

Private Members' Business

I realize that time is important and is passing. Perhaps I may do what an author is not supposed to do and quote from my own book on the subject. I would like to quote from *Western Canadians in Confederation*. In part it indicates that Western Canada in 1986 had approximately 170,000 persons of solely Chinese origin and about 22,000 more of partly Chinese descent. Seven in ten single origin Chinese western Canadians live in British Columbia, and fully 100,000 of these reside in the Vancouver area. A little less than half of all Canadians of single Chinese origin live in the four western provinces, Yukon, and Northwest Territories. The book continues:

Chinese Canadians born outside Canada have come from many countries. The 1981 census shows that in this group 24 per cent were born in Taiwan; 23 per cent in China; 9 per cent in Vietnam; 4 per cent in Malaysia or Singapore; and 34 per cent elsewhere, primarily Hong Kong. Eighty-seven per cent of those born outside Canada entered Canada during the 1965-81 period and in recent years approximately 13,000 have entered Canada, many from Hong Kong, as entrepreneurs. The unemployment rate for both Chinese men and women was at the time of the 1981 census less than that for Canadian men and women as a whole. Considerably more Chinese Canadians (28 per cent) than all Canadians (16 per cent) have some university education.

Western Canadians of Chinese origin are part of the huge Diaspora of more than eight million "overseas Chinese" who have prospered from South Asia to the Caribbean. As late as the sixteenth century, China had the highest standard of living on earth. During the eighteenth century, its population more than doubled, reaching 430 million by 1850. When Europeans forcibly opened China's markets in the 19th century, its cottage cloth industry was all but destroyed by machine-made foreign cloth. A migration of young men became necessary to help feed their closely-knit families who were left at home.

The first of these men from China came to British Columbia in 1858, lured by the Fraser River gold rush, and by 1860 approximately 4,000 of them lived in the lower mainland of the colony. Some mined, others sold vegetables or wood, or operated restaurants and laundries.

The legal equality in the workplace of those who stayed after the gold rush was removed by the B.C. provincial legislature in 1878 when it unanimously resolved that persons of origin in China could no longer be hired on provincial public works—a rule which astonishingly remained in effect until after World War II. The franchise was denied them in 1872.

Nonetheless, as many as 17,000 Chinese came to B.C. between 1881 and 1884 to assume a Herculean part in the completion of the Canadian Pacific rail line between the Fraser Canyon and Vancouver. As the project neared completion, the B.C. provincial government encouraged them to leave the region through such

measures as a \$10 head tax on all Chinese, banning the removal of dead bodies back to China, denying Chinese the right to buy provincial Crown land, and prohibiting further immigration from China. Prime Minister Macdonald's government in Ottawa played its part by imposing \$50 head tax on all Chinese entering Canada after 1886.

• (1750)

That was to its shame. The book continues:

In 1900, Prime Minister Laurier raised the head tax to \$100, and in 1904 to \$500. In 1923, the government of Mackenzie King barred all Chinese immigration, and it did not begin again until the legislation was finally repealed in 1947.

The combination of legislated and other discrimination against the Chinese in British Columbia and better opportunities to establish small businesses elsewhere in Canada, by 1921 had caused an estimated 40 per cent of the 40,000 Chinese then resident in Canada to move eastward, some as far as Newfoundland. Virtually every prairie town soon had a Chinese restaurant and laundry.

Sadly, Madam Speaker, the books continues:

The three prairie legislatures proved not immune to anti-Chinese propaganda seeping over the mountains. The Saskatchewan assembly disenfranchised Chinese as early as 1908, which meant in practice that they could not vote in federal elections either or join professions whose associations required members to be registered voters. The prairie fever—

I could call it a plague:

—here reached a sufficiently high temperature that the Saskatchewan and Manitoba governments, even before British Columbia's, barred Chinese restaurants from hiring white women out of a preposterous fear that they would be introduced to opium and sold into white slavery.

Between 1924 and 1946, only eight Chinese immigrants entered Canada because of Mackenzie King's Chinese exclusion law of 1923. Many of the Chinese men already resident in Canada thus aged without families in Canada.

A minute ago we heard Mr. Yee's family story, the president of CCNC. There are all kinds of tragic stories of this type. It continues:

Ironically, events of World War II helped the Canadian Chinese cause because white Canadian sympathy for China grew markedly as a result of the Japanese aggression there. As the historians Jin Tan and Patricia Roy point out, "(During the war,) racial prejudice became unfashionable." The Vancouver Parks Board, for example, repealed its rule that Chinese persons could swim at a public pool only during a specified two-hour period once weekly. The legislature of Saskatchewan restored the franchise in 1944 and in 1945 British Columbia enfranchised everyone who had served in either World War, including the Chinese but not the Japanese. The public on the coast generally welcomed the repeal of Ottawa's Chinese Immigration Act in 1947.