

VOLUME 2/15B: H.D. WILSON, MC CLATCHY, VS. THE JAPANESE
PROBLEM IN CALIFORNIA, SAN FRANCISCO:
C.J.I.C., 1929.

The JAPANESE **PROBLEM**

In California

■

RACIAL RELATIONS
and the
SECOND GENERATION

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The Aftermath of Japanese
Immigration

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By V. S. McCLATCHY

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Foreword

The article reproduced herewith, was written in compliance with a joint request from the Editor of the Japanese American News of San Francisco and the Editor of Kokumin Shimbun, one of the leading newspapers of Tokyo, Japan. It appeared in the English Section of the San Francisco newspaper, January 1, 1929; and a Japanese translation was published serially in the regular edition of the Tokyo newspaper on January 5, 6 and 7, 1929.

The editors invited a frank statement from the writer of the present conditions of Japanese-American relations in California, and particularly of the position of the second generation Japanese, American citizens by birth.

The task was approached with hesitancy since no solution could be offered for a problem of grave concern to the state and to both peoples. The article would not have been written were it not for the hope that a sympathetic statement of the conditions of the problem and a review of the train of events which led up to it would induce better understanding on both sides, and such consideration and friendly co-operation as might discover a practical method of dealing with it.

V. S. McCLATCHY.

January, 1929.

The Japanese Problem in California

By V. S. McCLATCHY

In discussing the subject of Japanese-American relations it is well to remember that two friends cannot clear up a misunderstanding by interchange of meaningless compliments, meanwhile ignoring obvious conditions and deceiving each other as to facts and opinions. Facts, and opinions too, may be handled with mutual toleration and courtesy, but above all there must be entire frankness.

Responsibility for peace on the Pacific rests, it is said, on the shoulders of Japan and the United States. Peace may be maintained for a time between two nations, even in the presence of ill will, through a desire to maintain valuable trade interests or to avoid war, so disastrous even to the conqueror. But the best guarantee for peace lies in that mutual confidence, that cordial relation, which prevents or removes misunderstanding. That is the spirit which, it is hoped, will always actuate the people of Japan and the United States in their intercourse with each other. While that spirit lives, misunderstandings may occur, but will disappear.

The traditional friendship of the two countries was threatened for a time by differences growing out of our immigration problems; and while the major differences have been resolved, at least temporarily, it is still felt by many that the question involved could have been settled in some way equally effective from our point of view and more satisfactory to Japan. It is fair, however, to say that this belief is held usually by those who lack intimate knowledge of the three months' consideration given to the matter by Congress in the spring of 1924. During that period every other plan suggested before or since, including quota, received full consideration and each was rejected in turn for clearly defined reasons. The plan chosen seemed to be the one which should cause least reasonable protest. It is not discriminatory in itself, for it permits the entrance as immigrant

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of anyone eligible to American citizenship. If our naturalization law, which declares certain colored races ineligible to citizenship, were modified in favor of the Japanese, they would have the right to enter as immigrants under the present immigration act. It is therefore the naturalization law, and not the immigration law, against which the charge of discrimination should be made.

Some other plan may yet be suggested which will meet Japan's view without violating basic laws or principles adopted by this nation; but until then (as was said by President Coolidge, the earnest friend of Japan) "We must seek by some means besides immigration to demonstrate the friendship and respect we feel for the Japanese nation." Japan, however, has declared frankly through various official sources that she expects that friendship to be shown ultimately by such modification of the present law as will place her nationals on the same plane as white Europeans.

Our Policy Outlined

Curiously enough the present misunderstanding in the matter of immigration has grown out of our desire and determination to so regulate our immigration policy that through it no rift would be created in the traditional friendship between Japan and this country; and it was President Roosevelt himself who first clearly defined the issue in the interest of both nations.

California had become much alarmed by the rapid increase in Japanese immigration, 19,774 having entered at the ports of San Francisco and Seattle, and 26,255 at Honolulu, during the two years ending July 1, 1908, at which date the Gentlemen's Agreement went into effect. In consequence there were introduced in the State Legislature in January, 1909, a number of bills directed against the Japanese in various ways. President Roosevelt strongly protested, declaring some of these bills illegal and some of them unfair, and finally secured the withdrawal of all of them on the assurance that the Federal Government had adjusted the immigration matter with Japan in line with California's desire; that the plan had

worked so well in its first six months' operation ending January 1, 1909, that the number of Japanese in continental United States had decreased in that time over 2,000; and that if, in the next year or two, it failed to be similarly successful the matter would be remedied by further action, meaning by an exclusion law. These matters are covered in his seven hundred word telegram to the California Legislature, February 9, 1909, and in his autobiography, at page 411 and following, both quoted in full in the hearings of the Senate Immigration Committee, March 11, 12, 13, 1924.

Roosevelt's view was that large settlement of the nationals of either country in the land of the other would be certain to produce racial friction and international trouble. The plan agreed upon with Japan was that she would guard against increase of Japanese population in the United States through her passport system. The object sought was thus explained in a letter from Roosevelt to Hon. Wm. Kent, February 4, 1909, a few days before his telegram to the California Legislature:

"Let the arrangement between Japan and the United States be entirely reciprocal. Let the Japanese and Americans visit one another's countries with entire freedom as tourists, scholars, professors, sojourners for study or pleasure, or for purposes of international business, but keep out laborers, men who want to take up farms, men who want to go into the small trades, or even in professions where the work is of a non-international character; that is, keep out of Japan those Americans who wish to settle and become part of the resident working population, and keep out of America those Japanese who wish to adopt a similar attitude. This is the only wise and proper policy."

"It is merely a recognition of the fact that, in the present stages of social advancement of the two peoples, whatever may be the case in the future, it is not only undesirable, but impossible, that there should be intermingling on a large scale, and the effort is sure to bring disaster. Let each country also behave with scrupulous courtesy, fairness and consideration to the other."

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The Gentlemen's Agreement

California learned afterwards that the arrangement was in the nature of a secret agreement, since referred to as the Gentlemen's Agreement, the text of which has never been made public, and the clearest explanation of which has come from Roosevelt, the man who made it. Under the Agreement Japan was permitted to flood Hawaii with Japanese (Japan subsequently relinquished this concession) provided she did not promote the increase of Japanese population in continental United States. Her passport was to be accepted without question as entitling any Japanese to enter. There was thus surrendered to Japan this nation's sovereign right of choosing its immigrants, and the executive branch of our government assumed the right to manage immigration, which is the sole prerogative of Congress.

Unfortunately, the plan failed, the Japanese population of continental United States increasing from 72,000 in 1910 to 150,000 in 1920; and Congress in 1924, after repeated complaints from California, was compelled to take action which nullified the Agreement.

Japan, long before Roosevelt enunciated the principle above quoted, had safeguarded herself from possible danger of this character by discouraging immigration, even of people of her own color, by forbidding profitable use of agricultural land to foreigners, and by declining to grant citizenship to children of aliens who chanced to be born on Japanese soil. As a result, Japan today possesses the most homogeneous population of any great nation in the world; one race, practically one religion, a common heredity, and a unified national outlook. Note what she has been able to accomplish in 50 years in consequence. In such matters the United States has made serious blunders, with the result that the birth rate of her original stock is now approaching the vanishing point, and she faces grave problems created by the presence within her borders, as settlers and even as naturalized citizens, of large groups of unassimilated population. She is attempting now to correct these blunders so far as she

may with justice to herself and due regard for the rights of others, and certainly with no unkindly feeling towards any.

Relations in California

In California, where resides two-thirds of the total Japanese population of continental United States, much ill will was shown by both Japanese and whites before and immediately after passage of the immigration act of 1924; but that ill will has entirely disappeared so far as concerns any public manifestation on either side, and there are many indications of steadily growing cordial relations, due in part to concerted action of leaders on both sides.

The present absence of unfriendly feeling on the part of the whites is due largely to the belief that the menace, economic, social and political, which they saw in the steadily increasing Japanese population has been halted by the new law. It is noted that the state's total Japanese population is not increasing apparently and that the annual births have gradually decreased from 5,275 in 1921 to 3,241 in 1927.

Open-minded Japanese will find some excuse for the ill will shown in the past toward Japanese in California if they will picture to themselves the more serious consequences which would be created in Japan under similar conditions by the introduction of 100,000 white Americans, grouping themselves in favored sections of the Empire, and securing control of land and certain activities through use of machinery and other methods familiar to Americans.

Alien Japanese in California voice two complaints. They desire exception made to the principle of exclusion of ineligible aliens so that they may bring in Japanese women for wives, the alien-born Japanese man and the California-born Japanese maiden both objecting to intermarriage because of the difference in culture and standards. The alien Japanese also object to the state law which forbids ownership or lease of agricultural land by all aliens ineligible to citizenship, a measure which was forced

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economically by the fact that in 1920 the Japanese had secured control through ownership or lease of from 50% to 85% of the irrigated lands in each of the four leading agricultural counties—Sacramento, Placer, San Joaquin and Colusa—and smaller proportions in other favored sections.

These complaints as to wives and land ownership will disappear in a few years with the passing of the resident alien Japanese; since among the native-born Japanese, the sexes being about equal in number, every man will have opportunity to secure a bride; and each one, man or woman, being an American citizen, is entitled to own and lease land without restriction of any kind.

The Second Generation

More serious than any phase of the subject thus far considered is the problem presented by the second generation, the Japanese born here and entitled thereby to American citizenship, and trained in public school and university to American standards and ideals. These young men and young women are fine specimens, physically and mentally, a credit to their race and to this country. Undoubtedly they earnestly desire to be thorough Americans, and Japan under her present policy encourages them in that ambition; but while they fraternize freely with the whites up to the time they leave school or college, in social as well as in school activities, they find themselves set apart in later years by a racial barrier which is apparently too strong for either side to break down. There is an added complication in that the Japanese, like many of the whites, prefer "white collar jobs." They no longer fill positions as house boys, and Filipinos have taken their place. Many abandon liberally-paid work on farm and orchard to the Mexicans.

Naturally, the Japanese employ their own people in business, and so too do the whites. In consequence, a Japanese professional man—physician, dentist, lawyer or engineer—finds himself restricted to practice among his own people. Intermarriage being frowned upon by

both races and even forbidden by California law, the races drift apart socially, meeting only occasionally at public functions. Inevitably the Japanese become race conscious, American citizens in rights, but a group apart with separate interests. Thus is produced an unfortunate situation, detrimental alike to Japanese and whites, and most serious from the national point of view, since the country must look to a homogeneous citizenry for permanent stability and progress.

This result is the fault of neither race. It is due to the fact that each is marked by racial characteristics so strong and so different that assimilation, in the perfect or biological sense, is not possible. Both are capable of cultural assimilation, but each resents absorption by the other, the real assimilation which makes for national homogeneity.

Even in Hawaii, where the Japanese constitute over one-third of the total population, and furnish more than one-half of the school children, where they outnumber the whites three to one, where there is every encouragement for intermarriage and biological assimilation, the second generation Japanese find themselves a group apart, and their vernacular press calls upon them to cast their votes, not for the benefit of the Territory and the Nation, but in support of those who will pay most attention to Japanese interests.

Co-operation Necessary

It is through no wish or action or fault of their own that the second generation Japanese find themselves in an unfortunate position for which there does not appear to be any adequate remedy, but which should receive intelligent and kindly consideration from both sides. It offers striking demonstration of the unwisdom of any nation inviting the entrance, as immigrants or citizens, of elements which, however worthy or even superior, cannot amalgamate with the mass of resident citizenry. It offers conclusive justification for President Roosevelt's announced policy of preventing an increase of Japanese population in the United

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States, through operation of the Gentlemen's Agreement, or otherwise.

The question remains, what can we do with this problem of the second generation Japanese? There does not appear to be any immediate solution. It is possible that in the absence of further friction and with the goodwill which exists on both sides the more serious phases of the problem will gradually diminish and in time sink out of sight. Naturally such a process can gather no impetus in the face of efforts to destroy the basic principle upon which the present protective barrier was erected. It is probable that continued co-operation of Japanese leaders in California with certain white organizations and individuals, all anxious to avoid friction and to preserve friendly relations, will aid materially in an improvement of the existing condition; and may be able in time to find a partial remedy. That certainly is the sincere wish of those for whom this writer sometimes speaks.

The situation occasioned by the immigration question and outgrowth therefrom, as thus frankly outlined, confronts two friendly nations, each of which has every desire to respect the rights of the other while jealously caring for the welfare of its own people and institutions. It should be the aim of the loyal citizens of each nation to see that no misunderstanding is created through ignorance or misrepresentation of the facts, or prejudice, and that those who discuss the matter are charged with the duty of investigating and carefully weighing the facts. Surely then, with frequent intercourse and conference between leaders on both sides, all material differences should gradually disappear.

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