



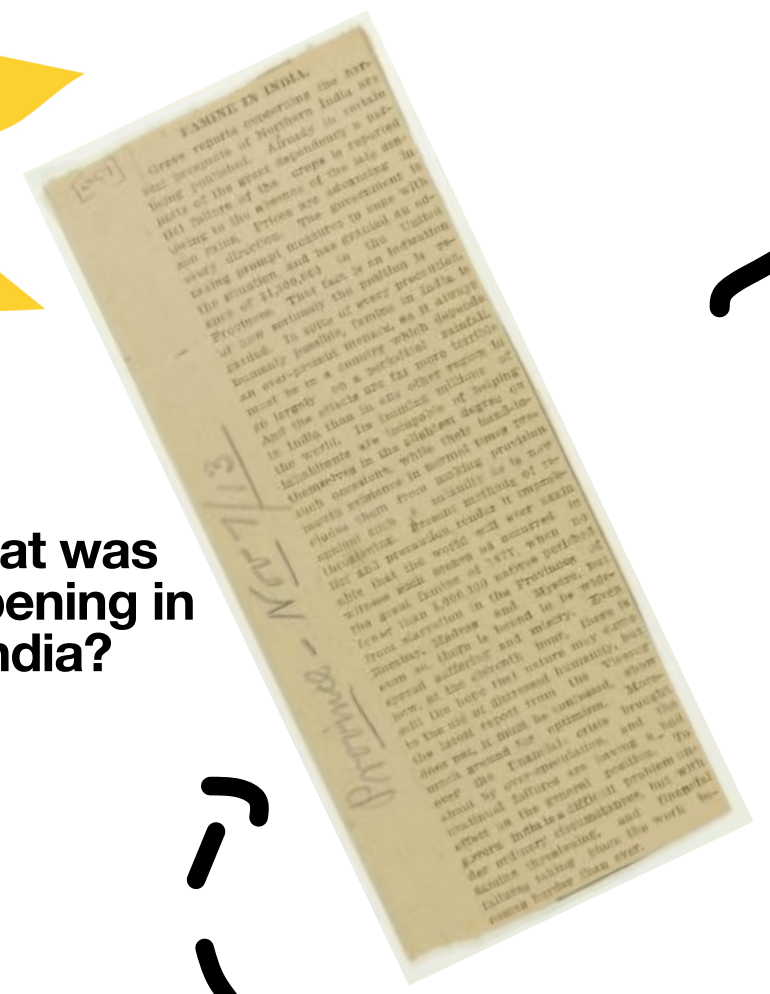
# The Komagata Maru







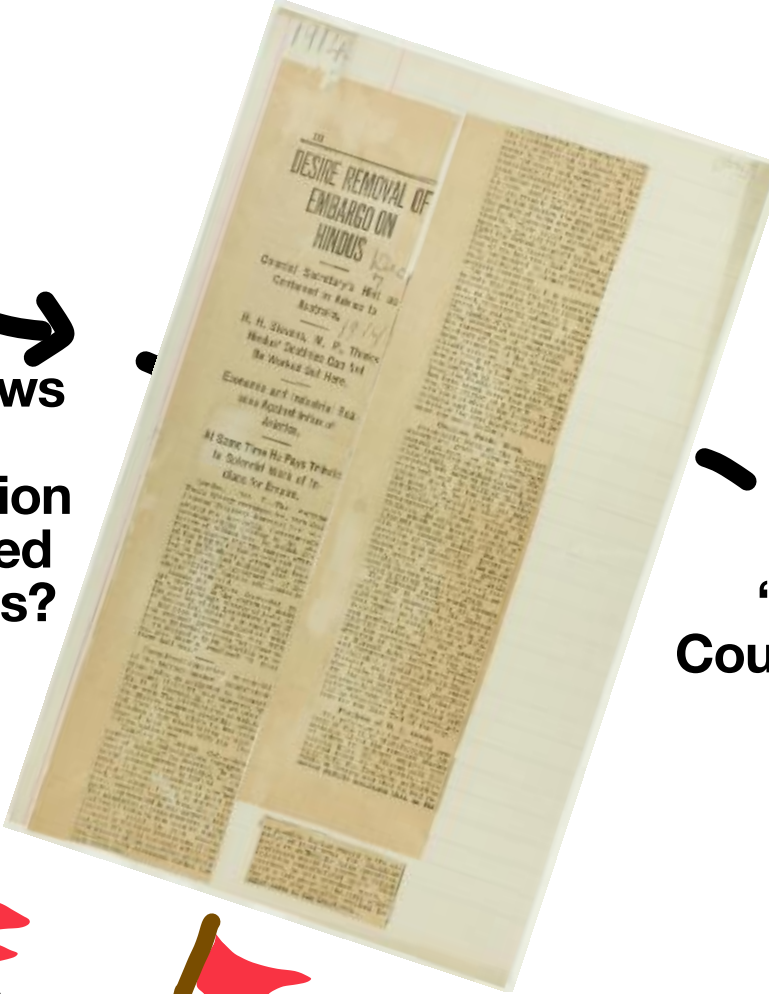
What was happening in India?



What was happening in Canada?



What views about immigration influenced decisions?



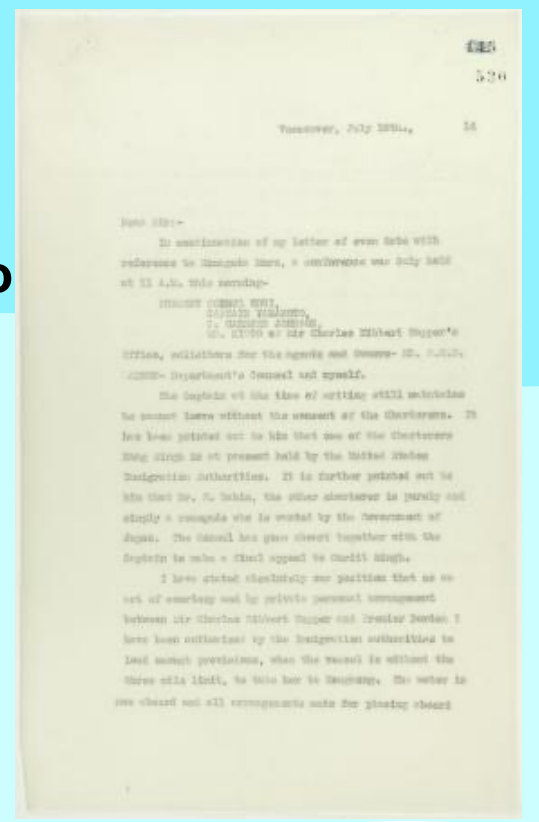
"To our Countrymen":



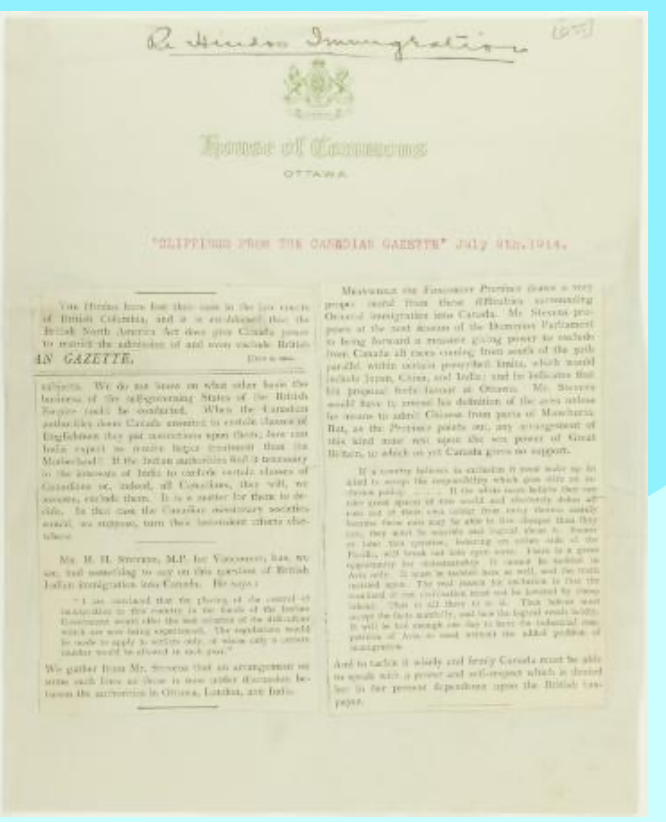
# The Komagata Maru



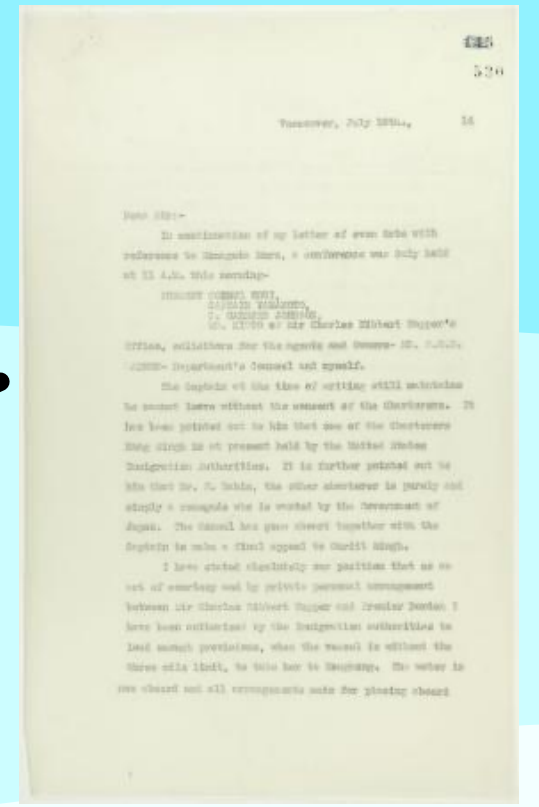
What did departure look like?



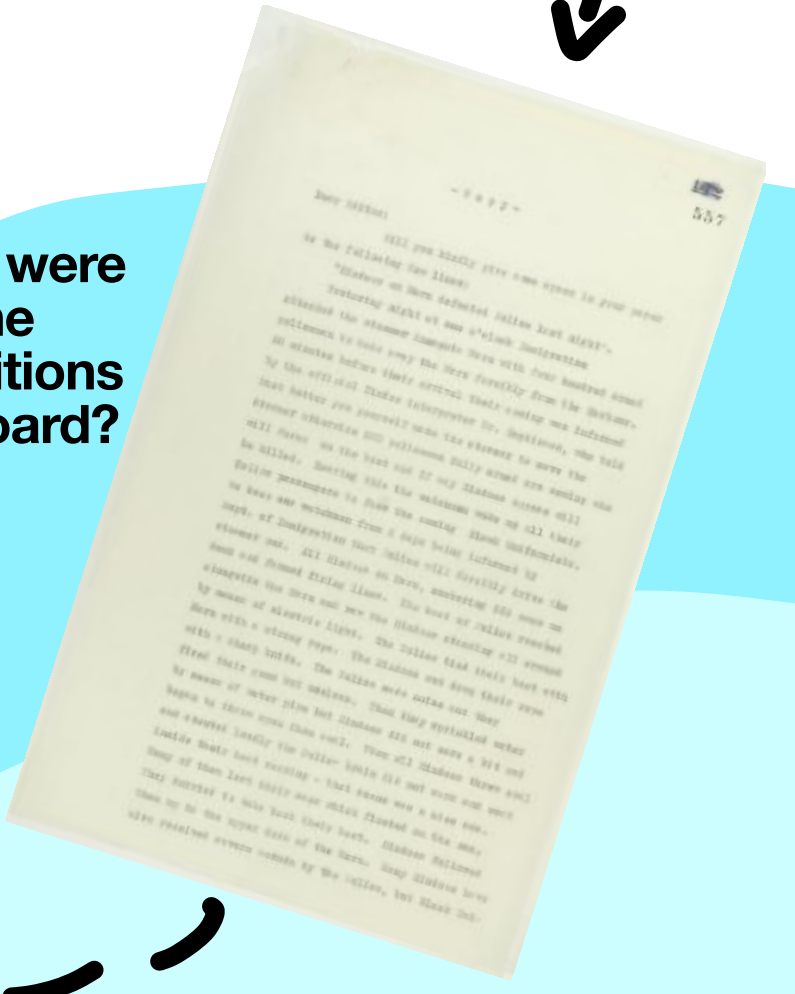
What happened when they lost their case?



What did negotiations look like?



What were the conditions on board?





1887

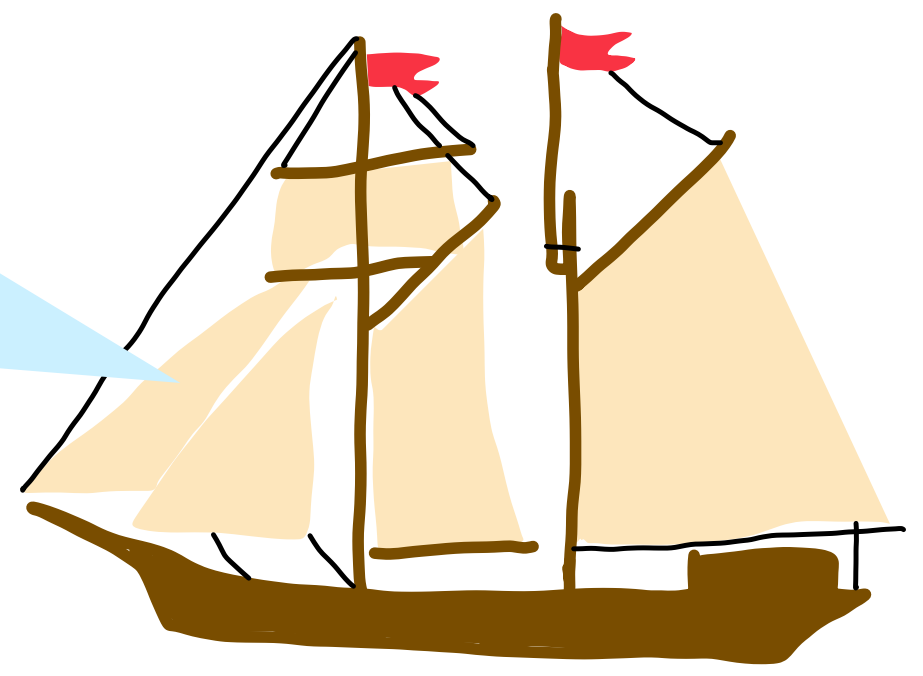
FAMINE IN INDIA.

Grave reports concerning the harvest prospects of Northern India are being published. Already in certain parts of the great dependency a partial failure of the crops is reported owing to the absence of the late autumn rains. Prices are advancing in every direction. The government is taking prompt measures to cope with the situation, and has granted an advance of \$1,500,000 to the United Provinces. This fact is an indication of how seriously the problem is regarded. In spite of every precaution, humanly possible, famine in India is an ever-present menace, as it always must be in a country which depends so largely on a periodical rainfall. And the effects are far more terrible in India than in any other region in the world. Its teeming millions of inhabitants are incapable of helping themselves in the slightest degree on such occasions, while their hard-earned existence in normal times precludes them from making provision against such a calamity as is now threatening. Present methods of relief and provision render it improbable that the world will ever again witness such scenes as occurred in the great famine of 1877, when no fewer than 5,000,000 natives perished from starvation in the Provinces of Bombay, Madras and Mysore, but even so, there is bound to be widespread suffering and misery. Even now, at the eleventh hour, there is still the hope that nature may come to the aid of distressed humanity, but the latest report from the Viceroy does not, it must be confessed, show much ground for optimism. Moreover the financial crisis brought about by over-speculation, and the continual failures are having a bad

Province - Nov 7/13

# What was happening in India?

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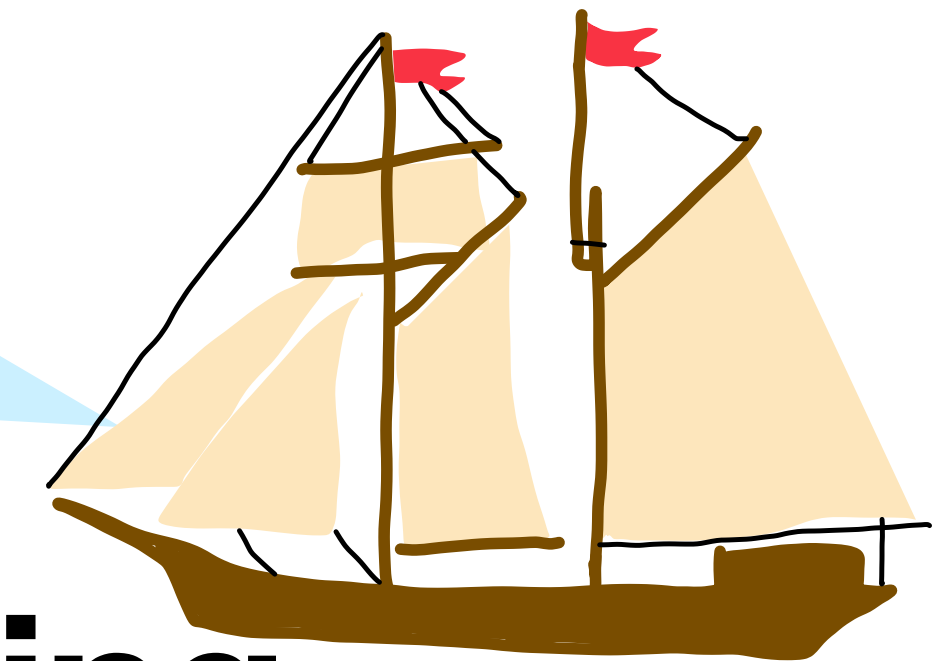


In the year 1913, approximately a year before the Komagata Maru arrived in BC, there was a famine in India. This country survived off periodic rain but even those rains were absent. According to the article, many people feared that the famine would be as severe as the famine of 1877 when around 5,000,000 died. With this terrible famine, the United Provinces were granted an advance of \$1,500,000 showing the severity of the problem. Another problem facing the government was the financial crisis because of “over speculation”. This article provides important background information as to why some passengers boarded the Komagata Maru and came to Canada.

- Vancouver Daily Province newspaper clipping  
 - 1913 November 7  
 - Found [here](#)



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## What was happening in Canada?

Discrimination and racism was all across Canada in the early 19 century. This photograph from New Westminster exemplifies conflict in British Columbia towards Hindus around this time in Canada's history. The destroyed home shows prejudice toward people coming over from India to live in Canada and why the arrival of the Komagato Maru might not be welcome.

- Newspaper clipping "Dynamited Hindus' home"  
- Found [here](#)


DYNAMITED HINDUS' HOME

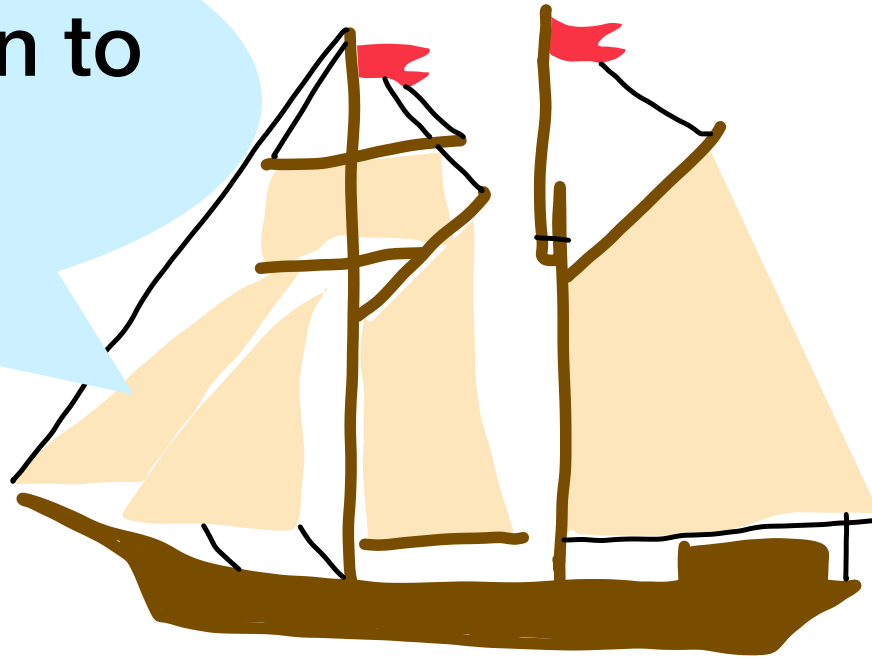






# What views about immigration influenced decisions?

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People all across Canada had many different ideas and views about the laws for Indian Immigration into Canada. While this newspaper article is written in December, 1914 after the Komagata Maru left, it provides a historical perspective about some of the views influencing the incident. In the first paragraph it talks about the “desired removal of embargo on Hindus” but looking further into the article there argues an opposite view. It talks about how the Canadian and British Colombian government’s unwillingness to indiscriminate immigration is “not based off any narrow prejudice but around economic and industrial reasons”. Along with this idea, is another view that “the destinies of India can[not] be worked out by Immigration into Canada”. It was believed by some people at the time, that people from India brought over lots of problems and these problems were not solved by moving to Canada. Even though this article was not written during the Komagata Maru incident, it shows some of the perspectives behind the discrimination by “white” Canadians at the time.

- News clipping “desire removal of embargo on Hindus”  
- 1914 December 7  
- Found [here](#)



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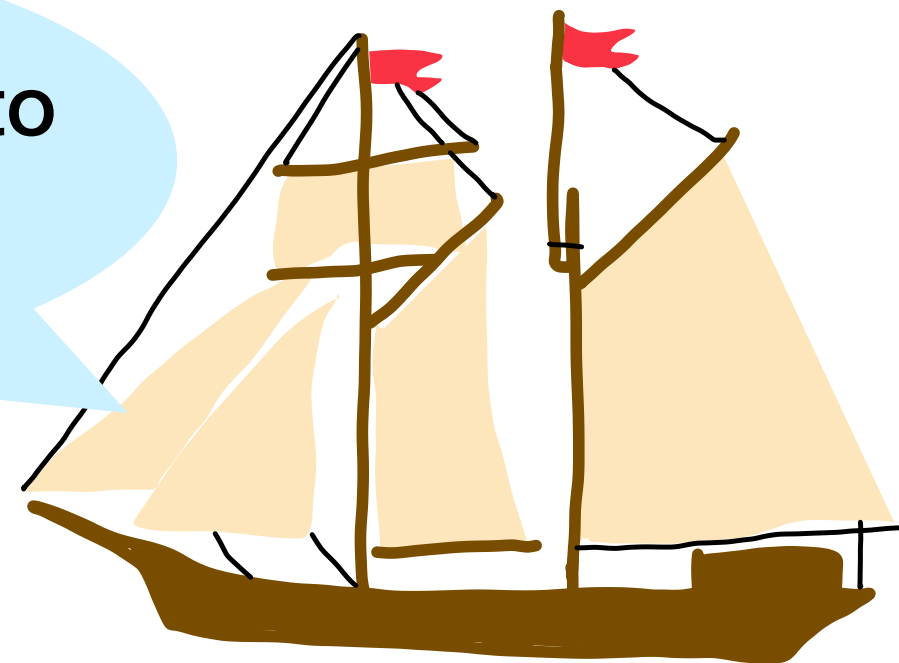
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# “To our Countrymen”:

All the passengers on the Komagata Maru had reasons to leave India and come to Canada. Disease and famine were two such reasons, unfortunately those who left India for those reasons only faced more hunger once arriving in Canada. With crucial evidence, the letter shows that Mr. Singh bought a steamer and allowed anyone aboard who wanted to go to Canada for a very generous fair. Those who couldn't pay the amount still were allowed to come with the promise they would pay him back when they earned money in Canada. After arriving, these British Citizens were shown only hostility and not allowed off of their boat. Police and others kept anyone from trying to help or communicate with the passengers. Their food and water rations eventually ran out and they started to starve. The personal account says that “Our water supply and rations were used up but no one came to make any enquiry, we were days without food or drink.” They wired and asked people for help. They even said they would go home if given food for the trip back but no help was given at the time.

-Message from the passengers of the Komagata Maru to their countrymen  
- Found [here](#)



- 1897 -

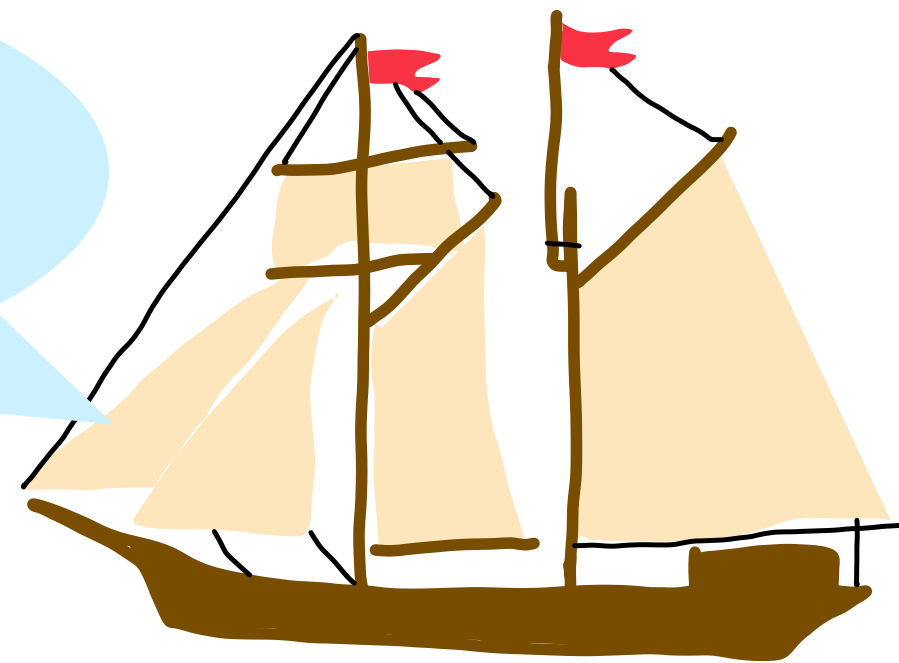
Dear Sirs,

Will you kindly give some space in your paper to the following for issue:

"Hindoos on Maru defeated police last night"

Yesterday night of our vessel Indraghatia attacked the steamer Komagata Maru with four hundred armed soldiers to take away the Maru forcibly from the harbor. 30 minutes before their arrival their coming was informed by the official Customs Interpreter Mr. Johnston, who told that better you yourself make the attempt to save the steamer otherwise you yourselves fully armed are coming via Hill Street on the boat and if any Hindoo vessel will be killed. Hearing this the passengers with all their full preparations to face the coming Hindoo soldiers, in less than 10 minutes from a ship being informed by Capt. of Indraghatia that police will forcibly arrest the steamer out. All Hindoo on Maru, including 300 men on board and several firing lines. The boat of police reached alongside the Maru and saw the Hindoo standing all around by means of electric light. The police that their boat with Maru with a strong rope. The Hindoo men saw their rope with a strong knife. The police were not far out they fired their guns but useless. Then they sprinkled water by means of water pipe but Hindoo did not care a bit and began to throw some stones overboard. Then all Hindoo threw some stones and some of the police boats did not want to get near.

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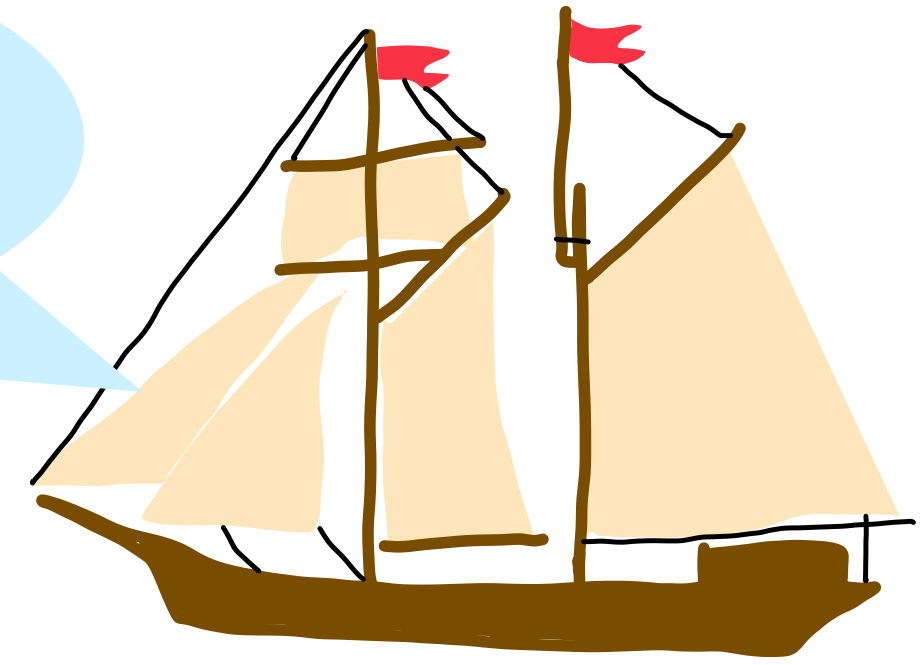


# What were the conditions on board?

This is a letter that passengers on the Komagata Maru wrote on behalf of all the passengers to represent their perspective to Canadians. They wrote this to be submitted to a newspaper asking them to please publish their account of an attack on their ship a few nights before, where the police in the area approached on small boats and tried to attack the Komagata Maru. To the passengers, this was a clear message to "leave". They didn't though. Passengers grabbed whatever they could and threw it at the boats forcing them to leave. In the letter the passengers state that they had shown no hostile signs but the police still attacked them. The passengers believed that this attack was unjustified because there were defenceless and starving people on the boat. It is unknown if the letter was published.

Submission to newspaper,  
 Title: ""Hindoos on Maru defeated police last night,""  
 Found [here](#)

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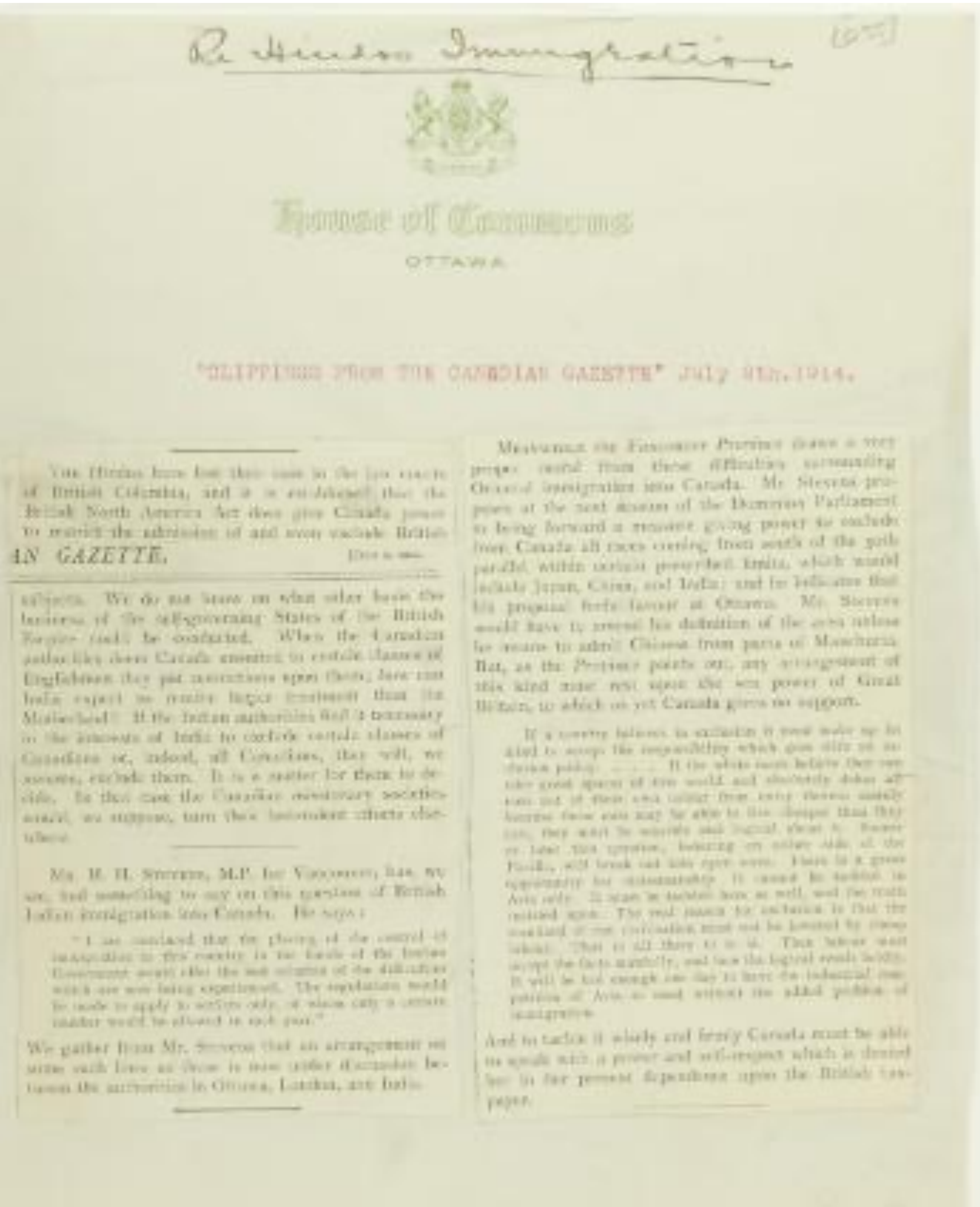


# What did the negotiations look like?

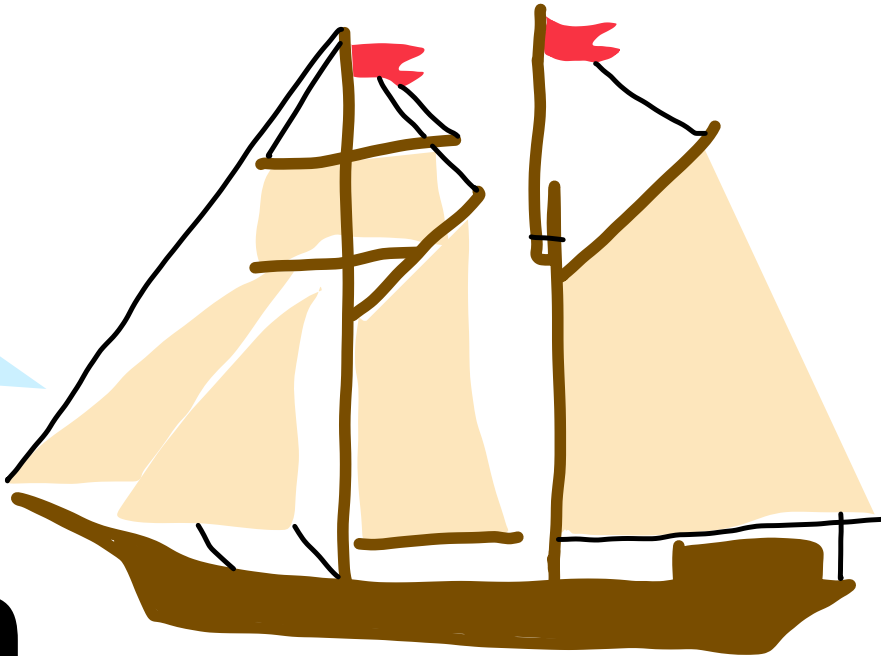
This letter, written by Mr. Reid to Mr. Scott, reveals a little of the negotiations between Mr. Bird, the legal representative for the passengers, and the Canadian Government and Superintendent of Immigration. Mr. Reid writes a Mr. Scott (immigration) informing him that that Mr. Bird advises that the boat be allowed to dock to take on cargo. Also, Mr. Bird asks for the Government to pay \$20,000 for passage and provisions for the return trip. Mr. Reid strongly disagrees with these requests and believes that if the boat is allowed to dock, some passengers might escape causing issues. Furthermore, Mr. Reid requests that the Immigration Department give an order for deportation. This evidence reveals the politics at play during the time the Komagata Maru was stationed off the coast of Canada. It was written the day before the ship is ordered to leave.

Letter to Mr. Scott from Mr. Reid  
Found [here](#)





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# What happened when they lost their case?

From a collection of clippings from the Canadian Gazette, Canadians learn that the passengers of Komagata Maru lost their legal case to stay in Canada. The ship departed near the end of July. The various clippings show the strong opinions about immigration. With winning the legal case, one submission suggests that a motion be brought forward to Parliament that could exclude immigration by certain “classes South the 50th Parallel”. These articles reveal the explicit bias at this time.

- The Canadian Gazette newspaper clippings  
- Found [here](#)



Tuesday, July 28th, 1914


Dear Sir:-

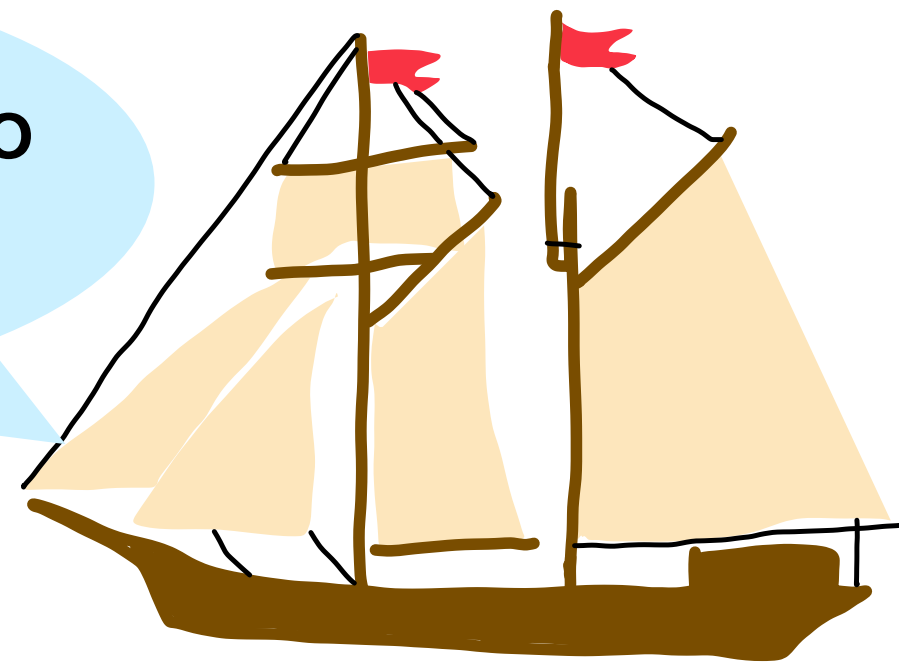
In continuation of my letter of even date with reference to Komagata Maru, a conference was held at 11 A.M. this morning-

MEMBERS PRESENT WERE,  
SIR CHARLES HIBBERT TUPPER,  
T. GARDNER JENNINGS  
M. L. B. OF SIR CHARLES HIBBERT TUPPER'S  
OFFICE, ASSISTANTS FOR THE AGENT AND DEPUTY- M. L. B.,  
-COM- Department's Council and myself.

The Captain of the line of writing still maintains he cannot leave without the consent of the Chartered. It has been pointed out to him that one of the Chartered ships which is at present held by the British Indian Navigation Authorities. It is further pointed out to him that Mr. A. White, the other shareholder is purely and simply a company who is owned by the Government of Japan. The Council has gone ahead together with the Captain to make a final appeal to Her Majesty.

I have stated absolutely our position that as we act of courtesy and by private personal arrangement between Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper and Premier Borden I have been authorized by the Japanese authorities to load some provisions, when the vessel is within the three mile limit, to take her to Hongkong. No water is on board and all arrangements made for getting aboard.

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# What did departure look like?

In a letter to Mr. Reid, Mr. Scott of the immigration department outlines the outcome of a meeting which arranged the details regarding the departure of the Komagata Maru. The immigration department says that “as an act of courtesy, and by private personal arrangement between Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper and Premier Borden that he has been approved to “load enough provisions” when the ship is outside “the three mile limit, to take her to Hong Kong”. He further adds that water is already on board. To make sure the ship follows orders and truly leaves, Mr. Scott reveals that the tug boat will carry 35 armed guards along with the provisions. Police would be present and also be watching for 12 hours to make sure the ship does not turn around. This event stirred up prejudice as Canada debated immigration.

In conclusion, after leaving hardships behind in India, human beings approached British Columbia’s shores to start a new life in Canada, but they were not even given necessities to survive when they were denied entry. They were met with suspicion and hostility. The descendants of the passengers of the Komagata Maru will always remember this injustice and so should all Canadians.

Letter from to Mr. Reid from Mr Scott  
Found [here](#)