

Chinese Immigration

which on this side are primarily of economic concern.

Mr. TOLMIE: British Columbians as a whole are anxious to maintain international relations and also to maintain our high standard as a Christian community; but we do not want to do that at the expense of giving up our country to the Asiatics. I will just read this telegram from the Retail Merchants' Association of Victoria:

Retail Merchants of Victoria strongly opposed to Bill 45 feeling that the word "merchant" is much too vague. Oriental question in British Columbia has become alarming.

H. O. KIRKHAM,
President.

We might glance just for a moment at the result of past legislation. In 1885, we had a head tax passed of \$50 a head on Chinese. In 1901, this was increased to \$100; in 1904, to \$500, and in 1919, an order in council was passed keeping out skilled and unskilled labour. Then certain privileges were extended to students, and as has already been pointed out by one of the representatives from British Columbia, the Chinese abused that privilege. After a "student" came in he would attend a school for a short time, and then he would be found peeling potatoes in some hotel kitchen. He was not a student at all, but simply a labourer. We extended certain privileges to merchants, and in one year, 1921, no less than 1,145 "merchants" came in under that heading. In 1904, the Chinese population of Canada was only 14,000. It is now 58,000 and 38,000 of those are located in British Columbia. This indicates that our past legislation has been totally inadequate to meet the situation. I feel, like some hon. gentlemen who have spoken already, that if we do not have total exclusion, we must have something as close to that as possible, if we are going to get along and attain the ends we desire.

In the present bill before the House, the clause dealing with merchants leaves the question pretty wide open. I have listened with a great deal of interest to the remarks of the Prime Minister, and I must say that if this inspector whom he is going to send over to the other side is to keep out Chinese merchants or to have them come in only under the proper head, strict regulations will have to be made and carried out to the letter. This is of the utmost importance to us in British Columbia. I have lived in British Columbia all my life, and I can remember when in Victoria there was only one Chinese merchant; now we have thousands of them located there, and there are thousands of them in Vancouver. We have them controlling several lines of

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

agricultural work; we have them controlling practically, or very nearly, the whole of the fishing business and gaining on us every year, and they are becoming more powerful now that they have money as they did not have before. If the white people of British Columbia are going to be able to compete with these Chinese, they must lower their standard of living, live under cheaper conditions and in cheaper houses, wear cheaper clothes and eat less food. The Chinese do not and never will assimilate with our people, as has been proved to be the case in every country in which they have settled. We quite understand that the application of regulations that will be necessary will bring hardship on some people; but we must meet the situation courageously and apply those regulations in an effective manner. The whole aim of our immigration regulations and laws is to keep out the bad and undesirable people, and to let in those that are good.

I might refer for a moment to conditions existing across the Pacific, the tremendous populations there. In China alone there is a population of 400,000,000, many of whom have been kept on the edge of starvation owing to the heavily populated condition of the country, with the result that it has been found in all countries where they have settled, they are able to put up a class of work more cheaply and under rougher conditions than any other labour that is to be found in the world.

Let us consider what might happen in the case of a little laxity in our immigration laws. In the United States at the end of the Civil War, there was a coloured population of only 400,000. This has increased until at the present time there are over 10,000,000. Surely that is enough to make Canadians sit up and take notice of this Asiatic question. We cannot be too particular in allowing immigration to come to this country, for the reason that the very same men whom we are allowing in now, and their offspring, will in the future play an important part in building up the national life of this country, and the standard of our national life should be jealously guarded in every possible way.

I quite agree that we should like to have oriental trade, but if we are going to permit any laxity in connection with Chinese immigration or make too many concessions in order to get this trade, we shall find in all probability that we shall secure this trade at the expense of many of the industries of the country. My experience of Asiatics, and particularly the Chinese, has been in the past that they will buy where they can get goods cheapest. If we have goods to sell at prices that appeal to the Chinese, the 400,000,000 on