

**A Race of Cuckoos:
Chinese Migration, Anti-Chinese
Legislation and the
Canadian Pacific Railway.**

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Chinese labour migration to Canada in the nineteenth century is explained in terms of the respective positions of China and Canada within the World System. The role of the state in determining this position is discussed. With respect to the several states occupying China, this took the form of attempts to officially regulate the migrant labour trade. The Canadian state provided for the general interests of capital by reinforcing the use of Chinese as cheap labour for work on railway construction. Race as an ideology is used to explain the concrete actions of class fractions as they appropriated racism to promote their material interests. In China this took the form of European merchants and plantation owners aligned against exploited Chinese labour. Within Canada, the merchant class, which favoured political marginalization of the Chinese but not necessarily exclusion, was aligned against the white working class which favoured the outright exclusion of Chinese from Canada.

At the economic level, it is clear that race must be given its distinctive and 'relatively autonomous' effectivity, as a distinctive feature. This does not mean that the economic is sufficient to found an explanation of how these relations concretely function. One needs to know how different racial and ethnic groups were inserted historically, and the relations which tended to erode and transform, preserve these distinctions through time ---- not simply as residues and traces of previous modes, but as active structuring principles of the present organization of society. Racial categories will not provide or explain these. What are the different forms and relations in which these racial fractions were combined under capital? Do they stand in significantly different relations to capital? Do they stand within an articulation of different modes of production? ... Nevertheless, such an analysis would need to be complemented by an analysis of the specific forms which racism assumes in its ideological functioning. Here, we would have to begin by investigating the different ways in which racist ideologies have been constructed and made operative under different historical conditions: the racisms of mercantilist theory and of chattel slavery; of conquest and colonialism; of trade and 'high imperialism'; of 'popular imperialism' and of so-called 'post-imperialism'. In each case, in specific social formations, racism as an ideological configuration has been reconstituted by the dominant class relations and thoroughly reworked (see Hall,1980:338).

Introduction

The above quotation establishes the salience of race and ethnicity within capitalism. Hall suggests that one must examine the historically specific 'articulation' of race and the economic base, while attributing 'relative autonomy' to race as a 'distinctive feature' of capitalist social relations. This suggests an examination of the material base for racism as well as how racism at the political and ideological level reproduces the existing capital relations structured along racial lines.

The purpose of this paper is to examine how class struggle at the political level came to be defined along racial lines within two contexts: the British imperial state in China and the Canadian state. This paper will deal specifically with Chinese migration to Canada in the late nineteenth century.

The analysis will take place at two levels. The first level will involve an examination of the particular economic conditions within the world capitalist system which led to Chinese migration. The role of the British imperial state in promoting this migration will be discussed. In an indirect way the material conditions within the world system and the role of the British state in creating these conditions contributed to the structuring of class struggle along racial lines in the Canadian context. The role of the Canadian state in reproducing class relations along racial lines will be examined. Moreover, the play of class forces which determined the expression of racism in the Canadian state will also be investigated. The focus will be on how racism is appropriated by class fractions to promote their own material interests.

True to the method suggested above, the material conditions for the salience of race within capitalist social relations must be established. The salience of race within this particular historical period can be related to the imperialist stage of competitive capitalism. The root of imperialism lies in the tendency of the capitalist system towards cyclical crises, due to the Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall (TRPF), and the

resulting barriers in the valorization of capital (Bonacich, 1984 and Hirsch, 1978). The developed capitalist countries in Europe attempted to deal with these crises by exporting capital to its colonies.

The export of labour from the colonies as a means to counter the TRPF is one of the chief attractions of imperialist expansion (Bonacich, 1984:17). Employers in the metropole can deal with the TRPF by increasing the extraction of absolute surplus value through the lowering of workers' wages (5). Workers from the colonies can be paid a lower wage rate than their metropole counterparts because the cost of reproducing migrant labor power is borne by the colony (Burawoy, 1976). The state also plays a part in the exploitation of migrant labor power.

From the perspective of the colony, the exportation of its labor force is characterized by a relationship of dependency and domination in the form of an International Division of Labor (Baratt-Brown, 1974). In the late nineteenth century, imperialism made Britain the 'workshop of the world' to be supplied with raw materials (including labor) by its colonies. An International Division of Labor emerged, with advanced European countries being supplied with resources and markets by its colonies. Goods manufactured with foreign capital from the colony were then exported back to the metropole. Thus, there was an unequal exchange of value between the metropole and the colony with the profit from manufactured goods flowing to the metropole (Bonacich, 1984:12-16). The relationship between the colony

and the metropole was one of dominance and exploitation on the part of the metropole, and led to the underdevelopment of the colony (16-20). Therefore, at the economic level, race is a salient characteristic of capitalist social relations because of the domination of non-European countries by European imperial powers.

This is not to reduce race to the needs of capital accumulation. Hall (1980) notes that the structures through which black labor is reproduced are not simply 'colored' by race, they work through race. Therefore, a problem in Marxist conceptualizations of racism is to define racism in such a way as to affirm its material base without reducing it to the economic. Miles' (1982) conceptualization of racism as an ideology is the most profitable. He does not attribute the emergence of racism to the capitalist mode of production. Miles claims that the relative autonomy of racism as an ideology can be explained in two ways. First, racism in the nineteenth century was the product of a number of relatively 'independent' ideologies such as Christianity and 'scientific' racism as well as the 'lived experience' of early explorers to Africa.

Racism was relatively autonomous as well in that it was not reducible to a single class. The most significant aspect of Miles' argument is the process by which racism in the nineteenth century was appropriated by the Bourgeoisie to legitimate imperialism, "racism was used by those advancing the policy of expansionism as justification for intervention in Africa" (Miles, 1982:116). The working class can also appropriate racism

to further its own material self-interests, as was the case with the anti-Oriental policy adopted by organized labor in British Columbia.

China and the World System

Non-capitalist social relations can exist within a larger capitalist system. Lever-Tracy (1983), at a global level, conceptualizes a World System, the general form of which can be characterized as capitalist. Subsumed within this capitalist form are non-capitalist social relations which contribute to the World System. Bonacich (1984) also attributes the existence of cheap migrant labor to subsistence economies in the periphery. The articulation of China as a non-capitalist social formation within the world capitalist system set the conditions for labour migration from China. This describes accurately the relationship of China to the British state within the World System.

The Chinese social system in the early seventeenth century can be characterized as feudal, the power resting, on the one hand, with the absentee landlord and the impotence of the landless peasant on the other (Li, 1979:326). Imperialism laid the ground work for labour emigration to Canada because of the considerable displacement which occurred as a result of imperialism in China. Local craft workers were driven out of their trades by competition from cheap manufactured imports. Peasants were forced off their lands (Bonacich, 1984:27).

In the competitive stage of capitalism, transitory or propertyless labour was needed in the colonies because settlers

became small landowners and were not predisposed to participate in wage labour. (Marx in Barrat-Brown, 1974:50) The migrant, with kinship ties elsewhere, was suited to the needs of capital. According to Bonachich (1984:27):

The temporary nature of colonial labor (sic) was completely rational from the point of view of the emigrant and his family. His supplementary remittances meant a great deal to the well-being of his family in the subsistence sector, while he could only support the most degraded style of life within the capitalist economy.

China's integration into the world market was detrimental to its internal development. Those who benefited from the Chinese migrant labour trade were the imperial states which could expropriate Chinese labour for use in the colonies. China, being debt-burdened, was dependent on remittances from its workers abroad for foreign currency (Friedman, 1980:118). At the political level, the British imperial state played an important role in determining China's mode of articulation within the world system.

PART I: THE IMPERIAL STATE AND MIGRANT LABOUR

The state plays a crucial role in capitalist expansion, providing the general and external conditions for the accumulation of capital (Hirsch 1978:67). The form of the capitalist state can therefore be derived from the laws of motion of capital. The form of the state is bounded and structured by the precondition of its own existence, i.e. the need to attempt to ensure the general conditions for the continued accumulation of capital which individual capitalists cannot create for themselves (67). Derivationists, like Hirsch, are mainly

concerned with the modern capitalist state, but the above observation may also be applied to the imperial state.

If imperialism is a strategy to counter the TRPF, then the imperial state mediates the crisis by providing the political conditions advantageous to imperialist expansionism. Thus, the Opium Wars of 1839 to 1842 marked the coming of western imperialism to China by securing the military domination of China for western imperial powers.

During the early part of the seventeenth century, China was a source of raw materials for export to Britain. By 1839, China began to be viewed as a potential market for British goods. Opium exports to China were a major source of profit for Britain. Needless to say, China's efforts to stem the flow of opium (due to the growing addiction of the Chinese population to the drug) was met with hostility on the part of the British. The sinking of three Chinese gunboats on November 3, 1839 marked the beginning of the Opium Wars. The imperial navy blockaded the Yangtze river thereby cutting off the northern part of China from its food source, securing a victory for the British (Chan,1983:23-29).

The British state, as a member of the alliance of foreign capital in China, played a role in opening the country to the world market by legitimating the presence of foreign capital in China. Before 1842, the trading rights of the western powers were severely curtailed. Only one port, Canton, was open to foreign traders. The import and export trade was regulated by a

group of firms (collectively known as the Cohong) to which the Qing government had awarded a monopoly. In return, the Cohong closely monitored the activities of all foreigners in Canton. All of this changed with the signing of the treaty at Nanking which ended the Opium Wars. This treaty, signed in 1842, provided for the establishment of five treaty ports where foreigners could trade freely. It also ceded Hong Kong to Great Britain. More importantly, the treaty abolished the Cohong (Chan,1983:23-29).

On the political and diplomatic level, western imperialism laid the groundwork for Chinese migration. One third of the foreign treasury of China went to pay reparations for the Opium War (Bonacich,1984:30). In 1859, the provincial government of Quandong was forced to officially sanction the contract labour trade (230). This could have been due to the fact that allied troops had control of the provincial capital, Canton, because of the popular unrest directed at foreigners and specifically, at their involvement in the coolie trade (Campbell,1923:119).

Another important treaty that benefited Canada directly was the Burlingame treaty of 1868, signed between China and the United States. The treaty affirmed the right "of free migration of aliens and subjects from one country to another." The most favoured nation clause, where rights gained by one imperial nation would apply to all other nations occupying China, automatically granted the same privilege to Britain and all its former colonies (Chan,1983:43).

The treaties imposed by the imperial powers is an example of

how the imperial state provided the general and external conditions for the accumulation of capital by securing the political domination of China by the European powers. The treaties assured the smooth accumulation of capital by integrating China into the world system. Free labour was allowed to circulate from China, essentially removing barriers for its expropriation and facilitating its movement into Canada. The military power of the imperialist nations also created an unequal political relationship which meant that the foreign powers were able to regulate the flow of Chinese labour.

The commerce of migration: the contract labour trade

The 'coolie' trade was debt-bondage based on the 'credit-ticket' system by which a Chinese worker would be advanced passage money and would therefore be bound to a foreign employer for a certain amount of free labour while having to work off the commission of the coolie-broker. 'Coolies' very often could not pay back this debt and were not guaranteed passage back. Foreign merchant houses in the treaty ports were connected to a vast network of 'eating houses' in the countryside. These 'eating houses' were run as labour depots by crimps (coolie brokers) who were continually kept informed of the labour market needs in the treaty ports. Crimps frequently bought persons outright as debt-payment, reselling them to foreign immigration merchant houses. Kidnapping was a common form of recruitment (Campbell, 1923:2-120).

The abuses of the 'coolie' system led to an alternative form

of labour recruitment which came to be regulated by the foreign powers in China: the contract labour system. The formal distinction between the contract and the credit-ticket systems was that the contract between labourer and employer specified the period of employment and other obligations of the employer and thus protected the labourer (Campbell,1923:91). The Chinese labourer was, therefore, selling his labour freely by signing the contract. In practice, there was no distinction between the credit-ticket system and the contract labour system. Prospective migrant Chinese workers were often coerced into signing contracts by the crimps of the white trading houses. Torture was not an uncommon practice for extracting consent (118).

The link between the international capitalist labour market and the Chinese feudal economy was the comprador. Compradors were the traditional merchant brokers (ya-hang) who now worked for specific foreign merchant houses. They acted as intermediaries between Chinese officials and merchant houses. The Hong Kong compradors were the principal administrators of the contract labour system and used their kinship and regional ties to promote the trade (Hao,1970:99).

The compradors processed migrant workers when they were in Hong Kong. The agent's task included collecting regular fees from the North American contract labourers for the purposes of registration fees and arranging contracts with foreign companies. He would also be responsible for seeing that remittances from the workers were sent to the workers' family in China, or guaranteed

workers' return (dead or alive) to China after the contracts expired. At the North American end there was another network of Chinese businessmen known in the U.S. as the Six Companies and in Canada, after 1884, as the Chinese Benevolent Association.¹ (Chan,1983:44).

The imperial state and the 'coolie' trade

The content of state activities develops through a process of mediated reaction to the crisis in accumulation (Carnoy,1984:142). The evolution of the coolie trade from an unregulated 'industry' to a regulated and state-sponsored trade, is a response by the imperial nation states to the crisis in accumulation brought about by the abolition of slavery and the animosity of the Chinese to the 'coolie' trade. Race informed this class conflict with white European merchants and plantation owners aligned against exploited Chinese labour.

The Emancipation Act of 1833 which abolished slavery in Britain and its colonies threatened the dominant mode of production (the plantation economy) in the West Indies (Campbell,1923:86). In 1842, by the terms of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty, Great Britain and the United States agreed to enforce the international abolition of the slave trade by patrolling the coast of Africa; thus effectively eliminating the trade (Ching-Hwang,1985:32).

With the abolition of the slave trade a new source of labour for the West Indies and other slave/plantation economies had to be found. The competition for Chinese labour became fierce with

all the major foreign powers competing for labourers. The high demand led to deceitful practices on the part of the foreign merchant houses. For example, Syme-Muir Inc., the leading foreign coolie broker, confined Chinese workers to compounds at the front of the merchant house.² Some were held there against their will (Campbell,1923:128).

Given the fierce competition among the foreign powers and the agitation against the trade by the Chinese, it was in the interest of the British state to rationalize the trade where it had jurisdiction, and to induce other foreign powers to do likewise. The British state did this in a way which assured the West Indian plantation owners that their interests were taken into account.³ The contract system, which legally bound the worker to the employer for a specified period of time, was favoured by the West Indian plantation owners. This was because of the militancy of the Chinese who, according to one planter, would not accept wages "lower than the amount at the time" implying that migrant workers were traditionally paid below the average wage rate (Campbell,1923:89). The contract system was, therefore, a form of labour control.

The 'coolie' trade was further disrupted by the fact that the increase in Chinese labour recruitment was accompanied by a corresponding increase in the sentiment against it. In Canton, a mob killed a group of crimps who had been accused of kidnapping (Campbell,1923:119). The opposition to the trade culminated in the 1852 Amoy and 1859 Shanghai Anti-kidnapping riots.⁴ (Ching-Hwang,1985:74-81).

It was probably the animosity of the Chinese and the fierce competition that led the British state to attempt to eliminate the abuses of the 'coolie' trade by negotiating, with the other foreign powers, a contract system universally applicable to all countries participating in the trade. The British state introduced the Canton System in 1859 which regulated the trade by appointing a government official to act as agent between West Indian plantation owners and Chinese labourers. The British Emigration House would insure that the labourer entered freely into the contract and that travel accommodations were humane (Campbell, 1923:124). The Emigration House was to be supported with public funds as well as by a tax on employers of Chinese labourers (108). Canada, as a colony of Britain, benefited from this regulation in that it ensured that 'coolies' were in good health on coming to Canada, "if for no other reason than that the investment outlay was greater." (Chan,1983:45).⁵

The material basis for the antagonism between the white working class and Chinese labour can be related, in part, to the historically lower subsistence level of Asians compared to Europeans (Creese, 1984:10) and to the fact that the costs of reproducing migrant labour are confined to China.⁶ This, in turn, can be attributed to conditions at the level of the Capitalist world system; conditions that were created and reproduced by the British imperial state in China. These conditions at the level of the world system contributed in turn to the 'making' of a labour market split along racial lines in British Columbia.⁷

PART II: CHINESE MIGRATION AND THE CANADIAN STATE

At the national level, the Canadian state contributed to the reproduction of the split labour market as well. Just as class conflict over the 'coolie' trade was structured by race (i.e. the exploitation of Chinese labour by European merchants and plantation owners), race informed class conflict in the Canadian context. All of these issues must be discussed within the context of the changing economic structure of Canada as well as Canada's own 'articulation' within the world system.

Canada in the World System

Canada's economy in the early 1800s, like that of any other British colony, was geared to the interests of the British Empire. For example, Canada was required to take all its imports from Britain (Pentland, 1981:101). Furthermore, Canada's economy was geared to the export of staples to Britain (131). Therefore, Canada possessed two basic characteristics of a colonial economy: it was a source of raw materials for the metropole as well a market for its manufactured goods. As Naylor has noted, "the metropole defines the character and extent of economic development in the hinterland area" (Naylor, 1972:2). Therefore, the general need for Chinese labour in the Canadian economy can be linked to the interests of the Empire.

Given that Canada's economy was geared towards the circulation of staples, the dominant class fraction (the merchant class) had built a considerable trade in timber and grain with

Britain (Naylor,1972:90). Mercantile capital works within the sphere of circulation and accumulates wealth through intermediary activities between producers and consumers (90). Therefore, it was in the interest of Canadian merchant capital, as well as British capital, to expedite the circulation of raw materials from Canada to Britain. Infrastructure construction (i.e. railways, canals, and roads) which expedites the circulation process, was, therefore, important for mercantile capital and the general needs of the Empire. The construction of the CPR can be seen as a state-sponsored attempt to provide the needed infrastructure for merchant capital.⁸

It is not surprising, then, that the greatest influx of Chinese to British Columbia occurred during the construction of the railroad. Fifteen thousand Chinese labourers worked for Andrew Onderdonk, the largest railroad contractor, between May 1880 and July 1885 (Chan,1983:63). In 1882 alone, Onderdonk contracted with Lian Chan Inc. for two thousand workers from Hong Kong (Wickberg et al,1982:21). Several authors have commented on the fact that the presence of Chinese labour dampened wages because of their lower subsistence level compared to whites (Berton,1971; Chan,1983 and Fang,1931). Thus, Chinese migrant labour helped to promote the interests of the Empire by being a source of cheap labour, acting as a damper on the wages of white workers, especially with respect to keeping the cost of railway construction down.

The low cost of Chinese labour relative to white labour

resulted in antagonisms between these class fractions. The practices of white employers and that of the Canadian state contributed to conditions in the labour market which formed the material foundation for racial antagonisms. The labour market, split along racial lines, was the structure in which this antagonism took place.⁹

At the political level, one way in which the state reproduced this labour market was by politically marginalizing the Chinese. First, Chinese and Asians in general were accorded the official status of 'non-settler' by the Canadian government (Creese, 1984:15). Second, in a series of amendments to the Voter's Act, the British Columbian legislature disenfranchised the Chinese at the provincial and municipal level (Wickberg et al., 1982:83). By 1920, the Chinese were formally disenfranchised at all levels of government (119). The stage was set for labour to make anti-Orientalism an issue in their political conflict with capital.

Organized Labour and Racism

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the economic structure of Canada began to shift gradually from a staple economy to a nascent industrial economy: "mercantile capital and an unmistakable agrarian dominance gave way to a more pervasive industrial capitalism" (Palmer, 1983:60). One particular consequence of the gradual shift from a staple to an industrial economy was the rise of organized labour and an increase in class conflict. "The 1880s was a decade of unprecedented working

class militancy and cultural cohesion" (99). One of the largest and most influential labour organizations was the Knights of Labor. In the west, workers' associations made anti-Orientalism a vital plank in their policy platforms. For example, R.D. Pitt, Master Workman for the Vancouver chapter of the Knights of Labor, ran on an anti-Chinese platform and later formed the Anti-Chinese League. (Wickberg et al., 1982:62). Another anti-Chinese organization, the Working Man's Protective Association (WPA), was formed in Victoria under Noah Shakespeare, an avowed racist (48). The explicitly racist ideology of the WPA can be seen in its declarations of purpose, which were:

the mutual protection of the working class in B.C. against the great influx of Chinese; to use all legitimate means for the suppression of their immigration; to assist each other in the obtaining of employment; and to devise means for the amelioration of the condition of the working class of this province in general (48).

At the national level, much of the success of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada between 1880-1900 can be attributed to its anti-Oriental policy which tended to unify otherwise dissenting groups. Ireland (1960) suggests that the Trades and Labor Congress incorporated the Chinese exclusionary policy in their Platform of Principles largely as an expedient measure to secure continued support from British Columbian representatives.

It would be a mistake to reduce labour's racist attitudes to differences in wages. Implicit in a racist ideology is that one race possesses a moral and cultural superiority over all other races. This 'moral imperative' is used as a rationale for the

domination of one racial group over another. Therefore, labour representatives expressed negative attitudes towards Chinese in moral and cultural terms when calling for their exclusion. This can be seen in the submission of the Nanaimo Trades Association to the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration,

Vice, including prostitution and gambling, is abundant in those (Chinese) quarters ... They are a non-assimilating race. Their vices are most disgusting. They turn their sick out to die in the streets and their lepers to fill our prisons ... Our children must seek employment in other countries to make room for a race of cuckoos ... In fact, the results of our investigation brings us to the conclusion that the Chinese are a disgrace to a civilised community, and we beg that steps may be taken to stop the influx of Chinese to our shores (54).

The WPA's declaration of purpose clearly shows that the 'working class' was defined along racial terms, marked by the exclusion of Chinese labour. Chinese labourers were in effect seen as 'non-workers', and possibly sub-human, if we consider seriously the submission of the Nanaimo Trades Association. Racist attitudes, therefore, informed the political strategies of the labour movement. Instead of seeking to include the Chinese in the organized labour structures, the Canadian labour movement sought to exclude them from Canada. This, of course, reinforced the position of the Chinese in the labour market. In the long run this strategy was detrimental to the working class as a whole.

Racism was appropriated by certain class fractions to further their own self-interests. The specific issue was anti-Chinese legislation. The political power of labour was

growing and the calls for exclusionary legislation could not go unheeded. Cheap migrant labour was needed for the completion of the railway, but the availability of a cheap labour supply was not in the interests of the white working class. The positions of capitalists and the working class with respect to anti-Chinese legislation varied according to their class interests. Capitalists could be seen as favouring forms of anti-Chinese legislation which created the political conditions that favoured the continued exploitation of Chinese labour. Capitalists then would favour legislation politically marginalizing the Chinese, but not necessarily excluding them from Canada. The working class, on the other hand, would favour legislation that would terminate the use of the Chinese as a source of cheap labour. Given the racist attitudes of the working class, this meant calls for the exclusion of Chinese workers from Canada. These issues will be dealt with in the next section.

A short review of anti-Chinese legislation in Canada

The evolution of anti-Chinese legislation from political marginalization to de facto exclusion can be explained in terms of class conflict at the political level. More specifically, the change in anti-Chinese legislation can be attributed to the growing political power of organized labour. A review of anti-Chinese legislation will show, however, that the political pressure from labour for exclusionary Chinese legislation was resisted until the completion of the CPR.

The string of exclusionary anti-Chinese legislation since

1855 was the culmination of anti-Chinese sentiment evident since the 1860s.¹⁰ The Gold Rush Period marked a sudden surge of economic prosperity for Victoria which was transformed from " 'a quiet English village' into a busy commercial centre 'with several thousand residents'" (13). While racism did not find expression in legislation at the provincial or federal level, racist sentiments against the Chinese were already evident in 1858. Amor De Cosmos, editor of the COLONIST and prominent Vancouver Island businessman, wrote that the Chinese were:

inferior to Europeans and Americans in ability, hostile to us in race language and habits and may remain among us a pariah race ... when the time arrives that we can dispose of them, we will heartily second a check to their immigration (43).

The first attempt at monitoring Chinese immigration to the West coast came as early as 1860 when the House of Assembly Colony of Vancouver Island proposed a poll tax of \$10 to be levied on each Chinese (42). The tax was opposed by Amor De Cosmos who, despite his racism, believed that Chinese labour was profitable for the colony (43). This is a prime example of 'situational' racism since he would later be at the fore of anti-Oriental agitation.

By 1864, the Gold Boom began to level off and antagonisms between white and Chinese labour in the Cariboo began to grow (44). It was not surprising that the most strident voices for anti-Chinese legislation came from labour representatives. For example, Noah Shakespeare, leader of the racist Working Man's Protective Association and a Victoria City Councillor, was responsible for legislation banning the Chinese from city works (48).

The first attempt at banning the Chinese from railway construction came five years before the Government of Canada called tenders for railway construction. John Robson (a pro-labour member from Nanaimo) presented a resolution in the Provincial legislature prohibiting the hiring of any Chinese on any public works in the province, effectively banning the Chinese from the proposed railway construction (46). This motion was defeated on the grounds that it interfered with free enterprise (46). When the Government of Canada called tenders for railway construction in 1877, the Governor of British Columbia petitioned J.A. MacDonald to insert in all contracts a clause prohibiting the employment of Chinese workers (20). This appeal was rejected by the MacDonald Government (20). Amor De Cosmos presented a petition to the Government of Canada calling for the exclusion of Chinese from railway construction as well as other proposals designed to exclude Chinese immigration to Canada(48). These proposals were rejected although the petition did prod the MacDonald government to create a Select Committee, chaired by Amor the Cosmos, to examine the 'Oriental question' (49). Up to the time of the Select Committee it seems that the form of racist legislation was meant to politically marginalize the Chinese. All attempts at outright exclusion were rebuffed by the Canadian Government.

Further evidence of this can be seen in the response of the MacDonald government to the Select Committee report. While the

recommendations of the Committee are not known, the fact that it was chaired by one of British Columbia's leading racists and that only two witnesses spoke favourably of the Chinese, (49) is a good indication of what the recommendations must have been. It would appear that no official policies came from the Committee's recommendations.

The government of the day seems to have subordinated calls for Chinese exclusion to the completion of the railway. As MacDonald bluntly told Members of Parliament from British Columbia, if they wanted the railway built they would have to accept Chinese labour (49). The MacDonald Government's actions in 1884 are also significant. In 1884, the Provincial Parliament of British Columbia proposed an act which would levy a head tax on all Chinese in British Columbia and forbid them from owning crown lands (56). The government of Canada disallowed the bill.¹¹ However, MacDonald was forced to commit himself to an investigation of Chinese immigration restrictions and measures to regulate Chinese migration. The result was the Royal Commission of 1884 (55). In February of 1885, the Provincial Act of 1884 was reenacted as a protest to the perceived ineffectual solutions to Chinese immigration proposed by the Commission of 1884 (56). This was a direct threat to the completion of the railway. As Onderdonk wrote to George Stephen, president of the CPR:

a large number of Chinamen will necessarily have to come from Oregon and California in the Spring to work on your road above Kamloops. It would be well for you to see that this act is disallowed immediately (see Ward, 1978:39).

MacDonald disallowed the act for the second time (39). The Royal Commission that MacDonald had been forced to create to investigate Chinese immigration gave full expression to racism in British Columbia. Unfair competition between Chinese and white workers was a major issue. Other issues were raised concerning the shortcomings of Chinese culture, including: the hazard they posed to the health of the white community (Chinese were unclean and spread disease); and their morality (gamblers and opium smokers (39). The recommendations of the commissioners are especially enlightening because they represent the class-selective nature of official racism against the Chinese. Mr. Justice Gray readily admitted that the Chinese were a 'boon to the economy'. The principle which should govern future legislation was a policy of "judicious selection" to make sure that "the great interests and enterprises not be harmed" (40). It is more than apparent that Justice Gray had the interests of the large capitalists at heart. Unlike in 1879, when the government of Canada ignored the findings of the Select Committee, the government acted swiftly on the Commission's recommendations. This may have been due, in part, to the fact that the railway was nearing completion. According to Chan (1984) the railway was completed in July 29, 1885. The new Chinese Immigration Act gained royal assent on July 20, 1885 (see Wickberg et al., 1982).

It is true that part of the explanation for the emergence of exclusionary legislation can be attributed to the growing

political power of labour. This can be seen in the evolution of anti-Chinese legislation in the late nineteenth century from those measures to politically marginalize the Chinese, to those which exclude them from immigrating to Canada. Creese (1984) has noted that the denial of political franchise and the progressively more stringent restrictions and taxes on Asian immigration occurred through pressure by the working class and small business rather than at the 'behest' of the capitalists in British Columbia (although it may have been in their long term self-interests).

Calls for the exclusion and disenfranchisement of the Chinese were made by labour. One can make the argument that the actual point at which the demands of labour were expressed in the state occurred at the behest of capital. Witness how MacDonald studiously ignored petitions for measures to exclude Chinese labour from railway construction, or for measures to exclude Chinese immigration before the end of railway construction was in sight, or in his twice-ordered disallowance of British Columbia's attempts at exclusionist legislation -- given, it seems, at the bidding of the president of the CPR.

Thus, it seems that the particular expression of racism in the Canadian state, here in the form of anti-Chinese legislation -- from political marginalization to de facto exclusion -- was subordinated to the needs of capital accumulation and reflected the power of the working class in relation to capital within the state at that particular historical moment.

Conclusions

We have seen in the above discussion that race played an important part in the structuring of class relations along racial lines in British Columbia. At the level of the world system, race was made salient as a structuring element of class relations in British Columbia through the imperial expansionism of the European powers. The British state played a crucial role in creating the conditions which indirectly contributed to the significance of race in British Columbia by creating conditions at the level of the world system which favoured labour migration from China. The concrete actions of the British state in creating these conditions was determined by the play of class forces in China. Class conflict in China proper was structured along racial lines with exploited Chinese labour aligned against the white plantation owners and the foreign trading house merchants.

Within the Canadian context, race was made a salient feature of class relations in three ways: first, through the practices of white employers who used Chinese as a source of cheap labour and as strike-breakers; secondly, through the appropriation of a racist ideology by the Canadian white working class and the Canadian merchant capitalist class to further their own material self-interests; and thirdly, through the practices of the Canadian state which, firstly, politically marginalized the Chinese and then proceeded to exclude them from Canada.

As in the British imperial state, the concrete activities of

the state were conditioned by class conflict. Specifically, expressions of racism in the state, in the form of anti-Chinese legislation, were conditioned by the play of class forces at the political level. One could further speculate that the relatively weak position of the white working class vis a vis the capitalist class could have been improved if Chinese labour were incorporated into existing labour organizations. Again, however, we see the influence of a racist ideology on the balance of class forces.

NOTES

1.Chinese contract labour in Canada seems to have been principally organized through the affiliates of the larger Chinese merchant houses operating in the United States. The recruitment of Chinese from the United States for the railway was undertaken by a Chinese company, the Lian Chang Company, organized by a Chinese businessman from San Francisco. (see Wickberg et al., 1982:21) Other affiliates of Chinese merchant houses in the United States supplying Chinese labour to British Columbia include the Hop Kee and Co. of San Francisco which arranged with the shipping company Allan Lowe and Co. for passage to Victoria on the Caribbean for 300 Chinese (13). Evidence seems to indicate, however, that the dominant company dealing in Chinese labour recruitment to the railway was non-Chinese, Stahlschmidt & Ward. This company received five thousand of the eight thousand Chinese who landed in Victoria during 1882 (21).

2.The common designation for the recruitment of migrant Chinese was the 'buying and selling of pigs'. The compounds in front of the foreign trading houses where migrant Chinese waited to be shipped out were called 'pig-pens' (Campbell, 1923:97). This term accurately reflects the living conditions within these compounds.

3.For example while calling for the end to the abuses of the coolie trade, the British State introduced legislation narrowing the permissible minimum space allowed for Asian and Black workers on ships. Minimum allowable space on ships was reduced from 15 to 12 feet for 'natives of Asia or Africa' (Campbell, 1923:108).

4. In both instances the riots centered around the kidnapping of Chinese by crimps for the foreign merchant houses (hongs) which dealt in the 'coolie' trade.

The Amoy riot was sparked by the actions of Mr. Syme of Syme, Muir & Co., a foreign 'hong' with a notorious reputation for abusive 'coolie' recruitment practices. Mr. Muir attempted to forcibly 'liberate' one of his 'crimps' (who was charged with kidnapping) from the Chinese authorities (Ching-Hwa, 1985:75). The ensuing riot left twelve killed and sixteen wounded (Campbell, 1923:101).

The Shanghai riots were precipitated by the friends and relatives of kidnapped Chinese who attacked foreign sailors of 'coolie'-bearing ships. The mob attacked several people including the Inspector General of the Chinese Maritime Customs and a British doctor (Ching-Hwa, 1923:81).

5. Other foreign powers were quick to follow the British lead. All foreign consuls gave their support to the Canton system. In December 1859, the French emigration agent formally applied and received permission from the Governor-General of Quandong to establish an Emigration House under the Canton System. The Spanish also established Emigration Houses in Canton. The American consul required all American ships to conform to the regulations governing emigration under contract, pending receipt of further instructions from the Secretary of State (Campbell, 1923:126-127).

Enforcement of a contract labour system applicable to all foreign powers proved to be a problem in the years following the Canton System. Under the Canton system no labour recruitment was allowed outside of licensed Emigration Houses in the Treaty Ports. In reality, a substantial amount of the trade was still conducted outside of the Emigration Houses. Subsequent attempts at the replacement of the coolie trade with a contract labour system, such as the Peking Regulations of 1866, proved to have limited success. The abuses of the coolie trade persisted until 1874 when Portugal, the last of the foreign powers which still sanctioned the trade, abolished it in Macao (Ching-Hwang, 1985:103).

6. Burawoy (1976) has made a similar argument in his analysis of South African and Mexican migrant workers. The relative low cost of migrant labour is due to the fact that the reproduction costs of the worker are borne by the migrant's family at the periphery.

7. Creese (1984) applies the split labour market model to describe the labour market structure in British Columbia during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The essence of the split labour according to Bonachich is that the dynamic of capitalism attempts to drive down the price of labour, and an

ethnically split labour market results from the differential resources available to dearer and cheaper workers in their attempt to improve wages and working conditions (see in Creese, 1984:6).

8. Naylor (1972) has pointed to the fact that the National Policy of the MacDonald government (of which the construction of the CPR was only an aspect) was a construct of the merchant class to benefit its material interests by suppressing the growth of other class fractions of the Bourgeoisie i.e. the petite Bourgeoisie and the 'nascent' industrial class.

9. The relative cheapness of Chinese labour, aside from the existence of a split labour market, can also be attributed to the form of labour recruitment used by the railroad contractors. Chinese labour was not contracted individually, but in work gangs. Probably; an agent of the contracting company was resident in the camp. Each gang had a non-Chinese foreman or 'herder' who was responsible to the construction company (Wickberg et al., 1983:22). According to Muszynski, (1986) the Chinese labourers were forced into a continuing dependence on the contractor. The cycle of continuing indebtedness prevented the workers from going back to China. Thus the Chinese custom of indebtedness was used as an instrument to provide for a pool of cheap labour,

This is an instance of a precapitalist relation of production being used within a capitalist mode of production. (93)

10. The first piece of anti-Chinese legislation meant to exclude Chinese immigrants to Canada was passed in 1885 in the form of a \$50 head tax levied on every Chinese entering Canada. The special tax was raised to \$100 in 1900 and \$500 in 1903. Anti-Chinese sentiment reached a climax in 1923 when the Parliament of Canada passed the Chinese immigration Act which basically excluded all Chinese from entering Canada. Between 1925 and 1947, the year that the Chinese Immigration Act was repealed, Chinese immigration to Canada was virtually stopped (Li, 1979:323).

11. The Chinese in British Columbia did not depend on the charity of the federal government to ensure that their rights were protected. In 1878, the government of British Columbia attempted to pass what amounted to a head tax on all Chinese (Wickberg et al., 1982:48). Opposition was immediate and culminated in a general strike by the Chinese community (lasting five days) where stores closed, domestic servants stayed away from homes, Chinese workers refused to report to hotels and boot factories. The Governor General of Canada disallowed the law on October 28, 1879 (49).

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