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The Indispensible Enemy: Labour and the  
Anti-Chinese Movement in California.  
Univ. of California Press.



Alexander Saxton; The Indispensable Enemy: Labour  
+ the Anti-Chinese Movement in California. 1971  
Univ. of Calif. Press. 4 CP!

2. Antagonism c/w be explained solely on the basis of cheap labour.
3. 1860 - 1880 ~ 9  $\Rightarrow$  7.5% C. in Calif.  
to 1860  $\Rightarrow$  p. l. mines. 1866-9 CPR
4. 1870 dispersion - ag, r. r. etc., S.F. pop. rise of  
use of C's for manufacture. 1877 - 18,000 factory,
5. 5000 loomsheds, 3000 workhouses 1876.
- ocs: "little or no skill, in occ. stigmatized as manual, + in  
manufacturing"  $\leftarrow$
6. By 1867 ~ wh. worker org.  $\rightarrow$  push C out of construction.  
 $\rightarrow$  stresses much more in urban than rural areas.
7. 2 1/5th labour force. (~ 239,000 I.)
8. strict contract labour org. No steamships could  
book a C out of Calif w/o C company approval.
9. C company est m. support.
11. C were # non-americans in C in 1870.
14. Influx of European (desperate) labour in the East challenged  
native labour.
17. Notes that C were oriented towards a fixed goal and  
therefore were content to put up w/ harsh conditions.  
A Fixed goal meant abuse led to further activity.
18. But why isolation? view of C's as unique event to  
1851 source.
19. Hinton Helper: 1852, (to become ambulatory propaganda)  
C = inferior. Many views were from experience  
w/ others in the East.
27. notes that Democratic egalitarianism, manifest destiny +  
inferiority of races all could be reconciled  
California was high w/ I immigrants.
40. most worker organizations in California were  
militant + leftish - at least pro producer.
42. trade unionism narrowed the "producer ethic"
48. Frontier + Teutonic theses were v. strong ~ 1880-20



### *Nationalization of the Chinese Issue*

After the joining of the railroad and following the onset of depression in the East, George's predictions for California began to come true. Agriculture sagged; industries shut down. Yet the influx of emigration from older sections of the country continued, more than doubling between 1872 and 1875. Unemployed workmen drifted up and down the state congregating in the cities, especially in San Francisco. The boom-time gains of the trade unionists were quickly lost. Wages fell; the standard workday reverted to ten hours and longer.<sup>38</sup>

According to Ira Cross in his history of California's labor movement, it was during these years that employers joined the anti-Chinese crusade:

As long as the Chinese were willing to work under the conditions and for the wages set by white employers who had taught them their respective trades, the employers were satisfied. But when the Chinese began to establish their own shops, to hire their countrymen, and to enter into direct competition with their former employers and instructors, it was a different story. . . . Another source of irritation for the white employers was that the Chinese learned to use the strike as a means of exacting higher wages and improved conditions of employment.

The last point is doubtful since evidence of strike actions by Chinese remains tantalizingly meager. As to the first point, it was noted earlier that small manufacturers from well before the Civil War were playing an active role in anticoolie clubs of the cigar makers, shoemakers, and tailors. Yet Cross was undoubtedly correct in his description of the generally broadening impact of Chinese competition.<sup>39</sup>

The events of 1867, moreover, had demonstrated that anti-Chinese politics in the West were successful politics. One reason for this was that during the war and the years immediately following, expressions of hostility toward Negroes had acquired a secessionist connotation. The argument against Chinese, however, remained untainted, and within this fabric the driving emotions of racism could be woven into a pattern of economic rationalization. The conclusions drawn would

<sup>38</sup> For a summary of economic developments during this decade, see Ira B. Cross, *A History of the Labor Movement in California* (Berkeley, 1935), 60-72, 313 note 30.

<sup>39</sup> Cross, 84-85. On strikes by Chinese, see above, pp. 9-10; on small manufacturers in anticoolie clubs, see above, pp. 76-77.

then apply analogously to the Negro. Henry George's letter to the New York *Tribune* had set the matter in national terms; and labor, nationally, had adopted the issue.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps a portion of the favorable response to the *Tribune* letter was due to the fact that it showed a way by which antislavery men and Unionists of Jacksonian persuasion could find their way, through the anti-Chinese argument, to a repudiation of their now burdensome alliance with abolitionism. The letter, in effect, stated the theoretical grounds upon which a Republican dominated Senate, one year later, would defeat Charles Sumner on the issue of naturalization for Chinese.<sup>41</sup> This decision in turn predicted the abandoning of Reconstruction for the Negro; and the end of Reconstruction would seal the fate of the Chinese in the West. It was no accident then that George's letter had first appeared in Greeley's newspaper, nor that within three years of writing that letter George himself moved from Republicanism, by way of the Liberal schism, back to Democracy.

By 1876 both major parties had adopted anti-Chinese clauses in their national platforms.<sup>42</sup>

To California, 1876 brought the full impact of depression. But the political repercussions which followed were not due solely to hard times. In part at least they were due to the contrast between misery and affluence—of which California, and especially San Francisco, offered striking views. In March, for example, the *Alta*, commenting on the increased menace of tramps, reported that they were flooding the state, that privately supported alms houses were swamped and in any case ineffective because, with their blankets and hot meals, they were far too luxurious. The men would rather stay there than get out and look for work. What was needed, the *Alta* proposed, were municipal lodgings where board would consist of water, black bread, salt fish, and the in-

<sup>40</sup> See above, pp. 80-91; also John Swinton, *The New Issue: The Chinese American Question* (New York, 1870) [Pamphlets on Immigration], University of California Library, Berkeley. For a western statement of the theme, see M. B. Starr, *The Coming Struggle: Or What the People on the Pacific Coast Think of the Coolie Invasion* (San Francisco, 1873).

<sup>41</sup> See above, pp. 36-37.

<sup>42</sup> Kirk H. Porter and Donald Bruce Johnson, *National Party Platforms, 1840-1960* (Urbana, Ill., 1961), 50, 54. The Democratic statement, long and detailed, was based explicitly on the unassimilability of the "Mongolian race"; the Republican held merely that it was the "immediate duty of Congress fully to investigate the effects of the immigration and importation of Mongolians on the moral and material interests of the country." Inclusion even of this mild statement, however, constituted an acceptance of the anti-Chinese argument. As to the minor parties, the Independent (Greenback) platform of 1876 made no mention of the issue; and only in the Prohibition platform was there an assertion of the old abolitionist stance which Sumner had defended in 1870. (See 51-53.)



53. As early as the mines C became restricted from owning them + get necessary. → re manual work + secondary claims. Throughout '60's C replaced whites at river claims

56. Wages in 1866 Virginia abt. ~ \$4.00 / day. strike for this wage occurred ↓ ↳ Coal strike ~ \$3 / day

58 1869 - CPacific finished - many C released w/ knowledge of tunneling etc. C demanded only \$1.50 / day.

63. CPacific costs ~ 2 2/3 of white labor. saved \$5.5 m on use of Chinese. Chinese caused non-C status.

↳ 1867 - shown day via political power.

But dumping from the East resulted in Chinese replacement of skilled white labor

72. "anticoolie clubs" were as old as coolies.

73. Boycott of C goods at least by 1859

40. Henry George in 1869 was anti C + influenced Gov Haydon. ↳ note from N.Y.

enlisted as editor of San Francisco - a Demo party rag.

He was a store attendant on V.C Island.

46. anti union (strikes are destructive) + individual enterprise  
land monopoly inhibited production

100. 1869 anti. C. arguments: C manland unshackled

1. w. labor could make no gains. Money sent to C. would shift more production into capitalist cycle.

Involves the Jacksonian fear of minorities.

103. John S. Mill responded. agreed re unpaid labor. yet disagrees as to unchangeableness of the Chinese.

105. 1876 Depression.

113-4. July 1877 massive anti C riot in S.F.

The Vigilance Committee was anti-riot

(largely republicans - business, property)

118 Kearny - a violent anti C.

148. Writings of 1872 - Chinatown = a fortress

162. By 1872 socialist influence was being felt.

1881 - much union building in building, manufacture building, machine + metal trades.



168. in domestic service, laundry, veg + fruit peddling,  
- universal C. - funige conflict.

168. small crafts - much conflict. Shoemakers, cigars.  
~ 5,200 in shoe, 5,100 laundry, 8,500 cigars, 7,500  
in clothing.

190-1 "The single zone of direct conflict lay in sector 5  
along the margin where highly skilled occupations  
overlapped the national market industries."

There were so many C in certain jobs that  
conflict w trade unions was impossible.

172. 1880 - new Burlingame Treaty (U.S. - China)  
U.S could limit C. But not non laborers.

1882. Congress bill to ban C for 20 years  
passes but Pres Arthur (rep) vetoes it.

177. Bill restructured for 10yr Ban - passed + signed.

182. Labor drive to displace C from factories 1882  
Boot + shoe made #1 attempt

18202 - 1885 Rock Springs Wyoming.  
1500 / 371 Cal mine. noting calls 28c.  
rates of pay 1875-85 ~ equal.  
work better coal digging (per ton pay)

205. following this 1885. Tacoma Nov 3

C expelled. Seattle similar militia called

215. Cigar Makers' International Union.

Adolph Strasser pres

S. Compens member.

CMIU → high org, attempt to drive  
out the C. Was willing 212 to accept  
subdivision of the trade skilled - CMIU  
unskilled - Chinese.

1885 - IWA fight over inclusion of Chinese