

IMPORTATION OF LABOR APPROVED

Writer Would Have Chinese Clear Land Under Government Regulation.

PORTLAND, Sept. 24.—(To the Editor.)—I note that Mayor Harley, of Astoria, has taken up the fight for the importation of Chinese labor to supply the deficiency in certain lines, where under present conditions work necessary to the future welfare of the country must go undone and work necessary for present welfare, as in food production, is being done only under great difficulties at present and will be under a far greater handicap by the time our National Army has reached its full strength.

If Mr. Harley can succeed in lining up the people of Oregon for this matter of emergency labor importation he will have accomplished something that will make his friends, his enemies and himself grateful that he did not succeed in his efforts for the Gubernatorial nomination.

In order that American labor shall not be adversely affected, such importation of Chinese should be managed directly by the United States Department of Labor and with such restrictions as will prevent their employment in any line where they would come into competition with white labor except in food production work. In this state the greatest field for this emergency labor is in the clearing and development of land.

There are tens of thousands of acres of land within the state from which the timber has been burned or removed, or in unused portions of our farms, that without such help as the Chinese can supply us will never be cleared, for at the present cost of white labor this land, even at the present high prices of products, will not produce enough to pay interest on the cost of clearing.

With a lessened demand for labor following the war and the return of our boys from Europe, the problem of uncleared land will still be unsolved. Farm products will decrease in price if wages are lowered and certainly no American wants to see our returned men put at such work at the wages that work will stand. If, however, the Chinese are kept busy while our men are in Europe in preparing land that will be available for use on their return, what will be the result?

For every Chinaman kept on land-clearing work for three years there will be an area prepared that will keep an American family, to supply whose wants roads and phone lines will be demanded, lumber for houses, furniture, clothing and agricultural implements will have to be supplied and a demand be created for hundreds of well-paid American workers at a time when useful work of some kind must be ready for several million released men.

To prevent exploitation and speculation, regulations covering the sale of land could be made and agreed to by land owners before the Government allowed the use of Chinese for clearing. For farm work, where there would necessarily be some competition with white labor, the Chinese could be let to the farmers at an agreed price, the difference between the contract price between the Government and the Chinese and that between the Government and the farmers being the profit of the Government in the transaction. These profits should care for all the expenses incurred in the importation and the returning of the Chinese to their homes when their term of service was over.

One hundred thousand Chinese workers in Western Oregon on land clearing and reforesting for a term of three years at far better wages than they could possibly earn at home would certainly be of the greatest benefit to the state. As many more as are necessary in food production work would guarantee an abundance for ourselves and our allies. What valid objection can be raised to their employment?

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