

From Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States: From Colonial Times to the Founding of the American Federation of Labor* (New York: International Publishers, 1998).

CHINESE EXCLUSION

While the Greenback-Labor movement engaged the energies of the workingmen of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and other eastern and mid-western states, workers in California were joining an independent political party whose purpose was the elimination of the Chinese from American life. Most Americans had welcomed the Chinese when they first came to America in large numbers during the gold rush of '49. In 1852 the governor of California had called the Chinese the "most desirable of our adopted citizens," and recommended that land be given them "to induce further settlement." However, emigration was stimulated by steamship companies which found the importation of Chinese workers highly profitable, and by contract companies which were thus able to supply American employers with a cheap supply of workers to break strikes.

In 1870 seventy-five Chinese were employed to break a strike of the Knights of St. Crispin in North Adams, Massachusetts. The employer threatened that he would continue using "coolie" labor in order "to free himself from the cramping tyranny of that worst of American trades-unions—the Knights of St. Crispin." The Philadelphia North American urged employers to emulate their colleague in North Adams and use this cheap labor which cost less than six dollars a month. The Boston Commonwealth agreed: "These 'Celestials' belong to no striking organization—do not care to be out at nights—don't worry about their pay—do not presume to dictate to their employers."

There were two attitudes toward the Chinese in the labor movement. One view was that since "a nation's wealth consists chiefly in its labor, which is its capital," American workers should welcome anyone, "China-

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African, or native of any country coming voluntarily to this soil." Opposition to the Chinese, by dividing the working class, only served the interests of employers. Instead of denouncing the so-called "yellow menace," American workers should organize the Chinese and prevent employers from using them to reduce wage standards. Not for an instant should they confuse the struggle against unfair immigrant labor competition with anti-foreign prejudices.

Those who proposed this correct approach to the problem were few. Even A. C. Cameron, who was far in advance of other labor leaders in his

belief that Negro and white workers should unite, took a wrong stand on the question of Oriental immigration. "Yes," he wrote in the *Wortyngman's Advocate* of June 12, 1869, "bring them along, Chinamen, Japanese, Malays, and monkeys, make voters of them all; acknowledge them as men and workers; mix them all up together, water down the old Caucasian race." The *Arbeiter Union*, ably edited by Adolph Douai, criticized these expressions of race hatred, but agreed that Chinese immigration should be stopped because their living standards were so low that it would take a hundred years until they absorbed western civilization.

With such an attitude coming from the advanced leaders of the labor movement, it is not surprising that so many workers opposed the Burlingame Treaty of 1868 under which the United States and China recognized the right of their citizens to emigrate to the other country. No sooner was the treaty ratified than the labor movement began a campaign to have it abrogated. This demand was advanced at each congress of the National Labor Union after 1868, and was made out of the planks of the National Labor Reform Party. The presence in America of Chinese labor, said the Labor Party, "is an evil, entailing Want and its attendant train of misery and crime, and should be prohibited...."39

DEMAGOGY'S BRIEF SWAY IN CALIFORNIA

Most of the Chinese laborers who had been brought to America lived in California, and here, once the great railroads were completed, they entered the trades, moving gradually from unskilled to skilled occupations. The completion of the railroads, throwing thousands of men out of work, brought on the problem of unemployment several years before it had become a serious problem in other parts of the country. Demagogues were able to convince many workingmen in California that Unemployment was due to "coolie competition," and Chinese workers forking for incredibly low wages gave these arguments plausibility. Many manufacturers and merchants who were beginning to feel the effects of competition from Chinese business men in America joined in building up the bugaboo of the "yellow menace."

On July 22, 1877, the workingmen of San Francisco met to express sympathy for the railroad strikers at a meeting sponsored by the Working Men's Party of the United States. Neither the speeches nor resolutions adopted by the gathering mentioned the Chinese question. But before the meeting was over, hoodlums disrupted the gathering by demanding that the speakers say something about the "Chinese menace." When the meeting refused to be intimidated, the gang departed, making Chinatown their target. For several days the hoodlums wandered about the city, attacking Chinese

laborers and demolishing Chinese laundries. The riots were finally quelled by a Committee of Safety which had organized a "pick-handle brigade."

One of the members of the "pick-handle brigade" was an Irish drayman, Denis Kearney, well known for his sympathies with the employers, his attacks upon the working class, and his boasts that he had amassed a fortune from business ventures. Kearney had decided that his political future would be best advanced by joining a workingmen's movement. He tried to join the Working Men's Party of the United States but was rejected as an enemy of the working class. He then decided to form his own organization, and with a small following he set up the Workingmen's Trade and Labor Union of San Francisco in August, 1877. Three months later, in October, he founded the Working Men's Party in California, with himself as president.

His party proposed "to wrest the government from the hands of the rich and place it in the hands of the people, where it properly belongs," aimed to destroy land monopoly in the state, to provide "decently for the poor and unfortunate," and declared its intention "to destroy the great money power of the rich by a system of taxation that will make great wealth impossible in the future." These planks were a mask for the party's disruptive aim: "We propose to rid the country of cheap Chinese labor as soon as possible and by all means in our power, because it tends still more to degrade labor and aggrandize capital."

The Kearney party made rapid headway; ward clubs were organized throughout San Francisco; meetings on the sand-lots were held every Sunday night, and thousands of unorganized workers joined the Working Men's Party of California. Its prestige among workingmen increased when some leaders of the Socialist Working Men's Party of the United States united with the Kearney party. Soon most of the members of the Socialist movement in San Francisco had joined Kearney's party* giving it considerable strength.

The Labor Standard urged all Socialists to fight against the slogan "The Chinese Must Go," and to expose Kearney as a demagogue who was preventing a proper solution of the Chinese problem. Importation of Chinese workers for anti-labor activity, the Labor Standard went on, must be opposed, but Chinese workers in America should join with other workers to raise their wages through trade union activity. "You can look in your shoe shops," wrote Caleb Tilley, an Eastern Socialist leader, to the party in California, "for some of the men that were made tramps not by Chinese, but by a more powerful enemy, an enemy that has no heart, no soul, that never hears your dying groans, capital."

Early in January, 1878, Kearney and his associates were arrested and

imprisoned for using language "having a tendency to cause a breach of peace." Having become a "martyr" by his brief imprisonment, Kearney was now convinced that no one would dare to oppose his leadership. But his high-handed and dictatorial tactics evoked resentment even among his own followers. Members of the Working Men's Party of California were infuriated by his practice of visiting ward-club meetings, accompanied by a gang of husky and noisy henchmen who would promptly disrupt any gathering that met with his displeasure. With the aid of his trained hoodlums, Kearney deposed ward-club officers who criticized his tactics and appointed leaders who were subservient to him. "I am the voice of the people," he is reported to have said. "I am the dictator until the people put some one else in my place. I owe the people nothing, but they owe me a great deal."

Rumor that the "voice of the people" was "owned and run" by anti-labor interests and that he had promised to put a stop to the movement if the business men of San Francisco handed over \$5,000, was also creating an opposition to Kearney and his closest associates. Furthermore, the local trade unions gradually became hostile to Kearney because, opposed to organized labor, he gave the trade unions no representation in the party.

For a while Kearney was able to retain control of the party by expelling all members, including a number of Socialists, who opposed his policies. He gained control of the first convention of the Working Men's Party of California, held in San Francisco on January 21, 1878, but was not able to stop the adoption of a platform which departed from Kearney's disruptive politics. The platform stated that since the government of the United States was controlled by the capitalists, the rights of the people were ignored. "Coolie" labor was denounced as a curse to the land and a demand for its restriction and abolition was raised. Other demands urged that ownership of land be granted only to settlers; that the financial system should be consistent with the needs of the agricultural, manufacturing, and mercantile industries and not the needs of bankers, merchants, and brokers; that the eight-hour day be the legal working day; the farming out of convict labor be halted, and all labor on public works be paid prevailing wages. It also advocated that an end should be put to the growth of millionaires and monopolists, through taxation, and that the President of the United States, the Vice President and the United States Senators be elected directly by the people. Finally, it called for a system of compulsory education, secular in character, to be set up nationally. "There should be instituted in all our public schools lectures, at stated intervals, whose primary aim should be to uphold the dignity of labor and mechanical avocations as paramount to all other walks in life."

During the early months of 1878 the party grew rapidly throughout the state, becoming a power in local elections. In a special election in Santa Clara county, on February 19, 1878, the Working Men's Party candidate for the assembly was elected, defeating the candidates supported by the Democrats and Republicans. A month later, the Working Men's Party elected the mayor and city attorney of Sacramento.

Like the Greenback-Labor movement, the decline of the Working Men's Party of California set in after its greatest victories. After March, 1878, the party split into Kearney and anti-Kearney factions, and wherever the two factions nominated separate candidates in municipal elections, defeats were suffered. Other factors hastened its disintegration. A number of candidates elected by the party were old-line politicians or manufacturers, and once in office they disregarded the organization's principles and voted for measures denounced by the workmen.

By May, 1878, two executive committees had been set up. The anti-Kearney forces, many of whom were trade unionists, issued an address to the people of California, accusing Kearney of being a dictator, of "selling out to the enemy," and of "acting as an irrepressible disorganizer and an enemy of the party, persuading men to folly, riot and disorder, breaking up clubs, and otherwise damaging and disgracing the party."

From this point on the story of the Working Men's Party of California is largely one of internal dissensions and petty squabbles. A few victories were won in this period of dissension—a new state constitution was adopted mainly through an alliance between the Working Men's Party and the Grangers, and in 1879 the party elected Isaac S. Kalloch, Mayor of San Francisco. But in 1880 the Working Men's Party failed to elect its candidates and soon after it fused with the declining Greenback-Labor Party.

The Working Men's Party of California, though it degenerated into a racket, and the Greenback-Labor movement, controlled though it often was by manufacturers and politicians, had far-reaching consequences. Both brought the question of monopoly to the fore, and were influential in arousing public support for a number of important labor demands. Both movements were instrumental in forcing old established parties to listen more attentively to the demands of the common people. This consequently resulted in the passage of laws in various states establishing bureaus of labor statistics, ending the farming out of convict labor, setting up systems of compulsory education, and abolishing payment of wages in anything but lawful money.

THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

The Unity Congress of the Socialist factions in 1876 did not end the conflict between the Lassalleans and the Marxists. The Lassalleans were determined to ignore the mandate of the congress that political campaigns should be organized only when the party was "strong enough to exercise a perceptible influence." The defeat of the great strikes of 1877 was seized upon by the Lassalleans as proof that the ballot box was the only effective weapon with which to fight the capitalist class. Strikes and unemployment demonstrations, they argued, could never succeed because the moment they began to be successful the government sent in the police, the militia, and the army to crush the movements. Since the government officials could not be removed by trade union action, only an independent political party representing the exploited masses could change the situation. Once the state was captured through the ballot a socialist society would be close at hand.

Aided by the general trend toward political action following the railroad strike, the Lassalleans or "political action" Socialists were able to persuade many sections to ignore the decisions of the Union Congress and to rush into politics. At first the results were very favorable. In the autumn municipal and state elections of 1877 the Socialist vote increased considerably: in Chicago the vote was 7,000; Cincinnati, 9,000; Buffalo, 6,000; Milwaukee, 1,500; New York, 1,800; Brooklyn, 1,200, and New Haven 1,600.

At the Working Men's Party convention held in Newark on December 26, 1877, the "political action" Socialists gained complete control of the movement. Its name was changed to Socialist Labor Party and the constitution and declaration of principles were completely revamped. All obstacles to immediate campaigning were removed, and the main purpose of the party, it was now asserted, was the mobilization of the Working class for political action. In a subsidiary statement it was affirmed that the party "should maintain friendly relations with the trade unions and should promote their formation upon socialistic principles." But it was made quite clear that the chief function of the Socialist Labor Party was the organization of political campaigns.

* J. P. McDonnell of the Labor Standard and his followers stayed away from the convention.