

MUST THE CHINESE GO?

Exclusion Act, if Enforced, Conceded to Be Satisfactory.

CHINAMEN PLEAD THEIR CAUSE

The Congressional Sub-committee on Immigration and Naturalization Conclude Their Labors in Portland.

Are the Chinese a desirable people on this coast? That is the question the congressional sub-committee on immigration and naturalization investigated at their second session in this city yesterday.

The committee resumed its labors in the Chamber of Commerce rooms at 10:30 o'clock in the forenoon, and continued taking testimony until 8 o'clock in the afternoon, without even taking a recess for lunch.

SEID BACK ON THE STAND.

The first witness placed on the stand was Seid Back, the Chinese Front-street merchant and labor contractor, and in the absence of the chairman, Senator Watson C. Squire, of Washington, both Congressman Lehibach, of New Jersey, and Congressman Stump, of Maryland, acted as interrogators.

Seid Back said he came to Portland twenty-one years ago, and for a time worked as a day laborer. He was now doing a general merchandise business, and was also furnishing labor. In reply to questions regarding the Chinese labor problem, he said:

"I have furnished the railway companies as high as 500 men at a time, but I could not furnish more than 100 or 200 at the present time. I am representing no company, and do this business for myself alone. The average price of wages on railway work is about \$1.15 a day. The men can grade, shovel, grub, lay tracks, blast rock, and, in fact, almost any kind of work connected with railway construction. I get no compensation for furnishing the labor, other than what I make out of selling the men supplies. The men are paid off on the 15th of the month, and, after deducting the cost of provisions and other supplies, I turn over the balance."

"It has been stated," said his interrogator, "that you receive one rate or one-tenth of what the men earn for your trouble. Is that a fact?"

"I have never received any such compensation," replied Seid Back, "and don't know what other contractors may be doing."

"Do you know of any Chinese coming over from China since the passage of the exclusion act?"

"All who come over, to the best of my knowledge, are merchants and Chinamen who claim they were born in the United States. I have heard of some Chinamen coming across from Canada, but don't know of any from personal knowledge. I read about them in the papers."

"How many Chinamen are there in Portland?"

"It is my opinion that there are not over 5000."

"Do you think that there can be as many as has been reported?"

"I don't know, but don't think there are over 5000."

"How many are males?"

"About 200 are women. The rest are men. About 70 per cent. of the men are married, having wives either in this city or in China. About 100 have wives and children in this city."

CHINESE LOAFERS AS WELL AS WORKERS.

"What are the Chinamen doing for a living?"

"Many of them work in the canneries. Others do railroad work, farm, grub stumps, chop wood, work in brickyards, work as servants and wash in laundries. Some are merchants and quite a number are loafers."

"How many are loafers?"

"About 500 or 600. They work only at times when the canneries are hard pressed for help, and then work but a short time."

"How do they live the rest of the time?"

"The same as white gamblers, by cheating and gambling." Seid Back followed this up by giving a lucid explanation of the fan tan game. In regard to opium smoking he said that about 1500 or 2000 out of the 5000 Chinese in Portland use the drug. The entire Chinese population of the state he thought was from 7500 to 8000. He also believed that the Chinese population was diminishing at the rate of about 500 a year. "Most of them leave for China," said he. "Some go to other states and a few die. Last year between ten and twenty Chinamen died in this city."

WHO THE HIGHBINDER ASK.

Seid Back struck a snag when he came to testify regarding highbinders. He said the Chinese knew of no such term as "highbinder" and all the so-called highbinder societies in this city were organized for protective and benevolent purposes.

"Are you a highbinder?" he was asked.

"No I am not, but I was until about five years ago," he replied.

"Why did you leave the organization?"

Seid Back then had to admit that the object of these societies was not entirely benevolent in its character. He confessed that the obligation of members is to stand up for each other under any and all circumstances, even to the extent of protecting murderers when the occasion requires. Some of the societies, he said, do a square business, while others levy taxes on gamblers and prostitutes. They do not levy taxes on merchants because merchants do a legitimate business, and have the protection of law.

"No taxes are levied by the six companies," continued he, "other than what may be required to support old people and ship them back to China. In San Francisco, they collect from \$3.50 to \$4 from each man. The money is always paid, because the Chinamen are taught this as a duty." He denied that the agency of highbinders is employed to compel the payment of debts, and also that women are sold for immoral purposes. He said women practically sell themselves to get out of debt.