

THE CHINESE QUESTION.

EDITOR BULLETIN:—The efforts of planters several times repeated, to get the Ministry to let in more Chinese, and on the other hand the growing antagonism of other whites and natives to the admission of more labor of any kind—unless confined and restricted to plantation work—point significantly to the coming collision on that question this election.

Those interested in cheap labor have been represented or rather misrepresented by their leaders in such a way that they will be pushed into the coming election with a record furnished by their mentors so unnecessarily disingenuous, one-sided and inconsistent as to provoke unprecedented hostility and resentment on the part of their fellow whites, and will heavily handicap themselves in obtaining even their just demands next legislature.

For example: the pro-Chinese leaders have within the last two years adopted as a political principle the view that the necessities of their fellow whites will not justify restrictive measures against Chinese if involving departure from the approved precedents furnished by free institutions, forgetting that they themselves have resorted these many years to this identical plea of "necessity" to secure, at hazardous risk to the free institutions of the country, the coolie labor they now have, and have no other plea to urge in asking more of it next legislature.

Surely all history proves that there can be no greater menace to free institutions nor a more radical departure from safe precedent than in attempting to incorporate into a free country with already many elements of weakness droves of ignorant aliens of a hostile civilization and religion, with an enormous preponderance of males among them, and in such numbers as already to constitute one-third of the entire population.

The fact is both the planter's demand for more cheap labor and his fellow white's demand for some check upon that labor now here rest upon the identical plea of necessity. The arguments which justify one act justify both, and it cannot in reason be expected that the position taken by the pro-Chinese leaders, disallowing all legislation based on that plea when introduced in behalf of others, will not in turn by them be forced upon the pro-Chinese party regardless of consequences next legislature when more labor is asked for.

The exasperating effect this position of the pro-Chinese party will have on the electors at large next February when fully presented to them can only be fairly appreciated when one considers that the undue pressure upon whites and natives they now complain of was not of their own seeking, but has come upon them while co-operating in the introduction of coolies for their own fellow citizens interested in cheap labor. It would reasonably be supposed under such circumstances that those for whom this labor was allowed to come—for whom this risk was run—would in turn consider themselves in honor bound to lend their hearty co-operation in preventing loss or menace to their white and native brethren by reason of the coolie's presence. It certainly would never have been believed, had not our own eyes witnessed it last legislature, that it was to be this very class which, standing in the front ranks of the legislature, would resist and kill every attempt to check the rising tide of coolie competition in the towns which now clouds and obscures the future of both whites and natives.

Again those interested in cheap labor go into this election without any right in truth to claim that the position of the anti-Chinese party was or is hostile to the planters' interests. The records of the legislature show in black and white that so far from there being any proposition to prevent the introduction of cheap labor for plantations there was an express provision in the Constitutional amendment presented by the anti-Chinese members them-

selves by which Chinese could not be prevented from coming for the rice and sugar plantations, provided they were restricted in their employment to those industries and could be sent back when their services were no longer needed. It was then claimed by anti-Chinese members that the present process of introducing unrestricted cheap labor was no special advantage to the planters and unnecessarily onerous upon the country, in that out of every two or three men introduced for the plantations one perhaps remained permanently at plantation work and the balance, after temporary service there where they were needed, left to go out into the country at large where more coolies now means simply a deadly incubus on the white and native races and an oppressive struggle for that limited number of better paid occupations upon which our own people must depend for a living if they are to stay here. The anti-Chinese party then said, "An unrestricted Jap is far better than an unrestricted Chinaman, but a restricted Chinaman is far better than an unrestricted Jap," and the entire issue on the labor question as far as the plantations are concerned thus far has been, not whether cheap labor shall come, but how it shall come and under what restrictions. On this issue, last legislature, the representatives of those interested in cheap labor saw fit to take their stand against any restriction whatever being put on the coolie after he got here.

Such a position so unnecessary for the protection of the planters' interests, so senselessly servile to a coolie's wishes, so merciless and high-handed towards their fellow whites—men who with women and children by their sides to support and care for have within the past two years twice demonstrated their willingness to face death in support of responsible government—such a position I say will rouse any man's resentment and will force the whites and natives in self defense to take the stand this election that, seeing those interested in cheap labor not content with getting their labor insist upon giving it full license after getting here to forage on the balance of the country, they in turn will bend every energy to keep it out altogether until provision can be made by which it can be brought in under proper restrictions.

It is unfortunate that such an issue should be raised and more so that the leaders of those interested in cheap labor should themselves have provoked it. It is unfortunate that the views of Col. Spalding and many other planters, which are practically in sympathy with those of their fellow whites in the towns, have apparently been overridden by another wing of the cheap labor party, for the most part centered in Honolulu, which having not only plantation stock but also discounts, commissions, rents and what not to make out of Chinatown, evidently consider that they can best further these dual interests by suppressing this agitation all along the line and being so placed that a few of them in Honolulu can command the political policy of the entire sugar interests, have concluded to whip it into their service, though the issue as raised does not necessarily involve the planters' interests and very many of them are opposed at heart to being made a catspaw in suppressing the struggle of their own race to keep their feet.

Be this all as it may, the struggle is coming and though with the whites decimated in number, and the native tied hand and foot by the Chinese and his vision and comprehension already mercifully dimmed to the future that awaits him, the outcome of the struggle seems a foregone conclusion, yet it is not in the whites to give up ground once covered without a struggle worthy of the antecedents of their race.

Another position the leaders of the pro-Chinese party have taken which will expose them to the charge of disingenuousness is their contention that the refusal to admit more Chinese—under the Restriction Act coupled with the denial of return

passports to some of them leaving the kingdom—will in time deplete the country of these people and thus in itself settle the whole question—in other words, the continued total exclusion of Chinese and the refusal of return passports to a part of them is the solution offered by members of the pro-Chinese party.

Just how genuine this offer is will be apparent when one considers that the same men who make it, so far from consenting when in the legislature to a law which would secure this total exclusion they affect to favor, they opposed even a Restriction Act introduced by the Ministry as too stringent, and came within an ace of ousting them before assenting to the Restriction Act that was finally passed. Furthermore prominent members of the same party have since made efforts under this Act to get the Ministry to let in more Chinese at the very time that their political associates were quieting the country with the assurance of a gradual diminution of Chinese which they know can only be brought about by shutting the door for good against them. The truth is those depending on cheap labor, in justice to their own interests, can never assent to the permanent total exclusion of Chinese. The diplomatic uncertainties connected with the Japanese, the expense of other forms of labor and the extreme ups and downs of the sugar industry make it unsafe to close the door for good to the most reliable form of labor they have. The fault one has to find is that instead of coming out like men and saying so, the public is treated to disingenuous and misleading promises of relief never intended to be fulfilled even by this party of high moral purposes and which will conveniently be forgotten when a flagging or diverted public sentiment and a servile Ministry present an opportunity to slip in a few fresh cargoes of the "old reliable" and thus by a single act eliminate whatever relief might have come from months or even years of exclusion. Even if Chinese were shut out in good faith for a number of years and return passports refused to those leaving, there would be but slight relief at the point where the shoe really pinches, for the Chinese will naturally leave the better paid occupations which are the bone of contention last. The occasional vacancy occurring there will naturally be filled by some other Chinaman who now in the lower ranks of common labor is simply waiting like everybody else to better his condition. There are say from 2000 to 4000 places now filled by

Chinese which are or could be made remunerative enough to support that number of white and native families, and there are say 20,000 Chinese in the country. To attempt to wait until enough of them have gone so that vacancies will commence to occur in the better paid occupations will result only in a rapid depletion of the Chinese labor market to the benefit of no one, and with but a slight diminution in the ranks of those coolies who are really doing the mischief, and long before ever their numbers commenced to be depleted so as to give any practical relief there would be a stringency in the labor market that would simply force the doors open to the Chinese again whether or no. This is already being illustrated by two years' trial of such a policy by the present Ministry. The planters, notwithstanding four shiploads of Japanese and another expected, already feel a slight stringency in the Chinese labor market, yet as far as the towns are concerned Chinese in apparently increasing numbers are not only holding all the ground once covered by them but are still quietly pursuing the process of rooting out still more of the whites and natives.

The whole idea of looking to the gradual depletion of the Chinese for relief is a delusion and a snare. The foreigners now stand on the eve of an important election, divided against themselves but all conscious of the necessity of united action. One wing has just come out of an unprecedented year of prosperity, the other while suffering no actual hardships has had to deplete its own ranks to make the work go round and comes out of the past two years with very little accumulated, and a diminishing confidence in what the future has in store for them. One side has in the day of its prosperity seen fit to set its face against any concession or compromise whatsoever. The other while demanding self-protection has recognized and conceded the industrial necessities of its opponents. Under such circumstances it seems surprising and yet perhaps not so that the pro-Chinese party should now ask their fellow whites to drop the Chinese question this election and that many of them should apparently have taken offense because their proposition does not seem to meet with much enthusiasm.

The idea of now calling the legislature together and submitting a Chinese constitutional amendment to the people, thus bringing the foreigners together this election, is evidently a concession they still frown upon.

W. A. KINNEY.

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