

**THE CHINESE EXCLUSION ACT:
REPORT AND RESOLUTIONS
ADOPTED BY THE CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE OF THE STATE OF
NEW YORK, DECEMBER 5, 1889**

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The Chinese Exclusion Act: Report and Resolutions Adopted by the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York, December 5, 1889 by Various

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VARIOUS

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REPORT AND RESOLUTIONS

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CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

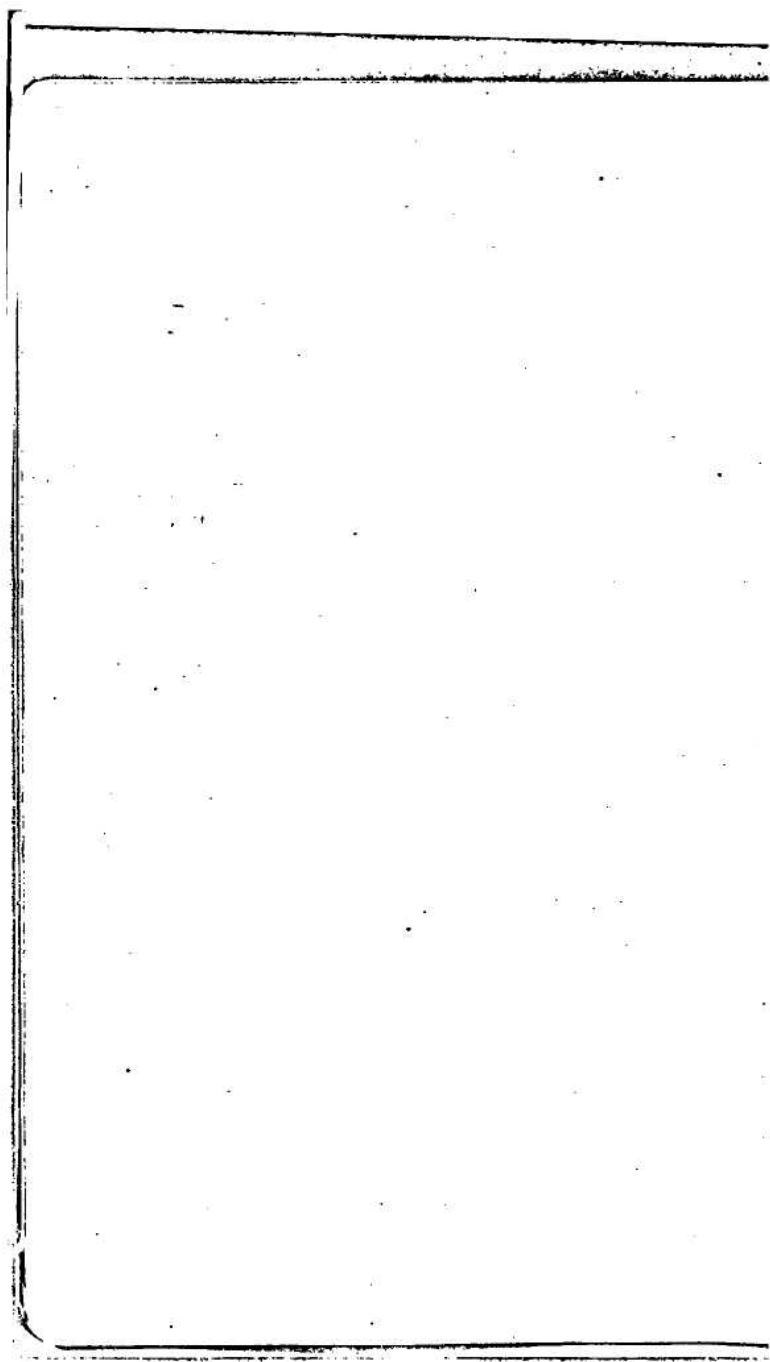
OF THE

STATE OF NEW YORK (*State*) — ^

DECEMBER 5, 1889.

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THE CHINESE EXCLUSION ACT.

REPORT AND RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, DECEMBER
5, 1888.

The committee on Foreign Commerce and the Revenue Laws, to which was referred a communication from Mr. C. P. Huntington relating to the Chinese Exclusion Act, submits the following report:

The attention of the Chamber has been called to this subject by a letter addressed to Mr. A. A. Low, a member of the Chamber, by Mr. C. P. Huntington, also a member, and by Mr. Low referred to the Chamber. As this letter is the basis of our inquiry and embodies the views of many of the people of the United States, it is proper that it should be given in full. It is as follows:

New York, November 24th, 1888.

A. A. Low, Esq.,

Burling Slip, New York City.

Dear Sir: I do not carry in my mind whether you have altogether retired from the China trade; but I know you still have a keen interest in the national prosperity and in the dignity and honor of this Government. I suppose you felt as most other people did, last summer, when Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, that it was an unworthy proceeding which nothing but the necessities of a partisan struggle could have brought about. It may have been foreseen, and perhaps was pointed out at the time, that the Government of China had it in its power to inflict far more serious harm upon our country than we could upon China, even supposing that the coming of the Chinese was the injury to our laboring people which was charged. It seems that without uttering a word or lifting a finger the Chinese are enabled to retaliate effectively against our commerce; so that we have not only offered them a wanton affront, but also injured ourselves in a twofold way, by excluding a tractable and cheap labor which we very much need to build up our desolate places; and by the loss of a valuable trade which we might have kept to the exclusion of our rivals. A gentleman direct from Chinese and Japanese ports tells me that since the news of the passage of the Exclusion Act reached China American agents there have been unable to sell any of the coarser cotton textile fabrics, of which they had been taking large quantities. Their wants are supplied from other sources; England, I suppose. They offer

no explanation for this change of policy, but simply say they are not buying, just as soon as they can supply themselves with petroleum from Asiatic oil wells we may expect that trade to follow. Clocks and machinery can be supplied by the English and Germans who would be glad to relieve us of the trade. The tea, matings, raw silks and other commodities which we need and can buy nowhere else, Americans will have to pay for in coin, or exchange on London, when we might have paid for them with our own products.

Is not this a heavy price to pay for the luxury of the hoodlum vote of California. It is to be hoped that the expiring Congress will find time to undo this peralcious piece of spiteful legislation; or, if not, that the incoming administration will so interpret the law and instruct its ministers so as to restore the lost amity. Just how this is to be brought about, you know as much as I do.

It occurs to me that the New York Chamber of Commerce might properly speak on this subject, and I know of no one so well fitted as yourself to move in this matter. If you will undertake it, please do so; and if I can be of any assistance to you in the matter, I shall cheerfully render it. It seems to me this is a clear case where patriotic duty calls for prompt action.

Very respectfully yours,

C. P. HUNTINGTON

That the sentiments of this letter are not peculiar to its author, but are shared by many others in all parts of the United States, is manifest from the following expressions taken from prominent public journals.

The *Commercial*, of Louisville, says:

"The Chinese question is receiving a larger share of public attention as it becomes apparent that the ill effects of the Exclusion Act are manifold and certain, while it is exceedingly doubtful whether 'exclusion' can really be accomplished."

The *Bulletin*, of Providence, R. I., says:

"For the inspiration of the whole disgraceful business was not the public welfare nor the public dignity, but the desire to advance public party interests by satisfying a clamoring crowd of Pacific coast voters. With few exceptions the leaders of either party were only too eager to grant whatever the sand lot crowd of San Francisco desired. * * * So generally was this understood that the harsh construction put upon the act in the late administration was accepted without question everywhere as fairly embodying the purpose of Congress; and no one, even among those who deplored the law and felt humiliated in their citizenship by it, ever thought to doubt the correctness of the decision, but looked upon it as the natural conclusion to a piece of shameful demagogism.

"Some day, doubtless, we shall learn that by insulting a sensitive people who are essential to the development of our commerce on the Pacific, and who might have been made valuable customers, we have spited nobody so much as ourselves."

"The San Francisco *Report*," says the *Atlanta Journal*, "has amended the California slogan, 'The Chinese must go.' It says that the agriculturists who cannot get along without them must also go; that 'if they have become so far demoralized as to prefer to associate with yellow slaves rather than with their

fellow-countrymen, California can hardly be a desirable place of residence for them.' Isn't it about time to consider whether we are not pushing to hurtful extremes the policy of excluding workmen from this country."

"The St. Paul *Pioneer Press* characterizes the regulation forbidding Chinese laborers from landing at American ports, for any purpose whatever, as being 'about as stringent as the old anti-Huguenot laws of France.' And that paper goes on to say, 'It is to the material interest of this country to cultivate friendly relations with China. We want her trade, now largely going to Great Britain, but we cannot expect to get it by hurling exclusion acts at her. As a matter of fact the anti-Chinese laws now existing have not kept many Chinese out of the country. They come in with the greatest ease through British Columbia and Mexico. There are just as many Chinese in the country as there were in 1882. This is the result of about forty years' immigration. And, as these people cling more fondly to their native heath than any other in the world, the dangers of their overrunning this continent, even if all its ports were thrown open to them, is altogether imaginary."

The *Omaha Bee* declares that "the matter possesses the interest of an international question, the decision of which will hardly fail to have a more or less important bearing upon our future relations with China," and "the Chinese government may reasonably be expected to regard the discrimination against its people as evidence of a scathed hostility to them which self-respect would compel it to resent. Chinese merchants have already done so to the detriment of our commerce with China, but a further evidence of American aversion to the people of China may move the government of that country to take notice of the feeling in a way that might prove of a considerable damage to us."

The *Daily Commercial Bulletin*, of New York, in the course of a long and well considered article on "China as a Market for Americans," after commenting on the enterprising tendencies of the present government of China, says:

It is absolutely certain, that the opening up of China, with its enormous population, must, despite native views to the contrary, mean a great impetus to her foreign trade. The railroad ordered to be made will be followed by similar enterprises in other directions. The interior of China, of which we know so little, and the inhabitants of which know still less about us, will then be brought into contact with Western manufacturers; and it needs no spirit of prophecy to tell what the tremendous outcome of that will be. With an area of about 5,000,000 square miles, and a population of over 400,000,000 souls, the possibilities of international trade with the Chinese Empire in future generations are altogether beyond calculation.

In this connection it will be well to examine our own position with regard to the commerce of China. A return recently issued by the Maritime Customs Office of that country gives the imports of foreign merchandise (apart from the junk trade with Hong Kong and Macao) for the year 1888 as \$130,000,000—an increase on 1887 of 11 per cent. This improvement is part of a continuous growth, as the imports for the following years show.

1883	.....	\$91,500,000	1886	.....	\$109,000,000
1884	.....	99,000,000	1887	.....	117,500,000
1885	.....	110,000,000	1888	.....	130,000,000

The increase in the six years is thus no less than 43 per cent. Of the total imports last year, cotton goods represent \$55,000,000, or 43 per cent. Our exports to China (exclusive of Hong Kong) were as follows:

YEAR ENDING JUNE 30.			
1883	.....\$4,100,000	1886	.....\$7,500,000
1884	.....4,600,000	1887	.....6,200,000
1885	.....6,400,000	1888	.....4,600,000

These exports are made up almost entirely of cotton goods and petroleum. The exports of the former were greatest in 1887, when they reached \$5,180,000, and of the latter in 1886, when they reached \$2,400,000. For the year 1889 it is expected that the volume of imports into China will show the rate of expansion well maintained. For the year ending 30th June last our exports of cotton goods have fallen to \$1,500,000, and of petroleum to \$900,000—a decrease of 71 and 61 per cent. respectively from the best figures shown during the preceding six years. Thus, not only have we had no share in the increased imports into China, but have lost ground absolutely as well as relatively. In both leading divisions the decline can in some degree be traced to the natural effects of successful competition of other countries, notably Great Britain in cottons, and Russia in petroleum. It is certain, however, that it has been accelerated by the resentment aroused in China by our anti-Chinese legislation. The position demands the attention of our government as well as of our manufacturers, and we believe that when it is fully realized steps will be taken to regain the friendly interests of a nation whose possibilities are well nigh as great as our own.

The *Japan Gazette*, of Yokohama, 26th September, in a long article on "The United States and China," referring to reported measures of retaliation on the part of China for the treatment of the Chinese in the United States, says:

It is not easy to discover that any other course than the one which formed the subject matter of the conference remains for China to adopt as a counter thrust for the humiliation and indignity America has cast upon her. It is far from our desire to say that the United States was not perfectly justified in adopting the measure she did to prevent the celestial octopus stretching its vicious self over her territory. Justification in the highest existed. Chinese immigration thither had assumed alarming proportions and it was characterized by all those damning features ever associated with the Chinese element. The danger is one which faces America just as it has faced the Colonies, and it is well for those of our own color that it should be opposed by the best modes of defense. Only one result is aimed at, but it may be possible to achieve all that is desired by a plurality of methods. Perhaps America has not adopted the right one; at any rate she has clearly ruffled Chinese dignity. Such a decided act as hers, although, as we think, justified, was perhaps impolitic as the result indicates.

With these expressions of opinion as to the effect of the act and its policy, as an introduction, we now proceed to give as briefly as possible a record of the events that have led up to the present