

# MR. BRYAN ON CHINESE EXCLUSION

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If every American could visit China, the question of Chinese immigration would soon be settled upon a permanent basis, for no one can become acquainted with the Chinese coolie without recognizing the impossibility of opening the doors of our country to him without injustice to our own laboring men, demoralization to our social ideas, injury to China's reputation among us and danger to our diplomatic relations with that country.

I made it a point to inquire among the Chinese whom I met in order to ascertain the real sentiment back of the boycott. I had heard of students being subjected to harsh regulations at ports of entry, of travelers humiliated by confinement in uncomfortable sheds and of merchants treated rudely, and I supposed that these things had aroused the resentment. I found, however, that the things complained of were more difficult to deal with and the concessions demanded impossible to grant.

In order to understand the boycott one must know something of Chinese history. As China has never had representative government, the people have been compelled to bring their complaints before officials by petition, and where the petition has been ignored, they have been accustomed to bring such pressure to bear as was within their power, and the boycott has often been resorted to as a means of compelling action upon the part of officials. They, therefore, conceived the idea of a boycott against American goods for the double purpose of urging their own government to favorable action and of calling the attention of the American government to their complaint. Our officials are doing what they can to convince the Chinese government of the injustice and folly of the boycott, and the Chinese officials with whom I conversed seemed anxious to co-operate with our minister and consuls. Immediate action upon the part of our congress, whether favorable or unfavorable to the Chinese, will remove the excuse for a boycott and our government should not be influenced in its action by any threats affecting trade, for the subject is too grave a one to be determined by commercial considerations.

The Americans who are doing business in China are naturally anxious to cultivate friendly relations with the Chinese merchants, and just before we reached Hong Kong the American business men residing there cabled home a statement of the minimum changes in the exclusion act asked for by the Chinese merchants. I had the privilege of attending a dinner at which a number of the leading Chinese merchants of Hong Kong presented their views, and it may be worth while to give here an abstract of their demands as drawn out by cross-examination.

They desire, first, that the word laborer shall be clearly and distinctly defined, "according to the highest standard English and be limited to such class or classes of persons as originally intended to be designated by both governments."

Second, that all regulations and legislative measures affecting Chinese immigration shall be communicated to and approved by the Chinese government before going into force, and that when in force, they should not be altered without consent of the Chinese government.

Third, that American consuls stationed in China shall have full power to grant certificates of admission to persons not included in the prohibited classes, such certificates to be conclusive except in cases of actual fraud.

Fourth, that the American consul in China shall without delay issue certificates of admission to such Chinese not included in the prohibited classes as shall obtain passports from the Chinese government.

Fifth, that the Chinese government shall be permitted to appoint one European medical practitioner to act in conjunction with a medical officer appointed by the United States at the port of departure and that no one shall be rejected as diseased unless certified to be so by both medical officers.

Sixth, that Chinese once admitted into the United States shall enjoy the same rights and protection accorded to the subjects of the most favored nation, and in case of ill treatment shall be entitled to damages from the government.

Seventh, that Chinese passing through the United States enroute for another country shall enjoy the same privileges as the subjects of the most favored nations.

Eighth, that Chinese residing in the United States shall not be required to register unless

such registration is required of the subjects of the most favored nation.

Ninth, that Chinese laborers shall be admitted into the Hawaiian and the Philippine Islands, provided that the legislatures or local authorities of such islands are willing. (While this proviso is satisfactory to the Hong Kong merchants, it seems to have been objected to by the Chinese of Amoy and Canton.)

Tenth, that any Chinese detained at an American port of entry for purposes of inquiry shall be permitted to engage legal assistance and furnish bond for appearance; should the decision be unfavorable, he shall have the right to appeal to the highest court of justice, and in case of any technical or formal error in his passport or certificate, he shall be allowed to correct the same without undergoing deportation.

Eleventh, that any Chinese residing in the United States shall have the right to bring his parents, wife, family and minor brothers and sisters to reside with him.

Twelfth, that Chinese lawfully admitted to the United States but deported because of failure to register shall be readmitted on satisfactory proof of possessing in the United States property or bona fide debt up to the required amount.

The second demand could not be complied with without putting the enforcement of the exclusion act so largely in the hands of the Chinese government as to very much cripple it.

The third demand is reasonable. Our country ought to be bound by the act of its own consuls, except in case of fraud, and those who are to be excluded ought to be notified before incurring the expense of a trip across the ocean.

The fourth demand should not be complied with unless the Chinese government assumes pecuniary responsibility for any errors in the issuing of the passport and for the subject's compliance with the regulations provided by our government.

The fifth demand is absurd, because it virtually transfers to a European physician appointed by the Chinese government the power to decide on the health of the immigrant. While, according to the language of the demand, the Chinese appointee would act in conjunction with an American physician, a favorable report by the Chinese appointee would admit the immigrant in spite of an adverse report by the physician appointed by our government. It is perfectly proper that a physician appointed by the Chinese government should be permitted to be present at the examination, and it is only fair that the examination should be made at the port of departure, but it is necessary that the examination should be in the hands of physicians appointed, and removable, by our government.

The tenth demand is for the most part reasonable. A Chinaman detained for purposes of inquiry should be allowed to secure counsel and furnish bond, and if the error in his certificate is technical or formal, he should be allowed to correct it on such terms as are equitable, but it would hardly be wise to permit appeal to the supreme court unless some vital principle is involved.

Demands six, seven and eight are based upon the theory that Chinese in the United States should be treated in every respect like subjects of other nations, and this overlooks two material facts, first, that certain classes of Chinese are prohibited from coming to the United States and, second, that the Chinese who do come to the United States come for reasons different from those which influence immigrants from Europe. (I shall consider the second reason later.) The fact that some Chinese are excluded while others are admitted makes it necessary to enforce rules against the Chinese that are not necessary against immigrants from other nations. While no humiliating conditions ought to be imposed, still our country is justified in enforcing such rules and regulations as will prevent fraud and evasion. This cannot be considered an act of unfriendliness because our nation adopts the same principle in dealing with its own people. For instance, the voters in the cities are required to register from time to time, often at great inconvenience, while registration is not required in rural districts, the discrimination being regarded as necessary to prevent election frauds in the cities. In like manner, Chinese may be required to register, even though registration may be inconvenient, if experience shows registration to be necessary to prevent evasion of the immigration law.

In the case of travelers it ought to be possible to provide for such a certification of passports as to relieve Chinese tourists, whether

passing through the United States or visiting there, from annoyance or vexation. It goes without saying that they should be protected as completely as tourists coming from any other country. Every encouragement should be given to travel between countries, for an exchange of views and ideas between nations is as wholesome and as necessary to progress as social intercourse between individuals.

The ninth demand, while strenuously insisted upon by the Chinese, involves questions of the first magnitude. It is a question whether Chinese could be admitted into Hawaii and then excluded from other states and territories, and in the case of the Philippines, our country should be slow to establish a policy there before the length of our occupation is determined.

It will be noticed that the purpose of the first, eleventh and twelfth demands is to increase the number of Chinese in the United States. The eleventh contemplates the indefinite enlargement of the family of each resident by the addition of first, one wife; second, (possibly) two parents, not to speak of an uncertain number of children, brothers and sisters. While to the Chinese who are accustomed to the patriarchal system, the admission of parents, brothers and sisters would seem a very natural demand, it would hardly seem reasonable to Americans unless it was limited to the exempted classes.

The real interest, however, centers in the first demand, viz., that the definition of the term laborer shall be enlarged. I questioned several of the Hong Kong merchants in regard to the matter, and found that they desired especially the admission of clerks and skilled laborers. They contended that a Chinese merchant could not conduct a store in the United States without Chinese help and that to exclude clerks was virtually to exclude merchants. When questioned as to the number of clerks needed, they estimated that there were about four thousand merchants in the United States and that each merchant would need from six to ten clerks. When surprise was expressed at the number, it was explained that some had to cook and do housework. It was even argued that Chinese shoemakers and tailors were also necessary to provide clothing and footwear for the Chinese residing in the United States. There was a division of opinion as to whether laundry men should be classed as merchants and entitled to clerks. But excluding laundry men and counting eight clerks to the store, this one change in definition would open the door to about thirty-two thousand, almost a fifty per cent increase, according to the estimate made by the Hong Kong merchants, of seventy thousand Chinese now in the United States. Whether the admission of clerks could be so regulated and restricted as to make it possible to grant this demand in whole or in part is a question which I am not prepared to answer without further information as to the location of the merchants, the character of their business and the sentiment of the local community.

The admission of skilled laborers is one upon which it is easier to form an opinion. The Chinese are not only an industrious people, but they are capable of becoming skilled artisans. They could supply every factory in the United States with skilled workmen and still have millions to spare. Nearly all the reasons which apply to the exclusion of the coolie, apply to the skilled laborer, and they can, therefore, be considered together.

It developed during the dinner that while the demands expressly recognized the improbability of coolies being admitted, most of the Chinese present favored the entire repeal of the restriction law. They resented any discrimination against their people as unfriendly and unwarranted. One Chinaman of prominence in another city went so far as to intimate that such discrimination would not be permitted if China had a large army and navy and was able to enforce her rights.

As the whole question turns on the admission of the Chinese laborer, let us consider, first, the differences between the European immigrant and the Chinese immigrant and, second, the general objections to the admission of Chinese workmen.

The Chinaman, unlike the European, regards America as only temporarily his home, preserves his national customs and peculiarities and finally returns, carrying his savings with him. He is not attracted by our institutions and brings with him no love of American ideals. To him the United States is a field to be exploited and nothing more. The European casts in his lot