

VOLUME 2/15C: H.D. WILSON, _____, THE JAPANESE IN
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The Japanese in California

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Results Following Alien Land
Law Enforcement

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The State's Attitude ^{and the} ~~had been~~
Conditions Which Provoked
the Law

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By V. S. McCLATCHY

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"For two decades and more, California has regarded herself as a frontier State, making the fight of the Nation against the peaceful penetration of insidious alien invaders from the Far East. She has been willing to accept the loss and trouble which come inevitably to the territory on which battles are fought, but has resented the complacent blindness of many other states which could see no danger, and insisted that California, because of unfounded racial prejudice, was precipitating this country into trouble and possible war."

NOTE

Since the following article was written for the "Overland Monthly," almost a year ago, the matters discussed therein have assumed more definite shape. The efforts of the Japanese and certain large land owners to evade the intent of the alien land law through various forms of cropping and bonus contracts were finally ended by decisions of the State Supreme Court in December, 1924. Comparatively few Japanese have left California to farm in other States. Migration to Mexico was discussed but the idea seems to have been abandoned because that country lacks the transportation and marketing facilities which would make such a venture successful. In certain districts of California many Japanese have left the farms and gone into the large cities to open small stores and engage in gardening, window cleaning and similar occupations. In other agricultural districts they remain as day laborers, commanding good, and in many instances high wages. Under these conditions, with annual births of over 5,000, no decrease in the Japanese population of the State is anticipated.

January, 1925.

V. S. McC.

The Japanese in California

By V. S. McClatchy

The law of California which forbids ownership, lease or profitable use of agricultural lands by aliens ineligible to citizenship was recently upheld in an uncompromising decision of the United States Supreme Court. Following that decision in December, the entire country was flooded by telegraphed statements from California to the effect that the Japanese, who are most affected by the decision, would decline to work for wages; that 50,000 or more of California's 100,000 Japanese population were about to leave the State; that farms and orchards could not be operated without the Japanese; that hundreds of thousands of acres of the richest lands must cease to produce and that the State's annual revenues would decrease over \$70,000,000 in consequence; and that the initiative would be invoked to secure modification or repeal of the objectionable law.

Publication of these statements brought application from landowners in many portions of the United States—outside of the Pacific Coast states—indicating an eagerness to secure the dissatisfied Japanese of California to work uncultivated lands in such states.

In the face of what the country assumed must prove an overwhelming disaster for California, that self-satisfied, reckless and improvident commonwealth not only failed to acknowledge her blunder and adopt means to correct it, but as soon as her various varied interests could confere and survey the situation, calmly announced to the world that if the Japanese wished to leave the State, they would be bidden "Godspeed"; that while the State is bound by treaty and in fairness to protect the resident Japanese in commercial pursuits, and even as farm laborers under wage, their presence on farm and orchard must prove an ultimate detriment much more serious than the temporary loss which might

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result from their departure. The district attorneys of the State, called together in conference by the State Attorney-General (with 49 out of 58 counties represented in attendance) gave public notice that the law would be rigidly enforced after the present growing crops had been harvested; the Farm Bureaus proceeded to organize a State clearing house for farm and seasonal labor, and to encourage the establishment of attractive conditions of employment for farm labor throughout the State. Requests from other states for Japanese laborers were turned over in friendly spirit to the Japanese Association of America with headquarters in San Francisco, that they might be filled.

Some of the reasons which actuate California in adopting this course—consistent with her declarations and policy of the past—will appear in the course of this article. Briefly, it may be said that any considerable migration of California Japanese at this time seems improbable; that should such migration occur, it is believed the place of the Japanese will be filled in time by competent white labor with benefit to the State; and that even should the departure of the Japanese leave idle for many years some of the State's rich lands, it were better so than to have such lands, with their marketable products and the industries connected therewith, in control of unassimilable aliens whose presence constitutes not only a national but an international danger as well.

First, as to the facts of the present situation. There was apparent foundation for the reports sent out from California in December, in the attitude of the Japanese, as announced in their vernacular press at the time, and in the claims of landowners whose profits for years past have been made by leasing to Japanese. That same vernacular press today, from the Canadian line to the Mexican border, and following California's determined action, voices the urgent advice of Japanese leaders that the Japanese do not leave California but remain here, and working under the conditions permitted, take concerted action to force such

change of the law within the next few years as will enable the Japanese to colonize the State under conditions more satisfactory to themselves.

This policy is urged not only in the interest of the California Japanese, but also to avoid injury to their countrymen in other states, which, if threatened by new Japanese immigration, may be induced to copy California's law. A notable case in point is furnished by an urgent appeal from the Idaho Japanese Association to the Japanese in California, published in *Nichi Bei*, of San Francisco, January 22nd, not to come to Idaho as the Chambers of Commerce of that State have petitioned the Governor to call an extra session of the Legislature to protect Idaho against the threatened invasion. The appeal naively states that as the Japanese born in Idaho average fifteen years younger than those born in California, it will be many years before their rights as American citizens can be utilized to secure lands for the proud Yamato race. They are, therefore, less able to protect themselves than are their brethren in the Golden State against alien laws!

It is improbable that a large number of Japanese will leave California at this time. The Japanese regard California, if they must leave Japan, as the most desirable place in the world for residence. Two-thirds of all the Japanese in Continental United States are in the Golden State, whose climatic conditions permit them to utilize in agricultural activities, practically all the hours of a 365-day year. The Japanese do not like cold climates—even refusing for that reason to settle their own northern island of Hokkaido; and they have the experience of a few thousand of their countrymen who about three years ago went to Idaho and Montana, but drifted back again to California.

The great objection made by the Japanese to the California law is that it does not permit them to share in the profits of the crops—and thereby utilize to the greatest advantage their low standards of living, their willingness

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to labor long hours and utilize women and child labor in competition with the farms and orchards managed and worked by white owners and white labor.

A number of Japanese who shared in crop profits through leases and cropping contracts, now forbidden, have accepted positions as foremen, or superintendents, at satisfactory compensation, and they will continue to employ Japanese as laborers at day wages as they did when they were lessees. In some orchards, former Japanese tenants are accepting contracts to perform the season's work under separate bids, for pruning, for cultivating and irrigating, and for picking and packing, and they will employ Japanese labor as they did before.

Some Japanese, dissatisfied with existing conditions in agricultural districts, will embark in commercial pursuits in the cities and small communities, where their methods of work will give them profit. Since the passage of the amended alien land law there has been a marked tendency in that direction. For instance, the License Collector of Los Angeles City months ago reported over four thousand separate businesses conducted in that city by Japanese, over one thousand of these being vegetable and fruit stores, and over six hundred grocery stores—each one of which probably displaced a similar store supporting a white man or a white family. This situation is causing concern in Los Angeles and elsewhere.

Undoubtedly some Japanese will leave the State for a time at least—how many it is difficult to estimate. Without question, temporary loss and inconvenience will result in certain districts in consequence, and continue in diminishing extent during the period of readjustment. It is believed there will be no difficulty in securing in time all the competent white labor necessary to replace the Japanese who may abandon the agricultural districts.

Experience shows that the white orchard manager who has gained a reputation for pro-

viding conditions of employment attractive to self-respecting white labor, has no difficulty in securing plenty of such labor. A notable instance is found in the Humphrey orchard at Mayhew Station, situated in the midst of the American River fruit district, extending twenty-two miles from Sacramento City to Folsom. For many years past the Humphrey orchard, employing as many as sixty men and forty women in the busiest season, has used white labor exclusively—although all other orchards in that district use Japanese labor in part or entirely. This orchard has never had difficulty in securing all the competent white labor needed. The Chief Camp Inspector of the State Housing and Immigration Commission, who enforces proper sanitary conditions in the out-door working camps of the State, declares that conditions similar to those which obtain on the Humphreys place, invite an adequate supply of competent white labor in other portions of the State. Letters received by the Sacramento Chamber of Commerce indicate the desire of many people living in the Middle West to come to California and to labor on farm and orchard if they can be assured of such conditions as are indicated.

Undoubtedly, enforcement of California's alien land law will cause a drop in the price of rich, cultivable lands, particularly those under irrigation, because white lessees will not pay as high rental as Japanese. But land values which cannot be sustained without making permanent the situation rapidly developing are too high for a white man's country. Objectionable social environment and economic competition which he cannot meet are driving the competent and intelligent white farmer and orchardist from the land in that State wherein soil and all-year climatic conditions lend most attraction and profit to agricultural pursuits.

For instance, the manager of the Rindge properties, 22,000 acres in the rich delta of the San Joaquin and Sacramento rivers, voices in published interview the indignation of his

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corporation because it can no longer lease those lands to Japanese to carry on truck farming under contracts which have netted the corporation in the past a yearly rental of \$50.00 or \$100.00 per acre. He complains that whites will not truck-farm on the lands and that hay and grain crops on shares will not yield a profit to the owners of more than \$10 or \$15 per acre.

For years past this corporation has made large profits per acre from reclaimed but otherwise unimproved land, without effort, by turning control thereof over to unassimilable aliens ineligible to citizenship under our laws, thereby preventing the chance of having the district populated by white citizens. Under the present law this corporation's profits will be considerably decreased whether it elects to lease to white tenants or to cultivate the land itself, either with white labor or with Japanese labor at day wage, as is permitted by law. For, be it known, the wily Japanese, working for day wage for the white farmer, has managed to make the cost of operation 50 to 75 per cent greater than when working for his countryman who shared in the crop.

California is more concerned in wresting her rich lands from alien control, and in encouraging the return thereto of the intelligent white citizen and his family, than in maintaining an excessive profit per acre for a comparatively few landowners, individuals and corporations, whose view of the interests of the State, Nation and race is obscured by the immediate dollar.

These land owners declare that white farmers will not lease the river lands for truck farming. Probably not—at the terms which Asiatics are willing to pay; but those terms, in standards of living, hours of labor and social conditions are too high for citizens of this nation to pay. In answer, too, it is to be said that many white farmers who own their lands, are truck farming on the Sacramento River; that more would do so with Japanese competition removed; that throughout many eastern states, where Japanese have

not yet secured a foothold, whites do the truck farming, and that the same is true in certain districts of California as well. California is confident that with the Japanese removed from the lands, whites, either from California or from other states, will be content and glad to take their place as owners, lessees or wage earners.

Some of the great fruit shipping companies of the State look with marked disfavor on the coming rigid enforcement of the alien land law. They have been prominent factors in bringing about the present situation because they felt impelled by the necessities of their business to finance the season's operations for Japanese lessees in orchard and vineyard, and have assisted, by fostering Japanese competition, in driving the white tenant and the white proprietor-farmer off the land. The companies now face a situation under which the fruit shipments for a few years may be less and their profits correspondingly smaller. Eventually the State, and incidentally these companies, will profit.

The average well-informed Californian who lays aside selfish personal interests, does not regard the threatened hegira of the State's Japanese population as an unmixed evil. He may even regard it with equanimity. A few—and one corporation in particular—a large employer of Japanese farm labor in the past—encourage the departure.

The preceding outline of certain phases of the existing situation will explain in part this attitude of California. But to appreciate her point of view thoroughly, there must be a better understanding of certain fundamental facts, for a time unknown to, or ignored by, the Nation at large, and only forced on public attention in the past few years through the State's continued agitation of the subject.

California has before her the startling example of Hawaii, where by the year 1940, Japanese will control the elections because of the great number of their Hawaiian-born children who will have reached the age of twenty-

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one by that time. In consequence, the territory will be compelled to abandon its present form of government and ask for a Federal Commission. (See in ASIA Magazine for July, 1923, the report of a two-year investigation of conditions in Hawaii made by Louis R. Sullivan for the American Museum of Natural History.) Japanese comprise already nearly half the population of the territory and furnish more than half of the school children; they provide 60 per cent of the labor and have a monopoly of the territory's fisheries. They control the building trades in Honolulu and various branches of business; and in the sugar strike a few years ago, they acted with absolute racial solidarity, most of them voluntarily and some under duress, but all regardless of affiliations or American citizenship. (See testimony of the Hawaiian Commission before the House Immigration Committee at Washington in 1921.)

California sees in various districts of the State a similar development; and she ponders over the published statement of the Registrar of Vital Statistics for her State Board of Health that if present conditions continue, the Japanese in California will in time exceed the whites in number.

For two decades and more, California has regarded herself as a frontier State, making the fight of the Nation against the peaceful penetration of insidious alien invaders from the Far East. She has been willing to accept the loss and trouble which come inevitably to the territory on which battles are fought, but has resented the complacent blindness of many other states which could see no danger, and insisted that California, because of unfounded racial prejudice, was precipitating this country into trouble and possible war.

California has always held that the presence in any district of this country of unassimilable aliens, massing in communities or occupations and capable of driving out the whites in economic competition, must lead to racial friction and international trouble; and

that it were therefore in the interests of our neighbors across the Pacific, as well as ourselves, to exclude such elements of discord.

President Theodore Roosevelt was in thorough accord with this point of view, and said so frankly to Japan, insisting that while Japanese already here should be fairly treated, no more should come if the friendship between the two countries was to be maintained. He induced California to abandon her anti-Japanese bills under consideration by the Legislature of 1909 by giving her guarantees contained in his memorable telegram of February 9th of that year, addressed to Speaker Stanton of the State Assembly. In that telegram, Roosevelt declared that under the terms of the Gentlemen's Agreement he had arranged with Japan so that Japanese immigration should cease by her own act, and with the understanding that the number of Japanese in this country should gradually decrease; he said the plan had worked so successfully during the first six months of its operation that the number of Japanese in the United States had decreased 2000; he acknowledged that if equally satisfactory results did not follow future operation of the Agreement, California would have just cause for complaint, and said in that case the Federal Government could and would apply the necessary remedy,—meaning thereby the passage of a Japanese exclusion act. In his autobiography, he explains that this safeguard was destroyed by his successor, President Taft, under the terms of the 1911 treaty with Japan.

At all events, under the operation of the "picture brides" and "kandogan brides" and lax regulation on the part of our government, the Japanese population in continental United States trebled between 1904 and 1920, instead of decreasing—while the Chinese population, under the Exclusion Act, diminished one-half. California's Japanese population quadrupled in the same period.

As the Japanese increased in number in California, they took practical control of cer-

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tain districts. First, driving out white labor in competition, they gradually sought to become owners of the land, and when that was prevented by law, they obtained leases with privilege of renewal, thus giving them permanent control. In time there grew up the present system, under which the owners of large pieces of unimproved land and bearing orchards found it more profitable to lease to Japanese, who undertook the entire management and the risk of financing, while the owner retired to the city and received his share of the profits at the end of the season. That plan, naturally, drove white tenants or lessees off the land, as well as white labor. But it did more. The small farmer or orchardist, owning and cultivating his own land nearby, found himself, when marketing his produce, in competition with the Japanese-grown article, produced with all the advantages to be had from low standards of living, long hours of labor, woman and child labor, etc. In time he gave up the contest, was forced off the land, went into industrial or business occupation, and sold or leased his land to the Japanese. Whole communities of whites, as for instance in the strawberry-growing district of Florin, in Sacramento County, were displaced by the Japanese.

And so, in California, where climatic conditions offer most inducement for pleasant and profitable all-year work in agricultural pursuits, conditions were permitted to develop which encouraged the farm-to-city movement and gave control to alien Japanese by the year 1920, of one-eighth of all the State's valuable and productive irrigated land.

California's consistent and insistent policy in this matter has forced the problem upon the attention of the Nation at large. Other states which have been invaded by the Japanese, or which have taken warning from California's experience, have passed laws similar to that State's alien land law. There has developed throughout the country a demand for the exclusion, as permanent residents, of all aliens ineligible to citizenship,

as a fundamental step in restricting unassimilable immigration. In response to that demand, a provision to that effect appears in the Immigration Bill recently favorably reported by the House Immigration Committee, although, according to published reports, Japan, through our State Department, violently protested against it; and certain American commercial interests complained that Japan had threatened them with cancellation of \$200,000,000 in contracts for reconstruction of the devastated districts of Japan if this provision be enacted into law. The provision has received the unanimous approval in national conventions of three great organizations—the American Legion, the American Federation of Labor, and the Grange. Its effect, if enacted, will be to exclude without further legislation, all the yellow and brown races of Asia, including Hindus, Malays, Chinese, Japanese and Filipinos—about half the population of the globe.

Even assuming, however, the enactment of such a provision into law and the rigid enforcement of her alien land law, California faces a grave problem in the presence within the State of one hundred thousand or more Japanese, all of whom are entitled to remain in the State and engage in industrial or commercial pursuits, or work as farm laborers at wage, if they so desire. Thirty thousand or more of these are California-born (there are over five thousand Japanese births yearly in California) and entitled therefore to full citizenship rights, including ownership of land. These rights are already being utilized as individuals come of age, to make place in the agricultural districts for their alien relatives and countrymen. These native-born Japanese are, in the mass, and with notable individual exceptions, only less unassimilable than their immigrant parents, and furnish an additional problem in a dangerous dual citizenship which ties them to Japan.

California feels that for years she has done her duty as a loyal State of the Republic in giving warning of a grave impending national

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danger and in opposing it to the extent of her limited authority. She has repeatedly urged Congressional action as the only effective remedy against the danger frankly, pointed out by President Roosevelt, in permitting the growth in our midst of alien and unassimilable communities of Asiatics. She has no patience with the weak-kneed Americanism which at the urge of halting diplomacy or commercial greed closes its eyes to the welfare of Nation and race, under veiled threats of war or loss of trade. Her insistence, and the official investigations forced in consequence, have aided in arousing a general public sentiment. She hopes that Congress will take the necessary action before the Golden State first, her two sister Pacific Coast states next, and the remaining rich agricultural states of the Union in order of the attraction they offer, shall have passed under economic and racial control of the Japanese. For unfortunate Hawaii it is already too late.



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