

Is Oriental Immigration in Canada Desirable?

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No one can reside in this Province for any length of time without being made aware that the question of Oriental Immigration is one which is giving the people very deep concern. Within recent years this concern is spreading to all parts of the Dominion as it is evident that peaceful penetration in this wide country is the policy of the Orientals. If viewed in its local aspects the question loses its more fundamental bearings and becomes almost a personal question of economic and industrial competition. Before, however, the full significance of the movement can be appreciated it is necessary to study Immigration in its wider aspects. When thus viewed it becomes a question of the intermingling of races of different types with a world wide significance.

THE CAUSES OR FACTORS ENTERING INTO THE IMMIGRATION MOVEMENT.

The following indicate the main lines and forces:—

(1) The constitutional tendency of the human race to wander up and down upon the earth. Whether this be due to hereditary tendencies or to the narrower urge of personal curiosity it remains a fact that from the dawn of history man has been a wanderer.

(2) The magnitude of the movement in recent years has resulted from the greatly increased facilities for travel. Formerly races were comparatively isolated and intercourse was maintained by diplomats, travellers, traders and missionaries. The steamship, railway, telegraph and telephone have made the world a community. Modern business sought exchange of goods. The result has been a redistribution of races and human interests. In 1870 the cost of transportation in Europe was so great that grain could not be sold over two hundred miles from where it was grown. In 1883 the United States began to pour its grain into Europe which resulted in an agricultural crisis in every Western European country.

(3) Economic reasons enter into the question. For over 30 years people have been leaving the land and crowding into our large cities. The city has thus become the centre of a vast uprooted crowd of seasonal and casual workers. The pressure has been great and eager eyes seek new opportunities. The great transportation companies tell of the free land in the vast unoccupied countries and the streams turn thither. Canada, the United States, South America, South Africa and Australia all have their immigration questions, prominent among which is the Oriental. The crowded conditions of India, China and Japan constitute the economic necessity which impels adventure elsewhere.

(4) The psychological factor is becoming more apparent. Formerly the white races dominated the world. Within a generation has appeared a movement among the colored races protesting against this domination and demanding the right of self-determination. Its significance ought not to be minimized. Indicative of the power of this movement may be noted four recent books:—"The Rising Tide of Color Against White World Supremacy," by Lothrop Stoddard; "Following the Color Line," by Ray Stannard Baker; "Black and White in South East Africa," by Maurice Evans; "The Japanese Invasion," by Jesse F. Steiner. It is evident that the day of unquestioning acceptance of white domination has passed away and that any settlement of the immigration question must be made on a new basis.

From a historical point of view as well as from the operation of fundamental mental and economic principles the immigration movement is a complicated and insistent fact, and for this reason any consideration of local aspects of it must keep in view the general background of world tendencies and experiences.

THE EXTENT OF THE ORIENTAL PENETRATION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

(1) The Chinese first entered B. C. from California after 1849. When the C.P.R. was building the mountain section the difficulty of securing labor became acute and in 1882 over 2,000 were brought from China to assist. It must be remembered that at that time the Chinese were not seeking admission to Canada. When the railroad was finished in 1885 they entered other lines of work, domestic, truck farming, laundry and lumber plants. Within recent years they have gone into almost every line of commerce and industry.

In B. C. there are about 20,000 including 18,000 men, 550 women and 1,450 children. These are distributed as follows: In Vancouver 7,000; Victoria, 3,000; Cumberland, 1,000; Vernon, 500; New Westminster, 400; Mission District, 400. Two thousand two hundred and seventy-five industries employ 5,691 Chinese.

(2) The Japanese came later and prior to 1905 were scarcely a factor in the community. The three following years showed marked increase, 1906, 1,922; 1907, 2,042; 1908, 7,601. The authorities became alarmed and in 1911 an agreement was reached between the two governments by which the number of Japanese immigrants was restricted to 400 annually.

In B. C. there are about 20,000 of whom 7,500 reside in Vancouver. The striking fact about the Japanese is the high birth rate. During the years 1918-20 almost 50% of the Japanese immigrants were women. The result is that within about 10 years the birth rate has increased to such an extent as to change from one Japanese to every 352 whites, to one Japanese to every 13 whites.

(3) The Hindus began coming in 1905 and within three years about 5,000 had entered. In 1909 the Immigration Act which requires a continuous passage from the country of their birth to Canada was made to apply to Indian Immigration. This checked the movement, which however has resulted in great bitterness. At present about 2,100 reside in B.C.

Altogether fully half of the 80,000 Orientals in Canada are in B. C., a fact which ought to receive sympathetic consideration from the other provinces.

THE REASONS OF PREJUDICE AGAINST THE ORIENTAL.

(1) The general prejudice which exists against immigrants who have a peculiar race mark. This has resulted in much ridicule and contempt, and even prejudiced the children against the Orientals.

(2) The economic reason. Generally speaking there is opposition to any immigrant whose coming seems destined to interfere with the success of native business. This appears not among the laborers alone, but even in the professional classes. But in the case of the Orientals there is the fact that, coming to improve their economic position, they are willing to work at a lower wage, which they can do on account of their lower standard of living. The inevitable industrial competition follows. The native will either lose his job, be compelled to work for a lower wage, or restrict the birth rate to avoid the pressure of economic conditions. It has been found in older countries that on account of the keen industrial competition and the high birth rate of immigrants that the native races have almost disappeared. In B. C. the Oriental has entered in competition in the fishing business, retail trade, tailoring, laundry, agriculture, lumber and similar lines. One of the striking facts is the disposition of the Oriental to possess land. In 1920 26,918 acres were held by 1,080 Orientals. With the recent restriction on the fishing