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### CHINESE LABOR IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

About one-fourth the population of British Columbia is Chinese, against whom Anglo-Saxon antipathy is becoming conspicuously aggressive. The Provincial Legislature has already passed an Act for subjecting the Mongolians to an exceptional tax, and the question whether it is to be confirmed or disallowed, at Ottawa, must soon be decided. The English-speaking population of British Columbia is by no means satisfied that this tax should form the complete measure of active hostility to the race against which it is directed. Mr. DeCosmos, supported by other members for the Pacific Province, has brought the whole question of Chinese immigration to Canada before the House of Commons, and obtained the appointment of a committee of enquiry. He does not stop short in his desire to exclude the Chinese from the Province of which he is a representative.

His attack on the Chinese in British Columbia is based on economical, moral and religious grounds; and in the short discussion which preceded the appointment of the committee, some sentiments, which can only be qualified as monstrous, found utterance. The Chinese are objected to as pagans; that is, they have a religion different from ours. Happily, the day has passed when men can be excluded from any part of the British empire on account of their religion. Whatever faults the English-speaking races may have, they are not intolerant. The use of this weapon against the Chinese would create sympathy in their favor; and if Mr. DeCosmos and his colleagues do not wish to discredit their cause in the eyes of the world, they had better not attempt to invoke a spirit of intolerance, for the response would be exactly the reverse of what they desire. Morally, the Chinese in British Columbia may possibly be worse than their neighbours; but the difference would not properly constitute a

ground of exclusion. They are accused of selling women; but a practice that is contrary to law ought to be capable of being put down.

The economic aspect of the question is likely to prove the most important. But there are two sides even to that question. Cheap labour, in a country in which savage nature in a thousand forms requires to be subdued, is not in itself an evil. On the contrary, it is a great advantage. The statement is made that this labour excludes a more desirable kind of labourers than the Mongolians; but we do not know to what extent the objection is true. Mr. DeCosmos states the total population of the province, exclusive of Indians, at 25,000; and gives the number of Chinese at 6,000, or a little less than a fourth of the whole. He then tells us how this fourth is employed: 3,000, one-half of the whole, as domestic servants; 1,800 as gold miners; 150 as shoemakers; 300 as labourers; 100 as tailors; 500 as gardeners; 500 in the fisheries, and 50 as peddlers. How completely transient these visitors to our shores are is shown by the fact that only four out of the 6,000 are said to own real estate, and that only to the insignificant aggregate amount of \$12,000. They have, we are told, no wives or families to support; and so long as this is the case, it is difficult to see how they can become a settled part of the population. The nature of the employment in which these people engage puts a limit to the number that can live. The demand for domestic servants, shoemakers, and tailors, is regulated by the wants of the rest of the population, and cannot be increased beyond that limit. Here no doubt Chinese exclude others who would become permanent residents; and though this is a real evil, it does not follow that it would justify exclusion or any very great degree of exceptional treatment.

The only two directions in which Chinese labour can be indefinitely extended is in mining and fishing. In these employments, the field is practically unlimited. It is difficult to see how their increase, even to very large numbers, as miners, could be disadvantageous to British Columbia. There are two ways in which they could be employed as miners: either as washers of gold, on their own account, or as labourers under the direction of capitalists, provided with machinery. In the former capacity, they are most likely to employ themselves; and here it is conceivable that their ability to live on less than the rest of the population might be a real advantage to the Province. We know that the number of persons engaged in mining is much less than it was once; for the reason that the pro-

duct was insufficient to remunerate dear labour. If this cheap race can glean gold which the Anglo-Saxon must leave in the beds of streams, the effect will be an increase of the productions of the Province. Admit that all the savings are sent out of the country, there would still remain the profit made by selling supplies to these labourers. So far as they pursued the fishery, on their own account, the same advantage would result, though they would not here be using the magic power of making productive what would otherwise have remained sterile.

Mr. DeCosmos enters into some calculations, in which, he has managed to get confused, though he will fail to confuse intelligent readers of his speech. He assumes that if the 6,000 Chinese were withdrawn, an equal number of a superior race would take their place. This could be true only on the supposition that the Chinese, man for man, are capable of doing as much work as an English, Irish, or German. He then goes on to attempt to show that the labour of 6,000 Anglo-Saxons would produce \$2,400,000 against \$1,800,000 which the labour of as many Chinese would produce; in other words, the labour of the Anglo-Saxon would cost so much more. Now, economically, the effect of this would be that a given amount of capital employing Chinese labour would be much more productive than if it employed Anglo-Saxon labour. This result, considered by itself, would be a clear advantage to the country. No doubt deductions would have to be made, on account of the exclusion of labourers who would naturally become permanent settlers.

The programme of Mr. DeCosmos is formidable enough. He wants England to revise her treaties with China, with a view of preventing Chinese emigration to Canada, which he is not very likely to get; he wants the exceptional Tax Bill of the Local Legislature confirmed; he wants a law passed prohibiting Chinamen from becoming owners or lessees of real estate; a very unnecessary provision if they now own only \$12,000 of real estate in the Province. It is needless to say that this programme, in most respects little creditable to its author, cannot be carried out. At the same time, Mr. DeCosmos may be thanked for having set on foot a very necessary enquiry.

### THE "PEMBINA BRANCH" AGAIN.

It appeared when we last wrote on this subject as if, by granting a lease to the firm of Upper & Co., the Government had provided against any further trouble in operating the Pembina Branch. It seems, however, that even a more serious obstacle