which he grew vegetables and small fruit. [He] owned a ‘gas’ (motor) boat in which he fished for the canneries during the summer and at other times conveyed his produce to Prince Rupert.37

From Osland, Jones proceeded to Oona River, a Norwegian settlement on the southeast side of Porcher Island, where it was evident that

a great deal of labour had been expended in making the small clearings attached to different houses. Several cows were kept and a large number of poultry, while the cleared ground produced hay, vegetables, and small fruits all of which were disposed of at Prince Rupert.38

As with the Icelanders, the Norwegians fished salmon in the summer months for the canneries which “yielded satisfactory returns.” Proceeding to Jap Inlet, Jones met Mr. Fuller, an English plumber and former soldier who had just taken a plot of 160 acres. Jones wrote,

By dint of hard work he had cleared about a quarter of an acre and could grow sufficient vegetables and potatoes for his family. Apart from groceries, he did not require to purchase food as there was an abundance of Wild game in the woods and a plentiful supply of fish, crab and clams in the inshore waters.39

The isolated life of a fisherman-farmer may have suited the ex-soldier and his family, but Jones was generally unimpressed with the potential of the land on the northern coast. Although he visited other successful settlers, among them a group of Finns on Malcolm’s Island and William Sim, a Scottish settler on Porcher Island, Jones remained sceptical. “Scrub timber covers all the unimproved land...[and] there was not a single clearing of more than one acre in Smith’s and Porcher Islands.” Furthermore, cattle raising had proved “a failure” as the livestock had become

bogged in the debris-covered muskeg (moss) and ditches...The climate is wet and there is very little
sunshine as compared with the greater part of British Columbia. Consequently grains do not ripen, but vegetables and small fruits do well.\textsuperscript{40}

It was partly due to these limitations that Jones favoured Alberni as the location for the first Hebridean settlers. The town was of a good size, 1200 inhabitants, and provided with a railway station, water main, electric light, "an excellent school", a hospital and a number of churches. In addition, the town council "would gladly welcome new settlers from Scotland." Unlike the north coast, the soil varied "from red clayey loam to sandy gravel" and there was an "abundance of free grazing for cows and goats."\textsuperscript{41}

A further attraction to the Alberni location was its proximity to the sockeye and herring fishery, but the competition was greater, particularly with regard to the exploitation of the latter species. In Nanaimo and Berkley Sound, the herring industry was "largely in the hands of the Japanese who export the fish in dry-salted state to China and Japan." Jones' report reveals that in the Prince Rupert-Queen Charlotte Island region, the fishery was largely conducted by groups of northern European immigrants and the native Haida, "a fine type of Indian", but on Vancouver Island the Japanese were clearly a significant presence. In fact, Jones noted that they even employed white labour.\textsuperscript{42}

In the Overseas Settlement Committee's instructions, Jones had been asked to discover "how far the fishermen and their families [would] have to compete with coloured labour."\textsuperscript{43} His analysis reveals the shared anti-Oriental racism of the members of the Provincial and Imperial governments, but it also highlights the fundamental economic concerns which helped to fuel these attitudes. Jones clearly agreed with the 1922 Fisheries Commission report which blamed "the system under which fishermen were employed" as being largely responsible for "the preponderance of Oriental." He added,

Under this system the canners hired any Oriental they required and the agency of an Oriental 'boss' who controlled their operations and 'drove them to produce fish to the utmost limit of their capacity'...it is perfectly evident that the Japanese have for some
years been gaining ground rapidly in the industry and have in many instances attained positions of affluence...It is to be noted that in British Columbia all fishermen are paid by results and that the Japanese fishermen are prepared to work very long hours under practically any weather conditions.  

Jones, like the white British Columbians, gave the Japanese little credit for developing the Asian salt-fish market, but merely charged them with having monopolized it and generally ‘invading’ all aspects of the fishery. In his report, Jones quoted the B.C. Attorney General’s figure of almost 10,000 Asians employed in the province’s industries. Of particular note was the fact that the canning industry’s labour force was 39% Asian, prompting Jones to agree with the politicians of the Province that “the menace is therefore a very real one.”

In addition to reflecting this shared prejudice toward Asians, Commander Jones’ report also reveals a less than charitable disposition toward Hebridean crofters. James Hunter has noted that from the start of crofting in the early nineteenth-century the Hebrideans were blamed for their own impoverished position. The concept of crofting life was antithetical to movements aimed at agricultural improvement and the encouragement of industry in the Highlands. For J. Bruce, a mid-nineteenth-century advocate of industry and empire, the crofter was “an idle feckless fellow whose difficulties were largely of his own making - the ‘natural fruits’ of his own ‘indolence and ignorance’.” Little seems to have changed in official attitudes by Jones’ day. He reported that the most successful settlers in British Columbia were “temperamentally fitted for such a comparatively lonely life” and that “they were resourceful, hard-working and thrifty.” Although parts of the province were, indeed, ideally suited to crofting,

In so far as my knowledge of the Hebridean crofter fisherman goes, my greatest fear is that he lacks the grit and staying power necessary to overcome the initial difficulties which have to be faced in a new country...under strange conditions.

In support of this claim, Jones referred to the fifteen unmarried crofters he had interviewed at the Vancouver Deep Sea
Mission for Fishermen, where they were receiving charitable assistance:

[their] ages ranged from 22 to 38 and [they] had been unemployed for some time. They appeared to have no idea of how to set about looking for employment and seemed quite a helpless lot of men although in good physique and appearance.\(^{48}\)

Jones advised them to seek employment “on the land or at fishing” on Vancouver Island or Prince Rupert. His report went on to provide a detailed example of how the crofters’ character was responsible for their own misfortune. Jones recounted the “plight” of two McNeill families originally from North Bay, Bara, who had first attempted settlement in Alberta but removed to Vancouver a year later in May, 1924. Both Peter and John McNeill had wives and young children, a total of eleven, and had brought approximately £500 with them. Peter was a carpenter by trade and had picked up some odd jobs, thereby gaining a “precarious living”, but John had not taken up any work in Canada “owing to the illness of his children.” Commander Jones was appalled:

I pointed out to him that that was hardly a sufficient reason for him to remain idle and he replied that he could not work when his children were ill...so far as I could ascertain, he had [not] made any serious effort to secure employment. He appeared to me to be quite an unsuitable type of emigrant and seemed quite content to live on charity. His main object in seeing me was to secure a passage home.\(^{49}\)

Although Commander Jones was clearly unsympathetic to their predicament, his report accurately identifies the crofter point of view. He touched directly on Hebridean concerns with the telling claim that “since the war the crofter fisherman has shown a preference for farming rather than fishing.”\(^{50}\) James Hunter’s study has shown how this desire for land motivated crofter agitation throughout the nineteenth century and that such agitation, often in the form of raids on large sheep farms, continued after World War One. The crofter attachment to land and to a way of life based on subsistence, had never been fully understood by Britain’s governing elite, a confusion which
continued into the inter-war period. Nevertheless, successive governments had bent to Highland community pressure and steadily made small plots of land available to crofters. In the inter-war period there appeared to be a further reason to continue this apparently anachronistic practice. There were considerable fears that landless young men in the Western Isles might be attracted to communist ideas and the relatively harmless land raiding could turn revolutionary. The Fishery Board files contain a letter from Oban’s Rev. McKeracky stating that such was the case in Lewis:

"There is no doubt that the situation in the island is serious and will get more so day by day - the young people who leave school...are easy prey to the Bolshevist Agents who are very busy just now [among] them."

Although land raiding in the Western Isles had ceased by 1925, the memory was fresh and crofter agitation probably encouraged the Scottish Office to view the British Columbian scheme with favour. This, despite the fact that their representative sent to view the situation, though favouring limitation on Oriental immigration, was hardly more well disposed toward the Scottish crofter.

III

Despite the ultimate failure of the 1924 scheme and the shelving of Jones’ report, the concept of settling crofters in British Columbia was not abandoned. The Board files contain documents which demonstrate continued interest from the province’s private commercial concerns into the 1930s. Records of two private proposals made their way into the Fisheries Board files during the same year as the government’s plan was put forward. The first was from the Langara Fishing Company which wished to settle five crofiting families in the Queen Charlotte Islands. The files contain a cablegram from Patullo advocating the plan and Jones was able to obtain some first hand information on the region by interviewing Captain Babington, the manager of a clam canning operation on Graham Island. The digging and canning was undertaken by the native Haida, but
Babington felt certain that crofters would prosper on the island. He suggested that previous attempts at immigration had ended in failure because the "wrong type" of settler had been chosen, "men who had neither a knowledge of farming nor fishing and who had previously lived in large towns." Despite Jones’ favourable impression, the plan to privately settle crofters in the Queen Charlottes was not pursued.54

The Board files merely contain a single newspaper clipping, from the August 23 issue of *Fishing News*, on the second private proposal of 1924. There is no evidence that any branch of government was asked to support the scheme, but the plan does indicate further private interest in the encouragement of emigration from the United Kingdom. The article describes the designs of Captain L.M. Vince, a 68 year old Yarmouth seafarer who had settled in British Columbia and established a herring saltry on Berkley Sound. Vince was so impressed by the potential markets for salt herring in Australia, New Zealand and Russia, that he proposed to establish a model village for fifty British fishing families at Numukannis Bay. The twenty acre settlement would have

[sixty-two] houses, roads, a park, village green, wharf, lawns, shade and fruit trees, public buildings, school and play grounds, a community hall for theatricals, lectures, and all the necessary provision for working facilities and amenities.

Vince hoped "to induce Scottish fishing families to join his venture."55 His plan, however, owed more to the idealism of the New Lanark planned-village or the Garden City movement56, than to the particular concerns of the west coast fishing industry or the Scottish crofting community in the 1920s.

It is not clear if these private schemes were a response to the displacement of Japanese from the industry, but such was certainly the case with further private schemes in 1927 and 1936.

The Dominion government had continued to introduce legislative measures designed to eliminate the Japanese from the west coast fishery. In 1926, the Fisheries Committee, which oversaw the initial reduction of licenses to Japanese between 1922 and 1925, recommended that in future the licenses continue to be reduced by 10% per annum. The department went
further in 1927, demanding that dry salt herring operators employ at least 25% white or Indian fishermen in their operations, declaring that the ultimate object was the elimination of “British subjects of Oriental origin from the salt herring industry.” These restrictions were enhanced on January 1, 1937 with a new Canada Shipping Act which stipulated that vessels employed in carrying fish must have onboard certified masters. Since certificates were only issued to British born or naturalized British subjects, Japanese masters could not secure the required certificates.

The commercial canning operators were facing the prospects of a reduction in their skilled workforce and increased payments to those left in the industry. In these circumstances, the importation of Highland crofters was once again appealing. Shortly after the 1927 salt herring industry measures were announced, the Broughton Straits Trading Company, through the British Settlement Agency of Canada, approached the Overseas Settlement Board with a proposal to recruit two or three families from Aberdeenshire. The remote Vancouver Island location of the operation had made it difficult to attract the white labour necessary to comply with the new regulations and the company hoped that the successful settlement of a few Aberdeenshire fishermen would encourage others to follow. The crofters would be “provided with land for truck gardening” and work in the company’s “saltery, sawmills and boats.” The Agent General for British Columbia in London, when approached by the Overseas Settlement Committee, endorsed the plan, but echoed Captain Jones’ sentiments by pointing out “that the district was remote and that much would depend on the adaptability of the settlers.” Failure to obtain an agreement with the Dominion government to provide half the cost of the assisted passage resulted in the abandonment of the plan.

The most detailed private proposal, however, was yet to come. The Scottish Fishery Board files contain a November 1936 communication from R.R. Payne, production manager of the Canadian Fishing Company in Vancouver, to Mr. F.L.C. Floud, British High Commissioner in Ottawa, with a proposal to settle British fishermen “on small pieces of land” around the Gulf of Georgia, between Vancouver Island and the mainland near Vancouver. According to Payne, the location had the advantage
of being “close to the main centres of population, which...afford an outlet for farm produce and [the] several varieties of fish which may be caught in...the Gulf of Georgia.” It also had the added benefit of “logging camps around the Gulf...and Johnstone Straits [which] would attract fishermen during the off season.”

Payne had the crofter in mind for his scheme and went on to extol the virtues, and provide a brief history, of the Scots families who had already settled in the province:

Twenty-five or thirty years ago there was a limited immigration of experienced Scotch fishermen and fish curers, principally from Peterhead and vicinity. Some of these men and their families were brought out by fishing companies, others arranged their own transportation. Generally speaking, this group have been highly successful and have become very good citizens of British Columbia. Almost without exception they were able to adapt themselves to the ways of the new country, were hard working and provident.

Payne also referred to a successful Vancouver Island settlement which appears a likely model for his scheme:

Quite a number of Scotch families settled in [Pender Harbour]...some years ago, each of them having a small piece of land, say five or ten acres. The man plants a garden in the Spring and then goes to the salmon fishery. These men make no attempt to grow a crop for sale, but use their garden produce for their food only.

He went on to point out that the Provincial government still had “ample logged-off lands around the Gulf of Georgia... available under a land settlement scheme at a very nominal cost.”

Conditions in 1936, though, were considerably different than those which had prevailed in 1927. Certainly skilled Japanese fishermen were still being pressured out of the west coast fishery, but the world-wide depression did not skip British Columbia. In order to justify importing Scottish fishermen, Payne argued that although fishermen could be found, companies had difficulty keeping them:
A great many of our present fishermen are poorly equipped, some are transients, and others stop work as soon as they have earned a few dollars. The latter class depend on the fishing industry only to earn sufficient money to buy bare necessities, and are not consistent producers. Also quite a number of our fishermen are of mature years, and within a few years replacements will be needed.\footnote{54}

Hardly a convincing argument for importing labour in an era of chronic unemployment!

The correspondence regarding the proposal, in the Fisheries Board files, suggests that contemporaries were not swayed either. G. Hogarth, of the Board, was initially receptive, believing that the proposal offered some relief to unemployed Scottish fishermen, particularly on the east coast:

It is true that few, if any, of these men have agricultural or gardening experience, but there is no reason to suppose that, with some guidance, they could not cultivate small plots.\footnote{55}

But the High Commissioner in Ottawa was not impressed, arguing that "Mr. Payne’s proposals were merely designed for the benefit of his own company and the idea of bringing out Scottish fishermen to compete with the Japanese, Indian and Canadian fishermen on the spot would almost certainly prove a failure."\footnote{56} During an earlier visit to the west coast, G.F. Plant, of the Dominion’s Office, had confirmed this opinion. He found that "any Scots fishermen who went out would have to be content to receive for their fish the same prices from the canneries as are offered to the Japanese, who have a much lower standard of living."\footnote{57} Hence, Payne’s firm was merely attempting to replace the displaced Japanese with cheap white labour.

Newspaper clippings in the Board files reveal that as early as May it had been clear that official support for Payne’s proposals would not be forthcoming. The Glasgow Herald reported that the upcoming provincial election would delay any decision and, as a consequence, claimed that "political as well as economic reasons are against mass emigration at the present time."\footnote{58} By June, the Vancouver Daily Province was reporting that the British
Columbia Fisheries Minister had no prior knowledge of the scheme and was not in favour of it.69

Although Payne’s motives were suspect, the main reason for the proposal’s failure, as with earlier schemes, was the inability of Provincial, Dominion and Imperial governments to agree on a formula to fund crofter emigration. The fact that these schemes were not implemented does not, however, diminish their historical significance. As the previous discussion of Jones’ report has shown, these proposals clearly reflected prevailing assumptions which prompted both the restrictions on the Japanese and the attempt to encourage crofter migration.

Like Commander Jones, Payne was not wholly convinced that all Highlanders would be suitable immigrants. He shared Jones’ antipathy to the Hebrideans, favouring instead fishermen from Aberdeenshire. Nevertheless, Payne was not as quick to base this judgement on perceived character faults and provided a somewhat sympathetic explanation for their lack of success:

After the war there was an immigration from the Hebrides and neighbouring islands, which generally speaking was not successful as a good many of the men were of mature years and found themselves unable to adapt themselves to the ways and methods employed in British Columbia.70

He agreed, though, with earlier commentators, that the ideal immigrants should be “young men and women who would be willing to adapt” and be free of “communistic [or] radical thought.”71

Payne clearly wished compliant, cheap white labour for his industry and believed that such was available from Scotland, if not the Hebrides. Clearly, his opinion did not flatter the crofter emigrant, but in this regard Payne was not alone. His proposal reflected a hierarchy of racism which appears to have been shared by many of his contemporaries. A stated further aim of his plan was to have British fishermen “take the place in the industry now being filled by people from the Mediterranean countries.” Crofters were preferable to Greeks but clearly all whites were preferable to Oriental. As with the 1924 proposal, Payne stressed the number of Japanese in the industry and, after the January
1937 masters certificate regulations, the opportunity for "British fishermen" to replace them.\textsuperscript{72}

Both the Provincial government's 1924 proposal and the attempts made by private British Columbian industry shared this common anti-Japanese thread. This must surely be the most significant aspect of the newly-released material. From these Fishery Board files, we have discovered that in British Columbia, the story of crofter immigration is not only linked to the problems of planned resource development or the search for a solution to the crofting problem in Scotland, but also to the history of the province's anti-Japanese legislation. Awareness of this racist underpinning should provoke a re-examination of the earlier nineteenth-century proposals. Perhaps this link has a much longer history? In British Columbia the restrictive anti-Oriental policies, reflected in these discussions over crofter settlement culminated with the notorious war-time expropriation and internment of the entire Japanese Canadian community. The assumptions and attitudes that made this possible, however, appear to have been shared by both the provincial and Imperial political elite and this commonality of viewpoint is certainly worthy of more detailed study.

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\section*{Notes}


\textsuperscript{2} Almost 110,000 made their homes in either the United States, South Africa, Australasia or Canada between 1915-1939. Only the exodus of the 1950s and 60s superseded the inter-war levels. During those two decades, 290,000 of the 309,000 Scottish emigrants went overseas. (see Flinn, p. 451 and Isobel Lindsay, "Migration and Motivation: A Twentieth-Century

The documents were made available through the expiration of the “fifty year rule.” The University of Guelph’s McLaughlin Library has obtained microfilm copies of the relevant sections held at the Scottish Record Office [hereafter SRO], AF 51/172, 173, 186.


5 This was the only proposal to be implemented in the 1880s. Stuart MacDonald, “Crofter Colonisation in Canada, 1886-1892: The Scottish Political Background”, Northern Scotland, 1986, pp. 47-59.

6 The “Crofter’s War” had focused attention on the plight of the region’s inhabitants, but to many the problem was not one of ‘land tenure’ but of ‘overcrowding’ and, therefore, only emigration would offer a permanent solution to the Highlander’s impoverished lot. This view was shared by the region’s major landholders, who had no wish to see their lands fragmented to satisfy the Highland passion for land holding. (see MacDonald, op. cit., and Eric Richards, History of the Highland Clearances Vol. II [London, Croom Helm, 1985], pp. 331-44, 489-92).

7 The Provincial government consistently referred to “Hebridean settlement” rather than Scottish or British.


10 Ibid, p. 137.

12 Although no formal immigration quotas were put in place, a "gentlemen's agreement" was reached between the Canadian Dominion Government and the Japanese administration limiting the numbers departing for the west coast. (see Ken Adachi, The Enemy That Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians [Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1991], pp. 81-2, 93-4, 105-06, 136-37).

13 Adachi, pp. 142-43, 391.

14 The Provincial government had already supported the Salvation Army's efforts to bring some of Britain's impoverished young men and women to British Columbia. Between April 1 and Sept. 30, 1924 the Army placed 149 settlers in British Columbia, 44 "youths" as farm-help and 105 "young women" as domestic servants. (see Marjory Harper, Emigration from North-East Scotland: Volume Two - Beyond the Broad Atlantic [Aberdeen, Aberdeen University Press], pp. 185, 209-15, 218-19; and BC Journals, Vol. I, IV, 1924, p. 160).

15 SRO AF51/172, and Payne, "Appendix", SRO AF51/186.

16 Harper, p. 291.

17 Payne, "Appendix", SRO AF51/186.

18 SRO AF51/172.

19 Jones to the Under-Secretary for Scotland, Feb. 23, 1925, "Proposed Settlement of Scottish Crofter Fishermen in British Columbia", p. 1, SRO AF51/173. It is not certain if Jones was the only visitor examining the British Columbia coast for potential crofter settlement. On Dec. 2, 1924, Pattullo informed the Legislative Assembly that the Department of Lands had incurred some expense escorting "a party of Hebrideans looking over the situation." In the same session, the Department of Lands was granted $20,000 to defray expenses until 1926. This must have been the appropriation mentioned by Jones. (see BC Journals, Vol. I, IV, 1924, pp. 91, 191).


21 These were the salmon and herring grounds near Alberni and the halibut fishery in the Charlottes. There does appear to have been a coincidence in the latter choice as Pattullo's Prince Rupert constituency was intimately involved in the
commercial exploitation of the halibut. (see Jones, pp. 16, 19-20, 25-6, SRO AF51/173, and Fisher, op. cit.).

22 Disagreement on these points had scuttled the earlier 1880s proposal. (see Wade, op. cit.).

23 Jones, p. 27, SRO AF51/173.

24 "Hebridean Fishermen for Canada", SRO AF51/172.

25 Memorandum, SRO AF51/172; Jones, p. 26, SRO AF51/173.

26 Provincial government fear of finding itself responsible for a large, newly-arrived, contingent of impoverished crofters had helped to quash the 1880s plan. Jones appears to have been aware of this, hence the attempt to involve the Highlands and Islands Distress Committee and his belief that the families selected should "if possible, possess some capital of their own." (see Jones, pp. 25-27, SRO AF51/173, and Harper, p. 153).


28 Pattullo to Pauline, SRO AF51/173.

29 Efforts were made to save the plan by the Overseas Settlement Committee chairman, Mr. Amery, during a visit to the province later in the year. Although concessions were offered on employment guarantees and the 'tents' if used as a the "last resort", Pattullo demanded a free hand with regard to settlement locations. The Settlement Committee insisted on Jones' original locations. Pattullo refused and informed the Legislative Assembly on Dec. 16, 1925 that the negotiations had been dropped. (see Payne, "Appendix", SRO AF51/186; BC Journals, Vol. I.V, 1925, p. 149).

30 Jones, p. 14, SRO AF51/173.


32 Jones, p. 15, SRO AF51/173.

33 Jones, p. 17, SRO AF51/173.

34 Jones, pp. 17-8, SRO AF51/173.

35 Jones, p. 19, SRO AF51/173.
Jones, p. 20, SRO AF51/173.

Jones, pp. 7-8, SRO AF51/173.

Jones, p. 8, SRO AF51/173.

Jones, pp. 8-9, SRO AF51/173.

Jones, pp. 9-10, SRO AF51/173.

Jones, pp. 4-6, SRO AF51/173.

Jones, pp. 17, 12. "The wages of the white fishermen employed by the Japanese average about 100 dollars a month, or 90 dollars if found in food", Jones, p. 4, SRO AF51/173.

Question 11, Memorandum, SRO AF51/172.

Jones, pp. 20-21, SRO AF51/173.

Jones, p. 21, SRO AF51/173.


Jones, p. 22, SRO AF51/173.

Jones, p. 23, SRO AF51/173.

Jones, pp. 23-24, SRO AF51/173.

Jones, p. 25. In those circumstances, Jones believed that Alberta, with its acres of fertile land "where no clearing is necessary" might prove more attractive. Despite the more severe winters and occasional threat of drought, Hebrideans had successfully "established themselves on farms in Alberta" but most of these were "married people with children of working age (over 14 or 15)", Jones, p. 24, SRO AF51/173.

Estate owners such as Lord Leverhulme, the soap magnate who had acquired Lewis in 1917, continued to believe that the fragmentation of land for crofts was counter to the economic development of the region. Leverhulme halted their creation in favour of developing the deep-sea fishery. (see Hunter, pp. 197-9).

Hunter, pp. 195, 203-5.
Contrary to Jones, the Reverend argued that the “lack of energy” evident in the Lewismen would prevent them from having successful arable farms and that “a settlement along the coast-where [their] natural bent for fishery might have scope - would be the most successful form of settlement.” (see Rev. J. Mc Keracky to Sir John Gilmour, Secretary of State for Scotland, March 11, 1925. SRO AF 51/173).

SRO AF51/172; Jones, pp. 11-13, SRO AF 51/173.

SRO AF51/172.


Adachi, pp.143-44.

Payne to D.N. Hossie, Jan. 21, 1937, SRO AF51/186.

Payne, “Appendix”, SRO AF51/186.

Payne, “Appendix”, SRO AF51/186.

Payne to Floud, “Re: Opportunities for British Fishermen in British Columbia”, Nov. 1936, SRO AF51/186.

Payne, “Opportunities”, SRO AF51/186. After the failure of the 1887 proposal some fishermen from the north-east had proceeded to British Columbia on their own resources. (see Harper, pp. 158-58).

Payne, “Opportunities”, SRO AF51/186.

Payne, “Opportunities”, SRO AF51/186.

G.H. Hogarth, Fishery Board for Scotland to Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, Apr. 17, 1937, SRO AF51/186.


Plant to High Commission, Ottawa, Sept. 27, 1937, SRO AF51/186


*Vancouver Daily Province*, June 8, 1937.
Payne, “Opportunities”, SRO AF51/186.

Payne, “Opportunities”, SRO AF51/186.

Payne to Hossie, Jan. 21, 1937, SRO AF51/186.