

*Patterns of Racism: Attitudes Towards Chinese and Japanese in Alberta 1920-1950**

by Howard PALMER**

The issue of Chinese and Japanese immigration to British Columbia has finally received some long-needed scholarly attention. A growing body of research now helps explain not simply the development of restrictive immigration laws and discriminatory legislation at the federal and provincial levels, but more about the politics and ideology of anti-Asian sentiment.¹ Historians have shown the organizational and economic bases of anti-Asian prejudice, the significance of the "Oriental question" as a political issue in British Columbia, its impact on uniting organized labour in the province and the ways in which the various strands of anti-Asian sentiment culminated in the relocation of Japanese-Canadians during the Second World War. Historians have also detailed the attitudes of British Columbian interest groups such as clergymen, organized labour, farmers, veterans, and retail associations and shown the way in which white supremacist views were crucial to the psychological make-up of British Columbians.²

Many of these studies give the impression that Chinese and Japanese lived only in British Columbia and therefore were of no concern to people on the Prairies. This is not the case. There have been concentrations of Chinese in other parts of the country since the 1880s and of Japanese since the first decade of the twentieth cen-

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¹ Throughout this paper I have used the term Asian in preference to "Oriental" because many people of Chinese and Japanese origin in North America feel that "Oriental" still carries many of the negative connotations associated with earlier attitudes toward the Chinese and Japanese.

² Ken ADACHI, *The Enemy That Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians* (Toronto, 1976); James MORTON, *In The Sea of Sterile Mountains: The Chinese in British Columbia* (Vancouver, 1975); Patricia ROY, "The Oriental Menace in British Columbia", in *The Twenties in Western Canada*, ed: S. M. TROFIMENKOFF (Ottawa, 1972), pp. 243-58; "Educating the 'East': British Columbia and the Oriental Question in the Interwar Years", *B.C. Studies*, 18 (1973): 50-69; "Protecting Their Pockets and Preserving Their Race: White Merchants and Oriental Competition", in *Cities in the West*, ed: A. R. MCCORMACK and Ian MACPHERSON (Ottawa, 1975), pp. 116-38; W. P. WARD, "The Oriental Immigrant and Canada's Protestant Clergy, 1858-1925", *B.C. Studies*, 22 (1974): 40-55; "British Columbia and the Japanese Evacuation", *Canadian Historical Review*, 57 (1976): 289-308; P. WARD, *White Canada Forever* (Montreal, 1978); M. Ann SUNAHARA, "Federal Policy and the Japanese Canadians: 1942-1950" (M.A. thesis, University of Calgary, 1977).

ture. Alberta has had the second largest proportion of both Japanese and Chinese in Canada throughout most of the twentieth century. With the exception of the Hut-terites, the Chinese and Japanese have borne the brunt of more discrimination and nativist agitation than any other immigrant ethnic groups in a province noted for its large number of distinctive ethnic and ethno-religious groups.

Several questions need to be asked in order for us to understand the course and significance of anti-Asian sentiment in Alberta. To what extent did Albertans join in the anti-Asian movement which developed in British Columbia? Since the Chinese and Japanese comprised less than one percent of the population of Alberta throughout the twentieth century,³ why did they encounter more discrimination than much larger European minority groups? What impact did Albertans have on the development of national policy toward Asians?

Table 1.

CHINESE AND JAPANESE IN ALBERTA AS % OF TOTAL NUMBER OF CHINESE AND JAPANESE IN CANADA

	Total # of Chinese in Canada	% of Chinese in Alberta	Total # of Japanese in Canada	% of Japanese in Alberta	Total # of Chinese and Japanese in Canada	Total Chinese and Japanese in Alberta
1901	17,312	1.4	4,738	0.2	22,050	0.1
1911	27,831	6.4	9,021	2.7	36,852	5.5
1921	39,587	7.7	15,868	3.0	55,455	7.3
1931	46,516	8.3	23,342	3.0	69,858	6.5
1941	34,627	9.0	23,149	2.5	57,776	6.4
1951	32,528	10.6	21,663	15.4	54,191	12.5

Perhaps the most interesting problem is that of explaining the shifts in attitudes towards the Chinese and Japanese which occurred over a relatively short time in Alberta. The Depression and the Second World War saw important changes in attitudes toward both the Chinese and the Japanese. But Chinese and Japanese cannot be seen as a single group. The Depression was a period of increased discrimination against the Chinese, but growing acceptance for the Japanese. The Second World War produced a reversal. The Japanese encountered intense hostility while Chinese found a growing acceptance. How can one account for the anomalous impact these two major events had on the two groups?

Attitudes Prior to 1920

A few Chinese began drifting into Alberta during the late 1880s after the completion of the CPR. Opposition to the Chinese in Alberta prior to 1920 was strident but less virulent than in British Columbia. Unlike the Pacific province, there were relatively few Chinese in Alberta and they did not compete directly with white labourers.⁴ In a frontier society which was labour-scarce and where women were al-

³ See Tables 1 and 2.

⁴ For a full discussion of anti-Oriental sentiment in Alberta between 1880 and 1920, see H. PALMER, "Anti-Oriental Sentiment in Alberta; 1880-1920", *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, II (December 1970): 31-58.

ways in a distinct minority, the Chinese engaged in various types of domestic service, principally cooking and washing, as well as working as hotel workers, domestic servants, and market gardeners.⁵ The Chinese took jobs that white men were unwilling to do since lack of skills, desire, and capital prevented Chinese from farming or ranching, and discrimination confined them to the lowest ranks of the working class in the cities. The Chinese were often appreciated for the work they did, although their concentration in menial jobs reinforced negative stereotypes concerning them. Since they came as "sojourners", intending to return to their families in China, very few brought their wives with them. By 1911 there were 1,787 Chinese in Alberta, but only twenty of them were women.

Despite their small numbers, and lack of direct competition with white workers, hostility towards the Chinese was prevalent. The Chinese were culturally and "racially" remote, and as in British Columbia, exaggerated talk of gambling and the use of drugs continually stirred up anti-Chinese animosity. Chinese immigrants were viewed as being so culturally remote that many opinion leaders in Alberta who advocated assimilation programmes for immigrants in general believed that Chinese immigrants neither could nor should be assimilated. Many felt that assimilation of "Orientals" might compromise Christian religion, ethics, and progress because of Chinese illiteracy, alleged moral turpitude, alleged ignorance of sanitation practices, and lack of experience with self-government. Consequently the assimilators concentrated their efforts on eastern Europeans. Only a handful of Protestant clergymen thought the Chinese could be integrated into Canadian society, but even they did not believe the complete assimilation of the Chinese through intermarriage was either possible or desirable.⁶

Most politicians and newspaper editors in Alberta gave expression to anti-Chinese sentiment at some point in the period between 1880 and 1920. There was little difference between the two major parties, the Conservatives and the Liberals, in their attitudes toward Chinese immigrants. Indeed, at election time (particularly in the 1908 federal election and 1909 provincial election) both major parties strained to be more anti-Chinese, since this was seen as the best way to capture the labour vote. The "Oriental question" had become a major preoccupation of organized labour in British Columbia and some of this concern spilled over into Alberta. British and Canadian-born workers regarded most Asians with either condescension, contempt, or hostility and organized labour was the most consistently and emphatically anti-Asian of any group in the province. Anti-Asian sentiment was by no means however the exclusive property of the working class.

Hostility toward the Chinese in Alberta found expression in movements to disfranchise them, to segregate them (in Lethbridge and Calgary), to force them to leave a particular town through boycotts or special taxes on Chinese laundries, and to ban the employment of white girls in Chinese stores. The most dramatic expressions of anti-Chinese sentiment were the anti-Chinese riots in Calgary in 1892 and

⁵ *Calgary Herald* (hereafter *C.H.*), 6 June 1888; Brian DAWSON, "The Chinese Experience in Frontier Calgary — 1885-1910", in *Frontier Calgary*, eds: Henry KLASSEN and A. RASPORICH (Calgary, 1975), pp. 124-40.

⁶ S. S. OSTERHOUT, *Orientals in Canada: The Story of the Work of the United Church of Canada with Asiatics in Canada* (Toronto, 1929); WARD, "The Oriental Immigrant".

ways in a distinct minority, the Chinese engaged in various types of domestic service, principally cooking and washing, as well as working as hotel workers, domestic servants, and market gardeners.⁵ The Chinese took jobs that white men were unwilling to do since lack of skills, desire, and capital prevented Chinese from farming or ranching, and discrimination confined them to the lowest ranks of the working class in the cities. The Chinese were often appreciated for the work they did, although their concentration in menial jobs reinforced negative stereotypes concerning them. Since they came as "sojourners", intending to return to their families in China, very few brought their wives with them. By 1911 there were 1,787 Chinese in Alberta, but only twenty of them were women.

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⁶ S. S. OSTERHOUT, *Orientals in Canada: The Story of the Work of the United Church of Canada with Asiatics in Canada* (Toronto, 1929); WARD, "The Oriental Immigrant".

anxieties about eastern Europeans.¹² Prejudice and discrimination certainly did not disappear but anti-Asian sentiment was less frequently expressed, and attempts to pass ordinances aimed only at the Chinese disappeared. Gone were the pre-war attempts to disfranchise the Chinese, to keep them in ghettos, and to attack them in riots.

Both the extent, and the causes of this decline require explanation. One reason for this decrease in overt hostility was that the Chinese and Japanese population in the province remained small. As a result of tightened immigration regulations, only about 475 Chinese and 100 Japanese came to the province during the 1920s, helping to bring the total Chinese population to 3,876 and the Japanese to 652 by 1931.¹³ Because of the shortage of Chinese women in Canada, the number of births among the Chinese was very low, and there were few children in the urban Chinatowns. Exaggerated rumours of an "Oriental" invasion could no longer be taken seriously.

Table 2.

CHINESE AND JAPANESE POPULATION IN ALBERTA AND BRITISH COLUMBIA, 1901-1951

	<i>Chinese and Japanese as % of Alberta Population</i>	<i>Japanese</i>	<i>Chinese</i>	<i>Total Alberta Population</i>
1901	0.3	13	235	73,022
1911	0.5	247	1,787	374,295
1921	0.6	473	3,581	588,454
1931	0.6	652	3,875	731,605
1941	0.4	578	3,122	796,169
1951	0.4	3,336	3,451	939,501

	<i>Chinese and Japanese as % of B.C. Population</i>	<i>Japanese</i>	<i>Chinese</i>	<i>Total B.C. Population</i>
1901	10.9	4,597	14,885	178,657
1911	7.2	8,587	19,568	392,480
1921	7.4	15,006	23,533	524,582
1931	7.1	22,205	27,139	694,236
1941	5.0	22,096	18,619	817,861

One reason for decreased hostility toward the Chinese was their continued concentration in specialized service areas of the economy which involved little direct competition with working-class whites. The Chinese were beginning to have an accepted place in the community, even if it was universally believed that they should remain in that place. There was some resistance among Anglo-Canadians when second generation "Orientals" attempted to move out of these traditional Chinese occupations. Hospitals in Calgary and Edmonton, for example, refused to accept Chinese girls for nurses' training.¹⁴

¹² H. PALMER, "Nativism and Ethnic Tolerance in Alberta, 1920-1972" (Ph.D. dissertation, York University, 1973), Chap. 2.

¹³ *Census of Canada, 1931*, IV, pp. 414-15. See also Table 2. The 1931 census reported that in the year, there still resided in Alberta 476 Chinese who had arrived between 1921 and 1930, and 97 Japanese who had arrived during the same period.

¹⁴ Nellie McCLUNG, *The Stream Runs Fast* (Toronto, 1945), p. 166.

If the Chinese were generally regarded as a necessary part of the economy, they were not regarded as an acceptable part of the local society; small town neighbourliness did not extend to them. Heather Gilead describes the status of the Chinese in small towns in Alberta prior to World War II:

... a living sacrifice is what those men must have been. They were the point at which the famous hospitality and neighbourliness stopped. There was not a white remittance-man shiftless or unwashed enough not to receive at least one invitation to eat his Christmas dinner with a proper family, but thousands of Chinese must have lived in our midst decade after decade without ever seeing the inside of a white Christian's home. Theirs but to launder, cook, wash dishes, listen to the kids shouting 'Chinky, Chinky Chinaman, sitting on a rail!...'

They were seldom actually persecuted. The children sauced them only from a discreet distance, and they would not be the only target for the children by any manner of means. Most adults spoke to them civilly enough most of the time. But if a community had some questionable activities to perform it would quite likely "requisition" the premises of the Chinese for that purpose...¹⁵

Chinese gambling and involvement in the drug trade continued to attract unfavourable comment in the press and formed part of the stereotype of the Chinese in popular fiction.¹⁶ Indeed, Canada's "drug problem" was seen by most sectors of society as a Chinese import, even though a number of Canadians were themselves becoming addicted to drugs through the widespread use of opiate-based patent medicines.¹⁷ One book written by Albertan Emily Murphy, *The Black Candle*, which was published in 1922 after being serialized in *Macleans*, continued to emphasize the danger of the Chinese involvement in the drug trade.¹⁸ But arrests for gambling and opium smoking became routine and did not excite the same degree of concern that they had in the pre-war period.¹⁹

One indication of the limited expression of anti-Chinese sentiment in Alberta during the 1920s was the fact that pressure for the complete restriction of Chinese immigration in the 1920s came not from Alberta, but from British Columbia. With the onset of economic depression in 1918-1919 combined with other social dislocation, the anti-Chinese movement, which had abated during the war period, again revived. Veterans, the unemployed, trade unionists, retail merchants, boards of trade members, farmers and politicians in that province demanded the complete exclusion of "Orientals", and initiated a new drive to limit the ability of Chinese to compete in farming and retailing. By the late twenties four new anti-Oriental Leagues had been formed in British Columbia which advocated not only the old standard "solutions" to the "Oriental problem" of exclusion and restricting the

¹⁵ *The Maple Leaf for Quite a While* (London, 1967), p. 18.

¹⁶ Nellie McCLUNG's novel *Painted Fires* (1925) utilized the Chinese involvement in the drug trade as part of the plot of the novel. See also A. HIEBERT, "The Oriental as He Appears in Some of the Novels of British Columbia", *British Columbia Library Quarterly*, 34 (April 1971): 20-31.

¹⁷ Terry CHAPMAN, "Drug Use in Western Canada", *Alberta History* (Autumn 1976): 18-27.

¹⁸ For a discussion of Mrs. Murphy's career see Byrne Hope SANDERS, *Emily Murphy Crusader* (Toronto, 1945). For a brief discussion of the impact of her book on legislative changes concerning the drug trade see the introduction by Robert SOLOMON to the Coles reprint of *The Black Candle* (Toronto, 1973), pp. 1-3. For a more detailed discussion of *The Black Candle* see PALMER, "Anti-Oriental Sentiment", p. 41.

¹⁹ *Edmonton Bulletin*, 14 October 1921; R.C.M.P., *Annual Report, Sessional Papers*, 1922.

Asians' ability to compete economically, but the repatriation of Oriental immigrants.²⁰

Alberta newspapers and politicians were seldom heatedly involved in this discussion. The Alberta papers carried stories on the anti-"Oriental" movement, but viewed it as primarily a British Columbian problem. The argument of the *Edmonton Bulletin* that the sooner "Orientals" were excluded, the better; that Western Canada was faced by an "invasion" of "aggressive foreigners"; and that "the choice is simple whether Western Canada is to be 'white' or 'yellow'", was not common in the Alberta press.²¹ Some Alberta politicians were involved in the parliamentary debate over "Oriental" exclusion in May 1922 which resulted in the adoption of a resolution calling for "effective restriction", a resolution which would ultimately bear fruit in the exclusionist Chinese Immigration Act the next year. W. T. Lucas the UFA member from Camrose and an Ontario-born farmer who had resided briefly at Kamloops, B.C., seconded the motion by British Columbian W. G. McQuarrie which called for the exclusion of "Orientals" and added his voice to the phalanx of B.C. Members of Parliament (both Liberals and Conservatives) who stayed up until quarter to two in the morning to rehearse the old catalogue of anti-Oriental phobias.²² Former Alberta Premier Charles Stewart was responsible for the introduction of the Chinese Immigration Act in 1923 but it is unclear if his position was primarily a political one — that restriction of Orientals was necessary to placate anti-Oriental sentiment in British Columbia, or if he believed the whole panoply of arguments put forward by B.C. Members of Parliament that recapitulated all the old Oriental menace arguments: that whites could not compete with Orientals because of the low standard of living of the latter, that Orientals were unassimilable, and that they posed a moral threat because of their involvement in the drug trade.²³ Stewart received a great deal of correspondence for and against the Chinese Immigration Act, but the only correspondence he received from Alberta regarding the question was from concerned Chinese organizations and from a lawyer worried about how it might affect his legal work among Chinese immigrants.²⁴ When British Columbia politicians and nativists lamented the fact that Canadians "east of the Rockies" were not sufficiently aware of the "yellow menace", they scarcely made any exception for Albertans.²⁵

Despite increasing anti-Japanese sentiment in British Columbia, during the 1920s the Japanese in Alberta attracted little attention; indeed, they became increasingly accepted in the small communities in southern Alberta where they lived.²⁶ Social links between Caucasians and Japanese were limited by language and cultur-

²⁰ MORTON, *In the Sea*, Chap. IX; Hilda Glynn WARD, *The Writing on the Wall*, introduction by Patricia ROY (Toronto, 1974); ROY, "Protecting Their Pocketbooks", pp. 116-38; WARD, *White Canada*, Chap. 7.

²¹ *Edmonton Bulletin* (hereafter *E.B.*), 11 May 1922, 8 April 1923.

"Gentlemen's Agreement" with Japan, C. H. YOUNG *et al.*, *Japanese Canadians* (Toronto, 1938).

²² CANADA, PARLIAMENT, HOUSE OF COMMONS, *Debates*, 9 May 1922, pp. 1509-77; biographical data on Lucas from *Peterborough Examiner*, 22 March 1961.

²³ T'ienfang CH'ENG, *Oriental Immigration in Canada* (Shanghai, 1931), pp. 86, 87.

²⁴ PAC, RG76, Immigration Department Files, Box 49, 827821.

²⁵ ROY, "Educating the East".

²⁶ David IWAASA, "Canadian Japanese in Southern Alberta, 1905-1965" (Research Paper, University of Lethbridge, 1972), p. 32; interviews with Kanao Sugimoto, Sash Matsumo, Kinko Matsumo, Yutetsu Kawamura, Raymond, Alberta, December 1978.

al differences, but the limited contacts between the Japanese immigrants and Caucasians were generally amiable. The schools served to bring Japanese and white children together. In British Columbia, by contrast, as the Japanese expanded their economic activities in fishing, lumbering, and farming, hostility against them increased. Pressure was brought upon the provincial government to restrict the expansion of Japanese in these areas and to have the federal government further restrict their immigration. Some demanded that the Gentleman's Agreement with Japan be abrogated and that the Chinese Immigration Act be extended to the Japanese.²⁷ There was little expression of anti-Japanese sentiment in Alberta where the newspapers reported what was happening in their neighbouring province, but as in the case of the Chinese, the events were regarded as matters of concern to British Columbia. With only 473 Japanese in Alberta in 1921 and few immigrants arriving²⁸ (most of these being wives, and agricultural labourers for Japanese farmers)²⁹ the Japanese were not highly visible.

In the coal mines, where the Japanese were beginning to play a more active part in union affairs, conflict was kept at a minimum because of their small numbers and the fact that by custom they were not allowed to work underground.³⁰ As a result of the improvement of attitudes toward the Japanese, one Japanese-Canadian historian refers to the 1920s as the "good years" for the Japanese in southern Alberta.³¹ However, had Japanese continued to come into the province opposition probably would have developed. In the irrigated sugar beet district of southwestern Alberta where agricultural labour was needed, local farmers deliberately decided on attracting central and eastern European immigrants as farm labourers because they preferred them to the "little yellow fellows".³²

The late 1920s saw the resurgence of anti-foreign sentiment in Alberta and the emergence of a small Ku Klux Klan. But this burst of hostility was caused by the influx during the late 1920s of significant numbers of central and eastern European immigrants and was not directed against Asians. The Klan grew slowly in the late 1920s and achieved a total membership by the early 1930s of around five thousand, with Klan locals in approximately fifty towns and villages as well as in most of the major cities.³³ For the Klan, anti-Catholicism was the major article of faith and most of its literature and activities were directed against combating the influence of Catholics and the Catholic Church. Although ideas of white supremacy were common in Klan literature, and there were cases in other parts of the country of Klansmen preventing interracial marriages and terrorizing Chinese laundrymen,³⁴ white su-

²⁷ ROY, "Educating the East"; ADACHI, *The Enemy*, Chap. 6.

²⁸ *Census of Canada*, 1921, p. 359; *Census of Canada*, 1931, IV, p. 414.

²⁹ These were two of the four classes of Japanese immigrants still permitted under the 1907 "Gentlemen's Agreement" with Japan, C. H. YOUNG *et al.*, *Japanese Canadians* (Toronto, 1938), pp. 10-16.

³⁰ IWAASA, "Canadian Japanese", p. 35.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Lethbridge Herald* (hereafter *L.H.*), 22 May 1925; interview with A. E. Palmer, Lethbridge, June 1978.

³³ H. PALMER, "Nativism and Ethnic Tolerance in Alberta, 1925-1930", *Canadian Historical Association Report* (1974): 183-212.

³⁴ Robin WINKS, *The Blacks in Canada* (New Haven, 1971), pp. 320-25; W. CALDERWOOD, "The Rise and Fall of the Ku Klux Klan in Saskatchewan" (M.A. thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1968). On the anti-Oriental activities of the Klan in B.C. see WARD, *White Canada*, p. 135.

premacy was not a priority concern of the Alberta Klan membership: the number of non-whites in Alberta was simply too small. The small number of Chinese and Japanese in Alberta and the concentration of the Japanese in mainly one community — the predominantly Mormon town of Raymond, in southwest Alberta, which did not have a Klan — kept the Klan from emphasizing the type of anti-Oriental activities in which it engaged in British Columbia.

Four major factors probably account then for the decline in anti-Asian sentiment in Alberta during the 1920s. First, both the Chinese and Japanese were small in number and concentrated in specialized occupations where there was little direct competition with whites. Second, Albertans were gradually growing accustomed to those who lived in the province, and were coming to take their services for granted. Third, the restrictive federal legislation introduced against Chinese and Japanese immigration during the 1920s defused the "Oriental question" by keeping the number coming in at a minimum and removing the major focal point of anti-Asian political pressure. Fourth, during the late 1920s another wave of central and eastern Europeans attracted attention away from the Chinese and Japanese. However, the precariousness of this apparent increase in acceptance would become evident for the Chinese during the Depression, and for the Japanese during the Second World War.

Impact of the Depression

The Depression affected the Japanese and Chinese differently because of their differing positions in the Alberta economy. Despite deteriorating economic conditions, the Japanese in southern Alberta generally found still greater acceptance than before,³⁵ whereas the Chinese once again found themselves in the position of being the most despised immigrant group in the province. They suffered a great deal of both official and unofficial discrimination.

During the Depression, the Japanese in southern Alberta remained concentrated in the Raymond and Hardieville areas, although they began expanding into newly opened irrigated land in other parts of southern Alberta.³⁶ Their concentration in the irrigated areas kept them relatively self-sufficient since these areas did not experience the consequences of the ravages of drought which affected other parts of the southern prairies. By remaining off the relief rolls, the Japanese avoided the problems faced by central European and Chinese immigrants in the cities who encountered an officialdom anxious to have them deported, or failing that, to have their relief payments kept at a minimum.³⁷ Some Japanese miners in Hardieville were laid off when the coal mines closed, but many of these men owned small farms and turned to full-time farming.³⁸

Inter-ethnic friction which did arise with the Japanese developed between them and other immigrant groups — eastern Europeans and Chinese. The predominantly Hungarian Alberta Beet Workers' Union resented the use of unemployed

³⁵ IWAASA, "Canadian Japanese", p. 45.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 45, 48.

³⁷ PALMER, "Nativism in Alberta", Chap. 3.

³⁸ IWAASA, "Canadian Japanese", p. 45.

Japanese miners as "scab labour" during a strike they organized in 1936.³⁹ More significant, however, was the hostility aroused among the Chinese in Alberta toward the Japanese by the Japanese invasion of China in 1937. The Chinese boycotted the buying of goods made in Japan and in 1937 they organized the Pan Alberta Anti-Japanese League to coordinate the collection of funds to aid in the Chinese war effort against Japan.⁴⁰ Chinese restaurant and grocery operators in Calgary refused to serve Japanese customers.⁴¹

The urban concentration of the Chinese adversely affected attitudes toward them during the depression. As economic conditions worsened many Chinese found themselves out of work because of their specialization in the economically vulnerable service occupations of house servants, laundering, and restaurants, and they were forced to go on relief for the first time since their arrival in Canada. The growing number of unemployed Calgary Chinese plus the influx of Chinese men from other prairie towns, made it impossible for the Chinese community in Calgary to maintain its own welfare system as it had done in the past. Calgary became the focal point for the issue of the single unemployed Chinese since, with a Chinese population of about 1,000 in 1931, the city had by far the largest Chinese community in the province; one-quarter of all Chinese in the province lived in Calgary.⁴²

The unemployed Chinese "single" men in Calgary first applied for relief late in 1931. Of the 150 Chinese who applied, eighty-three were given an allowance of \$1.12 per week. This compared with \$2.50 per week for single non-Chinese who were also on relief. Government officials seem to have used their own stereotypes about the "low standard of living" of the Chinese to justify giving them smaller payments. Since no bed allowance was given, the Chinese were forced to room in the cold, damp basements of Chinatown. Those who were not given relief were compelled to live on handouts from more prosperous Chinese residents of Calgary or smaller towns like High River.⁴³

One humiliating aspect of this treatment was that many of the Chinese were not in fact single. They had wives and children in China who depended on remittances from their husbands in Canada for family support. First, immigration laws had prevented the men from bringing their families to Canada, and now the depression made it impossible for them to support their families in China. Men who had worked sixteen hours per day, six days a week for anywhere from \$8.00 for dishwashing to a top wage of \$25.00 per month as a chief cook, to pay off their passage, head tax of \$500.00 and support their families in China, now could not find jobs to maintain themselves and could only rely on what amounted to starvation relief.

³⁹ L.H., 23 May 1936; John THOMPSON and Allen SEAGAR, "Workers, Growers, and Monopolists: The Labour Problem in the Alberta Beet Sugar Industry During the 1930s", *Labour*, III (1978): 153-74.

⁴⁰ IWAASA, "Canadian Japanese", p. 51.

⁴¹ Ban Seng HOE, *Structural Changes of Two Chinese Communities in Alberta, Canada* (Ottawa, 1976), p. 89.

⁴² Paul VOISEY, "Two Chinese Communities in Alberta: An Historical Perspective", *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, II (December 1970); C.H., 15 October 1973.

⁴³ Glenbow Archives, Oral History Interviews, Buck Doo Yee, Kim Dong, Poy Yee, Seto Gan, Mr. & Mrs. Jay Chang, Toe You Mah, Ook Wah Yee, Calgary, High River, Summer 1974.

The Chinese became increasingly discontent with relief discrimination. When their own protests proved ineffective they agreed to accept the support of the Communist Party of Canada, which had become aware of the plight of the Chinese since their own headquarters were located in Chinatown. Also, the Communists were dedicated to organizing the unemployed, of whatever nationality. The Communists favoured confrontation between the Chinese and the government as a means of getting better allowances. They instigated the picketing of government offices by the Chinese in May 1936 when government officials cut forty-eight local Calgary Chinese off the relief rolls after they refused to go to the single men's work camps in the mountains. These protests went unheeded by civic and relief officials, but not by police, who began making arrests.⁴⁴

There were two main causes of government unresponsiveness to the desperate plight of the Chinese. First, like so many other relief recipients during the Depression, the Chinese were caught in the middle of a jurisdictional dispute between the city and provincial authorities. The Mayor of Calgary argued that they were the responsibility of the Province, while the Provincial Supervisor of Relief, C. W. Eady, claimed that they were a civic responsibility. Second, government inaction was due to the racism of elected officials. This attitude was expressed openly and bluntly by Calgary Alderwoman, Rose Wilkinson: "White people... should be looked after before the Chinese."⁴⁵

The sad consequence of this bureaucratic callousness was that in December 1936, three single unemployed Chinese died of malnutrition. In response, Dr. W. H. Hill, the city health officer investigated the situation. He was appalled — not that the Chinese were slowly starving to death — but that they were living in basements which were "unfit for human habitation". The city's response to the three deaths was to close several premises. Twenty-eight single Chinese were affected by this ruling which was instituted in mid-winter — 8 January 1937.⁴⁶

Where would the twenty-eight men go and who would take care of them? The city and the Province once again started buck passing. In response, the Communists organized a sit-down protest by the unemployed Chinese on the streetcar tracks at Calgary's busiest intersection. The eighty Chinese participants demanded an allowance of \$2.50 per week. Relief Supervisor Eady, ignoring the fact that the previous year the Chinese had picketed his office as a means of increasing their relief allowance, claimed that the Chinese had made no effort to register at the Provincial Relief Office and emphasized that they had refused a provincial offer to go to a government relief camp.⁴⁷

For most of January 1937, while the civic administration and the provincial relief office continued their squabble and threatened each other with court action to settle the jurisdictional dispute, the Chinese continued their sit-down protests. Finally, on 6 February 1937 the usual peaceful demonstration became violent and police arrested thirteen Chinese. Pressure from the Communist Party, the C.C.F.

⁴⁴ C.H., 26 October 1933. Interview with Pat Lenihan, Calgary, Summer 1974; C.H., 12, 16 May 1936, 1 February 1937; *Calgary Albertan*, 23 July 1936.

⁴⁵ C.H., 16 May 1936; 19 January 1937.

⁴⁶ C.H., 22 December 1936; 5 January 1937.

⁴⁷ C.H., 9 January 1937; *Calgary Albertan*, 11 January 1937.

and the Calgary Council of Women intensified and finally forced Premier Aberhart and his government to act and put the single, unemployed Chinese on provincial relief. This meant that after a long and sometimes violent struggle, the relief allotment for the Chinese had been increased to the princely sum of \$2.12 per week.⁴⁸

That the Chinese were given considerably smaller relief payments than Caucasians and that they found both municipal and provincial governments exceedingly slow to do anything to alleviate their desperate plight gives striking evidence of over racism in government institutions during the Depression. One can explain discrimination toward the Chinese in terms of their relatively large concentration in one urban centre, the deterioration of economic conditions and the economic vulnerability of a group concentrated in service occupations. It can also be pointed out that there was much suffering in all sectors of society during the Great Depression and that Alberta cities were simply following a practice which was universally adopted in British Columbia of giving smaller amounts of relief to the Chinese, or that the Chinese had felt the sting of discrimination long before the Depression. One might find some encouragement in knowing that for the first time in the history of Alberta's Chinese community, Caucasian groups, and not simply a few isolated individuals, rallied to protest differential treatment of the Chinese. Nevertheless, the story of the "single" unemployed Chinese during the 1930s is surely one of the sorriest chapters in Alberta social history.

The Impact of World War II

The Second World War brought a significant shift in attitudes toward both the Japanese and Chinese in Alberta. The war period marked the most intense period of anti-Japanese sentiment in the province as lingering racist feelings toward Japanese were now fuelled by nationalism and fears of enemy subversion. While the Japanese served as the major focal point for nativist anxieties, the Chinese found a greater degree of acceptance since the war effort allowed them to prove their loyalty. The hostile treatment was not directed at the 600 Japanese Canadians already residing in Alberta at the outbreak of the Pacific War in December 1941. Rather anti-Japanese nativist sentiments in the Second World War were directed at the 2,600 Japanese Canadians forceably moved by the federal government from the Pacific Coast to Alberta in the spring and summer of 1942.

At the outbreak of the Pacific War on 7 December 1941, 23,450 persons of Japanese ancestry resided in Canada. Over half were Canadian-born and three-quarters were Canadian citizens. Of the 23,450 people, 22,000 resided in British Columbia, 600 in Alberta and the rest in urban centres across Canada. The differences between the Alberta and British Columbia Japanese in 1941 were more than geographical. The 600 Alberta Japanese were accepted, if not welcomed, additions to the communities in which they lived. In contrast, the 22,000 Japanese in British Columbia were a highly visible and intensely disliked minority. Although comprising only three percent of the province's population at any time, the Japanese in B.C.,

⁴⁸ *C.H.*, 8 February 1937; APA, Aberhart Papers, Correspondence; *E.B.*, 23 February 1937. The "victory" of the Chinese in Calgary led to the opening of the same question in Edmonton; the Chinese approached City Council hoping to have their relief allotment raised from \$1.26 per week to \$2.12 per week.

along with the Chinese and the South Asians, had long been the scapegoats of politicians and labour leaders. By 1941, anti-Asian legislation, regulation and discrimination in British Columbia had denied Asians the vote and barred their entry into most of the professions, the civil service, the unions and most government projects. Social taboos discouraged the employment of Asians in private industry (except in menial capacities) and social interaction between whites and Asians.⁴⁹

The differences in attitudes to Alberta and B.C. Japanese were reflected in the press reaction to the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor and Hong Kong. In Alberta press and public comment was mixed but generally charitable. In an ambiguous editorial, the *Calgary Herald* warned against embarking on witch hunts against local Japanese, but then observed that it was now time for the yellow peril to be "exterminated". The writer, however, quickly qualified his sharp statement by pointing out that "the yellow peril does not necessarily crouch under every yellow skin". The *Lethbridge Herald* carried reassuring stories about the loyalty of the local Japanese population, citing their long residence, their support of the Red Cross and their participation in the armed forces. While some employers, notably the Canadian Pacific Railway, let their Japanese employees go, the sentiment prevailed that Alberta Japanese were "all right".⁵⁰

In contrast, in B.C. the initial calming warnings of the press that Canada's quarrel was "with Japan not with the Japanese nationals here or people of Japanese blood", soon were forgotten. Japan's entry into the war only exacerbated B.C.'s traditional anti-Japanese sentiments. In their shock over Pearl Harbor some British Columbians' hatred of Japan became focused on the long despised minority in their midst. Exploiting the public's fears of air-raids, sabotage and even invasion by Japan, B.C.'s traditionally anti-Japanese political leaders reinforced the public's view that the Japanese in B.C. were a "Fifth Column" of spies and saboteurs. Japanese fishermen, they claimed, had used their occupation to gain a knowledge of the B.C. coast in order to aid the enemy when it invaded. Similarly Japanese farmers and businessmen were portrayed as strategically located saboteurs intent on creating public disorder during the expected invasion. Hysterical demands that B.C.'s Japanese population be interned ensued, demands which B.C.'s politicians in Ottawa used to convince the federal government to help them rid the province of the Japanese by uprooting every man, woman and child of Japanese ancestry residing within one hundred miles of the Pacific Coast.⁵¹

The campaign to uproot the B.C. Japanese took only twelve weeks despite opposition by the military, the R.C.M.P. and the Department of External Affairs, all of which were satisfied that Japanese Canadians were loyal Canadians. In a series of escalating orders under the War Measures Act the federal Cabinet, at the urging of British Columbian politicians, quickly stripped the defenceless Japanese Canadians of their already circumscribed civil and economic rights. Few distinctions

⁴⁹ WARD, *White Canada*, Chaps. 6, 7. Figures on number of Japanese from *Census of Canada*, 1941.

⁵⁰ *C.H.*, 17 December 1941. See also *C.H.*, 6 December 1941: IWAASA, "Canadian Japanese", pp. 59-60. SUNAHARA, "Federal Policy and Japanese Canadians", Chap. 2.

⁵¹ Quote from *Vancouver Daily Province*, 8 December 1941; Forrest LAVIOLETTE, *Canadian Japanese and World War II* (Toronto, 1948); SUNAHARA, "Federal Policy"; W. Peter WARD, "British Columbia and the Japanese Evacuation", *Canadian Historical Review*, 57 (1976): 289-308.

were made between citizens and aliens. They were denied the right to fish and to own fishing vessels, to assemble publicly without a permit, to buy or lease land or business premises, to move freely from one location to another, to own cameras, radios and automobiles, and to leave their homes between dusk and dawn. Finally on 24 February 1942, Japanese Canadians were ordered to abandon their homes, farms and businesses and leave the Pacific coast, all on the nebulous grounds of "national security".⁵²

The uprooting itself involved the denial of yet another basic human right: the right of a family to live together under one roof. Anxious to remove male Japanese Canadians as quickly as possible in accordance with the wishes of the British Columbian politicians and public, the federal government elected to try to remove the males first by sending them to road camps in the mountains of B.C. and in Northern Ontario. Their wives and children were to go to different camps in the remote valleys of the Kootenay Mountains. This separation of men from their wives and children disturbed the Commissioners of the British Columbia Security Commission, the federal agency set up in March to oversee the uprooting process and they soon began to seek means by which Japanese Canadians could be moved without breaking up families. Among the ideas put forth in the spring of 1942 were the creation of small, self-supporting Japanese Canadian communities in the interior of B.C., the accommodation of Japanese Canadian families in Indian Residential Schools on the Prairies and the initiation of a farm labour programme for Japanese Canadian families. The need for farm labour was greatest in Alberta and Manitoba where war industries had enticed most of the Central and Eastern European farm labourers to the cities and where the sugar beet crop demanded intensive labour. Accordingly the B.C.S.C. Commissioners entered into negotiations with the Sugar Beet Growers' Associations in these two provinces. Japanese families composed of four workers for every non-worker were to be housed by the growers and paid according to normal sugar beet contracts. The federal government was to assume all transportation, medical and relief costs, school fees for children under grade eight and, in the case of Alberta, was to remove the relocated Japanese within six months after armistice. Promised "normal" living conditions and anxious to avoid the pain of family separation, 5,000 Japanese Canadians from the Fraser Valley and Steveston scrambled through April 1942 to sign up for the beet labour programme on the prairies.⁵³

While beet growers were generally eager to import Japanese Canadian labour, many other southern Albertans were not. Some saw the sugar beet programme as an attempt to export B.C.'s "Japanese problem" to Alberta. In addition, the removal of Japanese Canadians from the Pacific Coast, as journalist Ken Adachi so cogently phrases it, "had raised the inevitable question: If these people are too dangerous to be permitted to remain on the west coast, aren't they too dangerous here?" Opposition to the beet program quickly developed. In Raymond and Taber, two of the major locales for sugar beet growing in southern Alberta, "citizens committees" organiz-

⁵² *Ibid.*; ADACHI, *The Enemy*, Chap. 9.

⁵³ L.H., 4 March 1942; IWAASA, "Canadian Japanese", pp. 64, 70; Chris LIEBICH, "The Coming of the Japanese Canadians to Alberta, 1942-1948: A Study in Public Policy and Public Attitude" (Honour's Essay, University of Alberta, 1976), Chap. 3. Liebich provides an excellent overview of the Japanese Canadian experience in Alberta during the war.

ed large and sometimes stormy, protest meetings. Legion locals, boards of trade, and town, city and labour councils throughout southern Alberta passed resolutions demanding either the exclusion of the uprooted Japanese, or their supervision by the army, preferably in concentration camps, and their removal at the end of the war. Bombarded by press reports of Japanese atrocities at Hong Kong, Southern Albertans readily identified the uprooted Japanese Canadians with the enemy. "Can we consciously let one ounce of sugar be produced by enemy hands, the same hands that produced the atrocities at Hong Kong?" demanded one opponent to the programme. With "a little sacrifice and effort we could meet the labour situation without the Japs", the chairman of the Tabor protest meeting claimed, "and keep the Land of the Golden Sunsets from becoming the Land of the Rising Sun".⁵⁴

Opposition to the Japanese was based on a strong alloy of economic, racial and nationalistic interests and feelings. It was also intimately related to the "Hutterite problem". The protest meeting in Raymond, where Japanese had resided since 1903, illustrates this phenomenon. The Hutterite issue in the Raymond area already had the local population brooding about "enemy aliens" and some residents of the area felt that if the Japanese were allowed to come in from B.C., Alberta would eventually be faced with just one more unassimilable group. The Sunday afternoon meeting in March 1942, which attracted over 700 people, discussed first the "Japanese problem" and then according to the account in the town newspaper, after a vocal solo and a piano duet "the meeting went into a discussion of the Hutterite and special privileged group question". Predictably the meeting resolved that "Canada should refuse right now to allow another race and language problem to develop." Raymond's Citizens' Committee outlined its fears as follows:

The district is already overloaded with enemy aliens and conscientious objectors and the same should not be augmented by Japanese labour unless under careful government supervision.

The president of the Lethbridge board of trade defined "careful government supervision" as meaning that the Japanese should be confined in concentration camps at the Lethbridge Fair Grounds and allowed out only to work in the fields. To fears of more unassimilable enemy aliens, organized labour in southern Alberta added a fear that Japanese labour would undercut white labour. Businessmen in Raymond also feared that the B.C. Japanese might show their resentment of their treatment through acts of sabotage. Alberta, it appeared, would provide no sanctuary for the B.C. Japanese.⁵⁵

It fell to a committee of prominent Southern Albertans associated with the sugar beet industry to explain why the Japanese were enough of a threat to warrant their removal from B.C. but not enough of a threat to endanger southern Alberta.

⁵⁴ ADACHI, *The Enemy*, p. 279; *L.H.*, 5, 9, 10, 20 March 1942; see also IWAASA, "Canadian Japanese", pp. 68-71 and LIEBICH, "The Coming", Chap. 3 for detailed discussion of public reaction to the Japanese. For detailed accounts of the protest meetings and editorials expressing opposition to the entry of the Japanese see *Taber Times*, 12, 19, 26 March, 16 April 1942; and *Raymond Recorder*, 6, 11, 31 March 1942.

⁵⁵ *L.H.*, 10, 12 March 1942; *Raymond Recorder*, 20 March 1942; APA, Premier's Papers, R.C.M.P. Report, Constable Carter to Headquarters, 5 March 1942. It is significant that the resolution passed at the Raymond meeting also reflected negative attitudes toward French-Canadians at a time when anti-conscription sentiment in Quebec was receiving considerable publicity.

Following a fact finding trip to B.C. during which they were informed by the R.C.M.P. that Japanese Canadians posed no security threat, the committee chose to appeal to the patriotism of Southern Albertans. The Japanese were a danger on the coast, they argued, because of the threat of a Japanese invasion. It was the duty of patriotic Albertans to do whatever the federal government felt was necessary to relieve that danger. To their appeal to patriotism they added an appeal to economic common sense. Southern Alberta and especially the beet industry desperately needed experienced agricultural labour and the Japanese Canadians were the only available source.⁵⁶

Although deference to the federal authorities and common sense helped to reduce nativist opposition to the uprooted Japanese, the ultimate acceptance of the idea depended mainly on the belief that the B.C. Japanese would be removed after the war. Alberta's Premier William Aberhart was among those who were flatly opposed to the B.C. Japanese from the beginning. Claiming that the cost of keeping the B.C. Japanese was his major concern, Aberhart demanded a contract with the federal government which would assure that all services used by them would be paid for by the federal government, and that government would remove the B.C. Japanese after the war was over, if the provincial government so requested. The federal government agreed on 6 May 1942. With assurances that the "Japanese problem" would only be temporary written into the contract, opposition to the B.C. Japanese receded temporarily.⁵⁷

The anxieties of Southern Albertans were further allayed by the seeming cooperation of Japanese Canadians with their uprooting. Concerned solely with keeping their families intact, Japanese Canadians regarded the opportunity to work as agricultural labour in Alberta very favourably. Throughout the negotiations in April entire Japanese farming communities in the Fraser Valley and at Steveston, B.C. had volunteered *en masse* for beet work. Through May and June, beet workers were shipped in units of seventy to one hundred people directly from their farms to the small towns near which they were expected to work. The beet farmers, informed by telephone that "their Japs" had arrived, would select one or more families, usually on the basis of the number of strong, young, male workers it contained. One evacuee has compared the selection process to a cattle auction, noting that some farmers felt their muscles and examined their teeth to make sure they were healthy. Surprised that the B.C. Japanese spoke English, Southern Albertans soon adjusted to the strangers in their midst. By September 1942, 2,600 B.C. Japanese had been moved to Alberta.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ PAC, King Papers, Box 39, Austin Taylor, Chairman B.C. Security Commission to Delegation, 11 March 1942 (in correspondence with Aberhart). Interview with A. E. Palmer, member of committee, Lethbridge, June 1978; see also IWAASA, "Canadian Japanese", p. 66; *L.H.*, 14 March 1942.

⁵⁷ *L.H.*, 5, 18, 20, 23 March 1942. Organized labour was also assured by the Security Commission that the Japanese would not crowd out local workers. *L.H.*, 9 April 1942. IWAASA, "Canadian Japanese", p. 67; LAVIOLETTE, *Canadian Japanese*, pp. 125, 135; PAC, King Papers, Box 39, Aberhart to King, 27 March 1942, 271936; PAC, Department of Labour, RG 27, Vol. 170; Solon Low later claimed that the clause which required that the Japanese be removed at the end of the war was written in at his insistence, *Debates* House of Commons, 22 November 1945, p. 2429.

⁵⁸ PAC, Department of Labour, RG 27, 175, Report of Intelligence Division, "Japanese-conditions-Canada-Generally," 19 May 1942. Information on Japanese reaction from interviews of Ann Sunahara, Lethbridge, Summer 1978.

The "Japanese problem" remained an issue which flared up regularly in the city councils of Alberta. One problem that soon arose after the arrival of the evacuees was that since beet labour provided only six months' employment, most families needed additional work if they were to avoid going on relief or try to approximate the standard of living they had been used to in British Columbia. As a consequence during slack periods on the beet farms and during the winter, the industrious Japanese would seek work in neighbouring towns and lumber camps in order to try to avoid going on relief. Problems arose because the city councils in Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Calgary and Edmonton, bolstered by the stereotype which portrayed Japanese Canadians as traitorous saboteurs and "unfair economic competition", banned Japanese Canadians from those centres.⁵⁹

The banning of Japanese soon resulted in a number of controversies. Each time Japanese Canadians tried to work temporarily in the vegetable cannery at Lethbridge, or attend school in Calgary, or work as domestics in any of these centres, some city councillors would object. Typical of these controversies was the attempt by one Canadian-born Japanese, Ted Aoki, to attend teachers college in Calgary in February 1945. Calling Japanese Canadians "well-educated cultural devils", Calgary Alderman E. H. Starr shouted in response to Aoki's application, "If I had my way I'd take them to the middle of the Ocean and pull the cork out!" On a more restrained level, Alderman R. G. Smith opposed Aoki's application because he wanted to "keep Alberta for citizens of British origin", while Alderman G. M. Brown repeated the traditional racist warning that "the yellow peril is still with us". Aoki eventually entered the teachers college but had to live outside the city limits, traveling by milk wagon each day to class. Exclusion remained the norm until the end of the war.⁶⁰

While the hostility and rhetoric focused mainly on the relocated B.C. Japanese, Albertan Japanese also experienced anti-Japanese sentiment and restrictions. At the same time that Ted Aoki applied to enter Calgary, an Alberta-born Japanese whose brother was on active service with the Canadian army was also denied entry. In two cases the city councils of Medicine Hat and Calgary refused to allow the reunification in those cities of the families of long-time Japanese Canadian residents. Even in Hardieville and Raymond where Japanese Albertans had been generally accepted before the war, the attitudes toward them deteriorated. Although never regarded as potential subversives, David Iwaasa notes in his study of the Alberta Japanese,

as the war progressed, feelings did become somewhat strained and often people forgot that there had been a distinction made at the beginning between the local Japanese residents and the Japanese who had lived on the coast.⁶¹

This tendency to make no distinction between Alberta and B.C. Japanese was exacerbated by the policies of the federal government. Not content with labelling the B.C. Japanese as potential traitors, the federal Cabinet on 11 September 1942

⁵⁹ LAVIOLETTE, *Canadian Japanese*, Chap. 6; LIEBICH, "The Coming", p. 50; *L.H.*, 14 April 1942; IWAASA, pp. 69, 75; *L.H.*, 22 February, 18 March 1943.

⁶⁰ IWAASA, "Canadian Japanese", pp. 76-9, 83; *C.H.*, 9 January, 6 February 1945; Ted AOKI, "On Being and Becoming a Teacher in Alberta", *Rikka*, IV (Summer 1978).

⁶¹ Interview with George Higa, Lethbridge, 1967; IWAASA, "Canadian Japanese", pp. 56, 83.

extended the restrictions on the coastal Japanese to all Japanese in Canada. The new regulations meant that Alberta Japanese like their B.C. counterparts, could not travel more than twelve miles without a permit, could not sell their homes and move without permission, could not buy any real property, could not enter British Columbia without permission and had their mail and telephone calls censored. Alberta Japanese, however, were spared the forced dispossession of real and personal property experienced by the uprooted Japanese. Alberta Japanese could also send their children to the local schools without having to pay the \$7.00 per month fee charged the uprooted Japanese for each child. The meticulousness with which the regulations were enforced against Alberta Japanese is perhaps best illustrated by the case of the long-time Alberta resident with a son in the Canadian army who waited from 1944 to 1946 for permission to buy a small acreage adjoining his property.⁶²

The End of the War: Another Uprooting?

In the summer of 1944 the federal government made public its postwar plans for Canada's Japanese minority. While acknowledging that no Japanese Canadian had committed any act of sabotage or subversion, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King announced on 4 August a fourfold plan: to halt Japanese immigration; to deport all Japanese Canadians found "disloyal" by a quasi-judicial loyalty commission; to encourage the "repatriation" to Japan of any Japanese Canadian who wished to go there; and to disperse the remainder across Canada.⁶³

Kings' proposed policies divided Albertans. To the anti-Japanese, dispersal was anathema since it would mean that those who had been moved to Alberta in 1942 would remain. Their solution was to deport all Japanese Canadians. Countering the nativists were a growing number of people, mostly associated with church groups, who had become convinced that the Japanese had been victims of illiberal policies. They saw deportation and repatriation as unjust and unchristian and felt that the Japanese already in Alberta should be allowed to remain in the province. It was this last issue, whether the B.C. Japanese should be uprooted a second time, over which the two groups clashed.

Deportation and repatriation were in the hands of the federal government, so they did not become provincial political issues; but the question of whether the Japanese would be allowed to remain in Alberta was clearly a matter which required action from Premier Ernest Manning (who had succeeded Aberhart after his death in 1943) and his Social Credit government. They announced their decision in April 1945. Despite statements by politicians in British Columbia that Japanese were not wanted in that province, Premier Manning declared that Alberta would expect Ottawa to keep its original agreement and return the Japanese to British Columbia.⁶⁴

⁶² *Ibid.*; SUNAHARA, "Japanese Canadians", pp. 53-83. For a discussion of the education issue, see LIEBICH, "The Coming", pp. 66-74.

⁶³ GOVERNMENT OF CANADA, DEPT. OF LABOUR, *Report on Reestablishment of Japanese in Canada, 1944-46* (Ottawa, 1947), p. 8; For discussion of the repatriation-deportation issue, see SUNAHARA, "Federal Policy", Chap. 4; and ADACHI, *The Enemy*, Chaps 12, 13. The term "repatriation" was obviously a misnomer when over half the Japanese Canadians were Canadian-born.

⁶⁴ *C.H.*, 16 February 1945; IWAASA, "Canadian Japanese", pp. 56, 83.

Manning, who had been Aberhart's student and political protégé, had very little experience with or understanding of the Japanese. He, like many other Canadians, viewed them not as Japanese Canadians, but as Japanese whose loyalty to the Japanese Empire was cemented by religious ties, and who were, therefore, not desirable Canadian citizens. He expressed this view when responding to letters from Protestant church groups who were objecting to the treatment both the federal and provincial governments had given the Japanese:

We cannot, however, shut our eyes to the fact that in the majority of cases the Japanese' first allegiance, due primarily to the religious traditions, is to the Emperor of Japan, to whom they regard their tie as spiritual.

It seems to me that as long as these people embrace this philosophy of the Orient we must recognize that their first allegiance in an hour of crisis is to the Emperor of Japan rather than to the land adopted by them or by their parents as their home and, to which as a result, they have sworn allegiance. As long as such allegiance is superseded by a tie that binds them to the Emperor of Japan, I do not feel that they can be regarded in the same light as citizens whose tie to their homeland was an allegiance of a similar character to that which they now have to Canada as their new home.⁶⁵

Manning's personal views were reinforced by political pressure from labour and civic groups. Both the Union of Alberta Municipalities and the Alberta Federation of Labour believed that Japanese Canadians were "undesirable" and a potential source of cheap labour undermining organized labour in the province. While the above groups demanded only the removal of the B.C. Japanese from Alberta others demanded the wholesale deportation of all Japanese Canadians. Among the latter was the Ladies Auxiliary to the provincial Canadian Legion which on 6 June 1945 passed a resolution urging the federal government "to take a decided stand for for the deportation of the Japanese".⁶⁶

Other Alberta politicians also supported mass deportation. Solon Low, M.P. for Peace River and leader of the national Social Credit Party, was one such politician. Low outlined his views in a speech in the House of Commons in 1945. As a former high school principal at Raymond, Low had taught Japanese Canadians and considered them to be "good people". He also considered them to be unassimilable and consequently would never be accepted into Canadian society. Without acceptance, he had concluded, they would never be happy and so it was best, for their own sake, that they be sent back to Japan. Low bolstered this paternalistic argument with the usual anti-Japanese racist myths about their supposedly "high birth rate", their efficiency and their "unfair" economic success. Low compared the "Japanese problem" to the "Hutterite problem".

The same was true of the Japanese [as the Hutterites]. They were getting hold of the best land once they were moving in, in a communal way. Their labours were such and their standard of living so low that they could save money. They can outdo a white man any time in saving, because of their simple wants, and they can accumulate gradually until they own a place... whenever they congregate into communities and come

⁶⁵ APA, Premier's Papers, File 1207. Manning to Elda Daniels, 11 December 1946; Manning to C. C. Kitney, 17 April 1945.

⁶⁶ For the response of the Union of Alberta Municipalities and the Alberta Federation of Labour, see *C.H.*, 16 February 1945; also IWAASA, "Canadian Japanese", p. 82; The Canadian Legion of Auxiliary meeting was reported in *C.H.*, 6 June 1945. For further discussion of the political response to the problem of where the Japanese would go following the war, see LAVIOLETTE, *Canadian Japanese*, pp. 126, 134.

into conflict with the white people in the field of labour and in the ownership of land in the district, it is inevitable that bad feeling will arise. I saw that feeling gradually rise higher and higher. Eventually there grew up in the community between 600 and 1,200 of these people, and they constituted a real problem.

To Low, the Japanese like the Hutterites "caused" the racial prejudice in Southern Alberta by being "unCanadian"; that is, hardworking, frugal and efficient. They should therefore be deported for their own good.⁶⁷

Throughout 1944 and 1945, as the war drew to a close, public consensus about the fate of Canada's Japanese minority altered significantly. Between February 1944 and December 1945 support for the deportation of all Japanese nationals declined from 80 percent of those polled to 60 percent and for the deportation of Canadian citizens of Japanese ancestry from 33 percent to 23 percent. By December 1945 it was evident that many Canadians were not only prepared to tolerate Japanese Canadians but were decidedly upset that the federal government would dare to attempt to deport Canadian citizens because of their ancestry. While the national polls of the period do not separate the opinions of Albertans from those of other Canadians, other indicators suggest that Albertan attitudes did not differ much from national attitudes. Another indication of the shift in attitudes were the 1945 and 1946 decisions by the Calgary and Lethbridge City Councils to allow Japanese into their respective cities.⁶⁸

By 1945, Manning was being pressured by three pro-dispersal groups: the federal government, the urban press and church groups. As part of its policy to resettle Japanese Canadians across the country, the federal government had begun applying both direct and indirect pressures on the Alberta government. At the same time the urban newspapers had finally begun to comprehend and react to the injustices suffered by Japanese Canadians in the Second World War: their uprooting, their dispossession, and now their impending deportation. While much of the anger of the press was directed at the federal government for initiating the repressive measures, they also condemned Manning for perpetuating them. Reversing its earlier anti-Japanese stance the *Calgary Herald* urged that "if we had any conscience at all, we would release them from bondage, restore their full civil rights and recompense them for the economic loss they have suffered." In March 1945, the *Lethbridge Herald* condemned Manning's demand that the B.C. Japanese be removed after armistice as "Hitlerism" and warned that a severe labour shortage would result if the uprooted Japanese chose to move to another province where the social climate was more acceptable.⁶⁹

United and Anglican church groups also opposed nativist demands for the removal of the B.C. Japanese. Coordinating their efforts with those of national inter-faith organizations, they lobbied to have Japanese Canadian civil liberties re-

⁶⁷ HOUSE OF COMMONS, *Debates*, 22 November 1945, pp. 2429-31; see also *C.H.*, 23 November 1945.

⁶⁸ Public opinion polls found in Nancy TIENHAARA, *Canadian Views on Immigration and Population* (Ottawa, 1974), pp. 56-58; see also SUNAHARA, "Federal Policy", Chap. 4; and ADACHI, *The Enemy*, Chap. 13. For an account of the city council reversals see *L.H.*, 30 May 1946.

⁶⁹ For a discussion of the federal government pressure on Manning see LIEBICH, "The Coming", p. 101. See also *C.H.*, 28 November, 7 December 1945; 21 February 1946; 5 February, 19 December 1947, for editorial opinion on the Japanese. Sympathetic comments in *C.H.*, 26 July 1946 and *L.H.*, comments quoted in *C.H.*, 5 March 1945.

stored and the Orders-in-Council under the War Measures Act, which would deport any Japanese Canadian who had requested "repatriation" to Japan, revoked. The latter problem arose from the coercive means through which "repatriation" requests had been taken in the spring of 1945, means which meant that many Japanese Canadians signed up for "repatriation" solely to keep their families intact or to keep, temporarily, the jobs with which they were feeding their families. Appealing to Manning's religious views, the church groups condemned agitation for the removal of the Japanese from Alberta as "unjust and unchristian" urging that "it is our task as Christians to win their first loyalty to Christ through Christian treatment."⁷⁰

Economic considerations, however, provided the most effective argument. The uprooted Japanese had proved to be dependable, efficient workers who had adjusted well to the communities in which they lived. By 1946 they had been credited with saving the sugar beet industry during the Second World War since they had contributed half of all the labour needs of the industry. They were also one of the few remaining sources of sugar beet labour. In 1946 the German prisoners of war who had supplemented the Japanese beet labour were repatriated to Europe, while the displaced persons from the European War had not yet begun to enter Canada. Anxious to retain their reliable Japanese labour, the Southern Alberta Sugar Beet Growers, the sugar processing company, and the Vegetable Growers Association all began to exert pressures on Premier Manning. Meeting with him in March 1946 they learned that Manning was sympathetic to their needs but was unwilling to take a public stance on the matter. Privately the Premier informed the delegation he felt Alberta should accept its quota of Japanese Canadians. He did not wish that fact to become public knowledge, however, since the government of British Columbia was insisting that all Japanese be removed from B.C.. Alberta would only take her share if B.C. would also do its part.⁷¹

Pressure was again exerted on Manning in the spring of 1947. By this time the federal government had dropped its attempt to deport Japanese Canadians who had signed for repatriation to Japan but who then changed their minds or had never intended to go in the first place. The federal government had also loosened the regulations restricting the civil rights of Japanese Canadians allowing them greater freedom of movement; however, it still prohibited them from returning to the Pacific Coast — as the American Japanese had been permitted to do in 1945 — and the right to own property west of the Rocky Mountains. In the Spring of 1947 yet another delegation interviewed Manning, a delegation which included not only the sugar interests but also Japanese Canadian representatives and the Edmonton Ministerial Association. Once again Manning chose to procrastinate. As one member of his government admitted to the press, there was little the Alberta government could do to keep Japanese out of Alberta once the wartime restrictions on their movements were lifted. By waiting one more year, until the agreement with the federal government expired, however, the issue would be robbed of any political repercus-

⁷⁰ Quote from LIEBICH, "The Coming", p. 106; Information about the pro-Japanese coalition between church and community groups, which included United Nations Societies and the Women's Christian Temperance Union, in *ibid.*, Chap. 6; see also WCTU, *Annual Reports* (Alberta, 1945), p. 50.

⁷¹ Discussion of contribution of Japanese to the sugar beet industry in DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR, *Report on the Administration of Japanese Affairs in Canada* (Ottawa, 1944), p. 37. Report of Manning's attitude and meeting with farm interest groups in PAC, RG 36/27, Report of J. S. Connors, 21 June 1946.

sions. Accordingly, shortly before that agreement was due to expire on 31 March 1948, Manning quietly announced that Japanese Canadians in Alberta were entitled to the same rights and privileges as other Albertans including the right to vote, the right to educational benefits and the right to free maternity care.⁷²

The granting of equal rights to Japanese in Alberta was greeted by the urban press as something long overdue. But having equal voting rights did not mean the end of discrimination for the Japanese; instead they encountered a whole new series of obstacles as the second generation (Nisei) quickly began moving into urban areas. The late forties were still part of an era in which human rights legislation was non-existent: consequently the Japanese were discriminated against with impunity in the workplace as well as in social relations. Until the mid-fifties, Japanese students found it difficult to be accepted as student nurses, many stores would not hire Japanese as clerks and a number of school boards refused to accept them as teachers. Japanese Canadians could serve as nursing aides and Japanese Canadian teachers could find jobs on Hutterite colonies or in other isolated rural schools, but beyond these opportunities, the barriers were drawn.⁷³

Wartime Attitudes toward the Chinese

That racism was not the only factor motivating Alberta's rejection of the Japanese is clear when we contrast attitudes toward Japanese with attitudes toward Chinese during the war and early post years. While Japan's dramatic entry into the war precipitated an outpouring of animosity toward Canada's Japanese community, China's support of the Allies opened the door to greater acceptance of Canada's Chinese. Indeed, the war years are remembered by many Chinese Canadians as the turning point in attitudes toward them. Overt discrimination declined during the early forties and the end of the war saw an end of the blatantly racist Chinese Immigration Act.

A variety of factors combined to facilitate greater acceptance of the Chinese. Improved job opportunities during the war eliminated the issue of Chinese relief and the relocation of coastal Japanese Canadians to Alberta provided a new group to occupy the lowest rung in the province's ethnic hierarchy. Most important, however, was China's participation in the war on the side of the Allies. To disassociate themselves from the Japanese, Alberta's Chinese did all they could to support the war effort and to make their support known. Indeed, some Chinese restaurant owners continued to serve Japanese customers throughout the war. The press differentiated between the "desirable" Chinese and the "undesirable" Japanese. For example, a 1943 *Calgary Herald* editorial asserted that, "unlike the Chinese who are honest and law-abiding, the Jap is tricky and unreliable and he should never be allowed in the future to establish self-centered and cultish communities in this country."⁷⁴

Following the war, improved attitudes toward the Chinese were institutionalized with the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act in May 1947. Although Alber-

⁷² Comment regarding the impact of lifting wartime restrictions in *C.H.*, 10 February 1947. For Manning's statement, see *C.H.*, 26 March 1948.

⁷³ See *C.H.*, 5 December 1947, 17 June 1948 for examples of discrimination.

⁷⁴ For examples of Chinese support of the war effort, see *L.H.*, 5, 11 March 1942; *Edmonton Journal*, 12, 21 February 1942, 10 August 1943. The restaurant example is cited in IWAASA, "Canadian Japanese", p. 62. The editorial appears in *C.H.*, 4 January 1943.

tans were not among the groups who had lobbied for repeal of the Act, the Alberta Members of Parliament who spoke during the debate supported the Act's abolition. But they also supported the federal government's continuing refusal to place the Chinese on an equal footing with white immigrants. Unlike whites, Chinese had to be Canadian citizens before they could sponsor their wives and children and it was impossible for any Chinese immigrants, other than wives or children, to enter Canada. The Chinese were not even able to sponsor adult children, parents or brothers and sisters as immigrants. The *Calgary Herald* expressed the Alberta stance by editorializing that the immigration bill would make possible "A Normal Life for Canada's Chinese", while simultaneously stressing that changed regulations did not mean "the doors would be flung open for Chinese immigration"; they would simply allow the Chinese already in Canada to be united with their families. Thus the government move neatly embodied the changing attitudes toward Chinese in Alberta and in Canada as a whole. Blatant racism, at least toward a group associated with a wartime ally, was no longer acceptable; yet there was a consensus that a significant increase in the number of Chinese in Canada was undesirable. Thus, while racism had not disappeared when it came to attitudes toward the Chinese, wartime nationalism had clearly contained and even diminished it.⁷⁵

Conclusion

The issue of Asian immigration between 1920 and 1950 was not a crucial issue in Alberta politics as it was in British Columbia. There was no spate of pamphleteering, no organized anti-Asian groups, and little violence against the Chinese and Japanese. Albertans made no original contributions to the development of anti-Asian ideology in Canada. Only one book was written by an Albertan which touched on the "Oriental question" and there the discussion was incidental to the focus on drugs. Anti-Asian sentiment did not serve as the indispensable cement uniting organized labour in Alberta. Politicians neither could nor did build whole careers and reputations on the basis of hostility to the Chinese and Japanese. The Chinese and Japanese in British Columbia were restricted by legislation during at least part of the period from 1920 to 1950 in the areas of employment, travel, voting and land purchase,⁷⁶ but in Alberta these legal restrictions were placed only on the Japanese and only during the war period. Albertans had relatively little impact on the formation of federal policy toward the Chinese and Japanese.

Perhaps the most telling indicator of the relatively low salience of the "Oriental question" in Alberta society is the way in which hostility towards Chinese and Japanese generally failed to coalesce into hostility toward "Orientals". Both the depression and the war affected attitudes toward Chinese and Japanese in opposite ways. Chinese and Japanese both encountered considerable discrimination and hostility, but opposition seldom merged into fears of the "yellow peril" where Chinese and Japanese were seen as a common threat to western civilization. Chinese and Japanese were both too few in number and too scattered across the province for fears of a common "yellow peril" to emerge as a major racist theme as it did in British Columbia. Given their small numbers, the Chinese and Japanese could not be

⁷⁵ *C.H.*, 6, 7 May 1947; HOUSE OF COMMONS, *Debates*, 5 May 1947. Speech by Arthur Smith.

⁷⁶ The restrictions in B.C. on land purchase and travel also applied only to the Japanese and only during the war and immediate postwar period.

used as the scapegoat for every socio-economic problem encountered by Albertans, nor could latent class conflict be rechannelled into working class hostility toward Asians as it was in British Columbia. Prejudice in Alberta was more local in character.

This is not to say, however, that anti-Chinese and anti-Japanese sentiment in Alberta was of no significance. Since they were non-white, culturally distinct and concentrated in the lower rungs of the socio-economic system, the Chinese and Japanese encountered more hostility than any other immigrant ethnic groups, except for the Hutterites, despite the fact that their combined numbers never reached even one percent of the population. Discrimination was not simply practised on an individual basis but was institutionalized in a number of areas. Anti-Chinese and anti-Japanese sentiment was given open expression not only by the uneducated or marginal elements of society but by leading elected officials at both the provincial and civic levels.

Anti-Chinese and anti-Japanese sentiment was not simply a B.C. phenomenon. Attitudes toward the Chinese and Japanese held by different interest groups in British Columbia were often mirrored by the same interest groups in Alberta. Certainly not all the same economic groups that were anti-Asian in B.C. were similarly inclined in Alberta, because industries in the two provinces were different and Chinese and Japanese in Alberta did not compete in the same range of occupations as in B.C.. Nonetheless, the principal critics and opponents of the Chinese and Japanese in B.C. — organized labour, civic groups, city councils and veterans' organizations — were also among their main opponents in Alberta. The main defenders of the Chinese and Japanese in both provinces were church groups, the C.C.F., and economic interests with a major stake in obtaining Asian labour. Partly through institutional linkages with anti-Asian groups in British Columbia and partly through deep-rooted racist and ethnocentric beliefs and feelings, Albertans shared in the anti-Chinese and anti-Japanese sentiment which characterized much of Western North America throughout the late nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth century.⁷⁷

In Alberta as well as British Columbia, the presence of people of Chinese and Japanese ancestry had the potential of arousing deep feelings. The question touched at the roots of core values held by Albertans — economic well-being, personal security, democratic and Christian values, and relations between social groups. As opinion was divided over the way the presence of Chinese and Japanese in Alberta touched on these values, their presence aroused considerable controversy. The major causes of the differences in relations between whites and Asians in Alberta and British Columbia were simply a matter of there being fewer Chinese and Japanese in Alberta, they were in less direct competition with whites, and there were other "visible" minorities who served as focal points for nativist anxieties.

⁷⁷ For an overall assessment of attitudes toward Asians in the United States and a comprehensive bibliography of literature on the subject see Roger DANIELS, "American Historians and East Asian Immigrants", in *The Asian American*, ed: Norris HUNDLEY, Jr. (Santa Barbara, 1976), pp. 1-25. For a provocative comparative assessment of the Japanese-American and Japanese-Canadian experiences see Roger DANIELS, "The Japanese Experience in North America: An Essay in Comparative Racism", *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, IX, 2 (1977): 91-100. For an excellent overview of attitudes toward the Chinese and Japanese in the United States see Roger DANIELS, "Majority Images — Minority Realities: A Perspective on Anti-Orientalism in the United States", in *Prospects: An Annual of American Cultural Studies*, ed: Jack SALZMAN (Hempstead, New York, 1976), pp. 209-62.