

**CHINESE IMMIGRATION: THE SOCIAL,
MORAL, AND POLITICAL EFFECT OF
CHINESE IMMIGRATION. TESTIMONY
TAKEN BEFORE A COMMITTEE OF THE
SENATE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA,
APPOINTED APRIL 3, 1876**

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Chinese Immigration: The Social, Moral, and Political Effect of Chinese Immigration. Testimony Taken Before a Committee of the Senate of the State of California, Appointed April 3, 1876 by Various

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VARIOUS

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TESTIMONY

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Committee of the Senate of the State of California,

APPOINTED APRIL 3, 1876.

CHINESE IMMIGRATION.

On the third day of April, eighteen hundred and seventy-six, in the Senate of the State of California, the Hon. Creed Haymond, Senator from the Eighteenth Senatorial District, offered the following resolutions, which were unanimously adopted:

Be it resolved by the Senate of the State of California, That a committee of five Senators be appointed, with power to sit at any time or place within the State, and the said committee shall make inquiry:

1. As to the number of Chinese in this State and the effect their presence has upon the social and political condition of the State.

2. As to the probable result of Chinese immigration upon the country, if such immigration be not discouraged.

3. As to the means of exclusion, if such committee should be of the opinion that the presence of the Chinese element in our midst is detrimental to the interests of the country.

4. As to such other matters as, in the judgment of the committee, have a bearing upon the question of Chinese immigration. And be it further

Resolved, That said committee, on or before the first day of December, eighteen hundred and seventy-six, shall prepare a memorial to the Congress of the United States, which memorial must set out at length the facts in relation to the subject of this inquiry, and such conclusions as the committee may have arrived at as to the policy and means of excluding Chinese from the country. And be it further

Resolved, That said committee is authorized and directed to have printed, at the State Printing Office, a sufficient number of copies of such memorial, and of the testimony taken by said committee, to furnish copies thereof to the leading newspapers of the United States, five copies to each member of Congress, ten copies to the Governor of each State, and to deposit two thousand copies with the Secretary of State of California for general distribution. And be it further

Resolved, That such committee shall, on or before the first Monday in December, eighteen hundred and seventy-six, furnish to the Governor of the State of California two copies of said memorial, properly engrossed, and the Governor, upon receipt thereof, be requested to transmit, through the proper channels, one of said copies to the Senate and the other to the House of Representatives of the United States. And be it further

Resolved, That said committee have full power to send for persons and papers, and to administer oaths and examine witnesses under oath, and that a majority of said committee shall constitute a quorum. And be it further

Resolved, That said committee shall have power to employ a Sergeant-at-Arms, at a compensation not to exceed two hundred and fifty dollars, and a phonographic reporter at a compensation not to exceed one thousand dollars, and that two thousand dollars of the Contingent Fund of the Senate be set aside, out of which such compensation and the contingent and traveling expenses of the committee shall be paid upon the order of the Chairman thereof. And be it further

Resolved, That said committee report to the Senate, at its next session, the proceedings had hereunder.

Subsequently, on motion, the Senate increased the number of the committee to seven, and the following Senators were appointed on said committee: Senators Haymond, McCoppin, Pierson, Donovan, Rogers, Lewis, and Evans.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMISSION.

STATE CAPITOL,
SACRAMENTO, April 14th, 1876. }

The committee appointed by the Senate of the State of California to investigate the subject of Chinese immigration met at two o'clock P. M.

Present—Senator Raymond, Chairman; Senators Evans, Lewis, Donovan, McCoppin, Rogers, and Pierson.

Frank Shay was elected official reporter, and — Cronk, Sergeant-at-Arms.

* * * * *

The committee adjourned to meet at the City of San Francisco on the eleventh day of April, eighteen hundred and seventy-six.

SAN FRANCISCO, April 11th, 1876.

The committee met pursuant to adjournment—present, all the members—and proceeded to take testimony, as follows:

F. F. Low sworn.

Mr. Pierson—How long did you reside in China?

A.—I resided there about three years and a half.

Q.—In what parts of China?

A.—Chiefly in Pekin; that was my residence.

Q.—Are you familiar with the immigration of Chinese to this State?

A.—Not from personal observation, because I was in a different part of the empire than from whence this immigration comes.

Q.—From where does it come?

A.—Principally from Hong-kong.

Q.—What position did you occupy in China?

A.—Minister Plenipotentiary from the United States to the Emperor of China.

Q.—During what years?

A.—Eighteen hundred and seventy, eighteen hundred and seventy-one, eighteen hundred and seventy-two, and a portion of eighteen hundred and seventy-three.

Q.—Have you any knowledge of the terms upon which the Chinese emigrate from China to this country, either officially or personally?

A.—I have no knowledge.

Q.—Is it voluntary or involuntary? Do they come voluntarily, or are they sent here?

A.—Before I can answer that question perhaps it will be well for me to state that the emigration from Hong-kong is not from China, a fact which seems to have been lost sight of by almost everybody that discusses this question. The Island of Hong-kong is a British possession, ceded to the British Crown by the Government of China, and is organized, I think, the same as Australia. It is a British colony, governed the same as any other British possession.

Q.—Under no jurisdiction of the Chinese Empire at all?

A.—No more than Canada. How these people get to Hong-kong I do not know. I suppose they go in sam-pans, in boats, steamers, and all sorts of ways, and then emigrate from Hong-kong to San Francisco.

Mr. McCoppin—Don't the Chinese come from different parts of China to Hong-kong to take ships there, just as emigrants from England, Ireland, and Scotland used to go to Liverpool?

A.—Yes, sir. But take the Chinese here and you would not find one in a thousand—probably one in five thousand—but that came from Kwang-tung, the province of which Canton is Capital. There are their homes; they are all from one section of the country. We have anglicized "Canton;" made that name out of the original Chinese words "Kwang-tung." So far as it appears from all evidences, all the emigrants from Kong-kong are freemen; indeed, I understand that the British emigration law forbids anybody but voluntary emigrants embarking; forbids a vessel clearing unless all the emigrants on board are voluntary emigrants, and that is to be certified to before the vessel can have a clearing.

Mr. Pierson—Who is the American Consul at Hong-kong, now?

A.—It is not easy to tell you that, the mutations of office are so frequent. David G. Bailey was the last one that I heard of.

Mr. Evans—You are then of the impression that the people do not come here as peons, under contract—that that theory is not correct?

A.—No, sir.

Q.—You think that they come here as free people?

A.—On the face of it, yes; that is the only impression that I have.

Mr. Pierson—Do you know of the existence in Hong-kong, or any part of China, of companies such as they have here?

A.—These companies all have agents in Hong-kong.

Mr. McCoppin—Each company here has an agency there?

A.—I do not speak from absolute knowledge, but that is my understanding. The Chinese people are made up of guilds, of all sorts and kinds, and rule, in this manner, everything sold—as tea, silks, etc., even to the transportation on wheelbarrows. It is all governed by guilds or associations, and these, probably, have some general headquarters in China; probably at the hospital to which the companies here telegraphed a short time since.

Q.—I suppose that is the place where all the people are received or taken prior to being shipped?

A.—That is my belief; I do not know. These people deny that such are the facts; practically, all Chinese come here through means advanced by these companies or individuals, or by people here,

through these companies. I think it is by no means sure that the Southern Pacific Railroad Company is not importing Chinese to-day through these companies. I know the Central Pacific Railroad Company did it.

Mr. Evans—Oftentimes friends and relatives here send for their friends and relatives there, don't they?

A.—There may be individual cases, but not many. I know the Central Pacific Railroad Company imported thousands and thousands of coolies through Chinese agents, and that they advanced money for passage, and took it out in work, with a bonus.

Mr. Pierson—Do you understand that these Chinamen here come under contracts, and that they must work themselves free from them?

A.—Their contract is simply to repay the amount advanced for their passage, with a sufficient bonus to recompense them for the risk, interest, etc. In other words, if they advanced forty dollars for passage they exacted that they should pay one hundred dollars, perhaps, in return, to be deducted from wages—five dollars a month or ten dollars a month, after they arrive; after they work that out they are free.

Q.—In an interview between you and a *Chronicle* reporter—

A.—That was a very imperfect report.

Q.—I did not gather what your ideas were about the Burlingame treaty. From your answers, I infer that no modification of the treaty can help us?

A.—You can see that yourself. Suppose the Chinese come from Australia, any inhibition in the Burlingame treaty could not have anything to do with them. Divest yourself of the idea that Hong-kong is not China, and you have the question in a nutshell.

Mr. McCoppin—So that any modification of the Chinese treaty—

A.—If the British Government and the United States Government should agree to any inhibition regarding the emigration of Chinese from a British port, then the Chinese Government might have cause for a grievance, for they had a treaty with this country, but a modification of the Burlingame treaty could have no effect one way or the other.

Q.—Is not the whole remedy of this evil with Congress? Has it not the power to pass laws restricting this class of immigration?

A.—It is not easy to map out.

Q.—Is not the power there?

A.—Yes, sir; the same as—it all lies there, if anywhere. It is not an easy problem to solve by any means, because of our treaties with China. We derive a large portion of our rights and privileges in China from the fact of the "favored nation" clause in those treaties; that is, when China makes a treaty with the United States, France, Great Britain, and all other countries, it is usual, and I think it is universal, to insert this "favored nation" clause, which reads substantially as follows: "That any rights other than those granted in this treaty, that have or may be granted to any other nation, shall inure to the nation that makes this treaty;" so that all our treaties with China contain that clause, and a very large proportion of our rights that we have there comes through the operation of the "favored nation" clause in our treaties, that we have gathered from other treaties.

Mr. Pierson—The great mass of the immigrants here, of the Chinese, is of the very lowest order of Chinese, is it not?

A.—They are the laboring classes, and, usually coming from sea-port towns, might be considered the lowest class of laborers; the agricultural laborers ranking next to the officials.

Q.—Then we get most of our Chinese immigration from sea-port towns?

A.—I am assuming that they come from the neighborhood of Canton—boatmen and men who work for hire, or the common class of laborers. Agricultural laborers are regarded with great consideration in the social ethics of China; indeed, agriculture has been ennobled by the action of the government. In the gradation of Chinese society the officials hold the highest rank; next come the agricultural laborers; then the manufacturers who increase values by working raw materials into articles of use; then the trader, let him trade in anything—peanuts, or dry goods at wholesale. They are dealers all the same; they exchange commodities, producing nothing.

Q.—His caste is lower than the laborer?

A.—Yes, sir. Then we have the professional man—he is lower still. A lawyer in China is pretty nearly as bad as actors and barbers, who are without the pale of social life.

Mr. Donovan—Then the lawyers are a stage above actors and barbers?

A.—Yes, sir. When I say lawyers, there is practically no such thing; there are men who hang about the Courts, but they answer more to the description of French notaries or conveyancers—men who draw papers. There are no differences in their grades.

Mr. Pierson—Where do we get the bulk of our immigration?

A.—From the laboring classes.

Q.—What are the customary wages of laborers in China?

A.—From ten to twenty cents a day. Perhaps ten cents will be nearer the average for common laborers.

Q.—They support themselves out of that?

A.—Yes, sir.

Q.—How do those people live? What is their social position there? Do they live on the water or on the land?

A.—They live on the land, with the exception of around about the City of Canton, where a great many people live in boats, knowing no law. They make their homes in boats, but that is a very small portion of the population. China is an immense empire, and we are only dealing with the little fringe around the edges. We know comparatively little of the interior.

Q.—I was asking to see if we drew the mass of our immigration from sea-port towns?

A.—I assume we do, for the laborers; the men who own a little piece of land and cultivate it will not come here, because they are independent. Those only who are obliged to work for wages will come. I speak now of the mass. Of course some merchants come here, because they will go anywhere where there is profit to be made in trade and traffic.

Q.—Now as to their education—can the lower classes of people read and write?

A.—Most of them can, to a certain extent.

Q.—What is their system of education; is it a governmental system?

A.—No, sir. It is all private education. They have neighborhood schools that are supported by the voluntary contributions of the